

Exercise walk-through

9.2

Reagan and Conservatism

AP United States History

Which conservative goal does each policy serve?

Period 9 begins in 1980. **Ronald Reagan** 's election helped the **conservative movement** enact policy changes.

Teacher-written cases grounded in CED Topics 9.2 and 9.3

- A Tax cuts and deregulation** aimed to encourage private economic activity.
- B Increased defence spending** supported a military buildup against the Soviet Union.
- C Social conservatism** promoted traditional social values.

Try it: Match each to an economic, foreign-policy or social goal. Does B fit the claim that conservatives wanted less government in every field?

A political coalition can combine several goals; one slogan does not explain every policy.

Worked comparison: a selective role for government

A: Economic policy. Tax cuts and deregulation sought a smaller federal role in parts of economic life. The **supply-side economics** argument stressed incentives for work, saving and investment.

B: Foreign policy. A military buildup used government resources to oppose communism. It was not an example of withdrawal from every area.

C: Social values. Social conservatism concerned traditional values and family life, not simply the same economic argument.

Explain the goal of a particular policy. Do not equate reduced economic regulation with the disappearance of federal power.

The conservative turn

The conservative movement

The **conservative movement** joined free-market economics, a stronger military, and religious traditionalism into one coalition.

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 carried it into office: tax cuts, deregulation, and a sharp military build-up.

What it argued

That government had grown beyond its competence – so the remedy was to shrink it, and let markets and families do more.

What persisted

Efforts to shrink government met resistance. Many programmes remained popular with voters, limiting change.

Name the three strands and say which one a given policy came from. Treating conservatism as one thing is what flattens an answer.

How far did the conservative programme change government?

CED Topic 9.2 provides evidence of change and limits.

Reagan's election enabled significant tax cuts and continued deregulation. Yet efforts to reduce government's size and scope met opposition and institutional resistance. Many programmes remained popular with voters.

Debates continued about free trade, the social safety net and financial regulation.

Significant policy change coexisted with surviving programmes and continued debate. A conservative victory did not settle every argument about government.

Read a policy argument: Reagan in September 1981

Teaching paraphrase of Reagan's economic-recovery address

Reagan presented tax cuts as a way to stimulate growth and jobs, spending cuts as a way to reduce deficits, and regulatory relief as a way to reduce burdens on business. He expected tax-rate reductions to encourage saving and productivity over time.

Try it: Identify an intended effect and the policy meant to produce it. Does a speech announcing this expectation establish that the outcome occurred?

This is a paraphrase of an argument, not a quotation or an independent evaluation of its success.

Exercises 2.1-2.2

2.1 State what the 1980 election allowed conservatives to enact. [2]

2.2 State the conservative argument and the force of “counterproductive”. [2]

Exercises 2.1·2.2

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2.1

- significant tax cuts and continued deregulation of many industries
-

2.2 State the conservative argument and the force of “counterproductive”. [2]

2.2

- that liberal programs were counterproductive in fighting poverty and stimulating growth; “counterproductive” claims they were self-defeating rather than merely ineffective

Exercise 2.3 (a)

2.3 Efforts to reduce government met an obstacle.

(a) State it and its cause.

[2]

Exercise 2.3 (a)

2.3 Efforts to reduce government met an obstacle.

(a) State it and its cause.

[2]

(a)

- inertia and liberal opposition, because many programs remained popular with voters

Exercise 2.3 (b)

2.3 Efforts to reduce government met an obstacle.

(b) Name two continuing policy debates.

[1]

Exercise 2.3 (b)

2.3 Efforts to reduce government met an obstacle.

(b) Name two continuing policy debates.

[1]

(b)

- any two of: free-trade agreements; the scope of the social safety net; financial reform; immigration policy; diversity; gender roles; family structures

Exercises 3.1-3.2

3.1 Efforts to reduce the size of government met inertia and liberal opposition because many programs [1]

☐

A remained popular with voters

B had been abolished

C were unconstitutional

D were foreign

3.2 “Counterproductive” claims that liberal programs were [1]

☐

A self-defeating

B merely slow

C successful

D never enacted

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3.2 A

- self-defeating

Exercise 3.3 (a)

3.3 A movement wins an election and cannot remove programmes it opposes.

(a) State the reason the CED gives.

[1]

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[1]

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- that many programs remained popular with voters

Exercise 3.3 (b)

3.3 A movement wins an election and cannot remove programmes it opposes.

(b) Explain the tension this creates.

[2]

Exercise 3.3 (b)

3.3 A movement wins an election and cannot remove programmes it opposes.

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[2]

(b)

- an electoral majority for reducing government in general can coexist with majorities for keeping each particular programme