

Period 8: 1945-1980

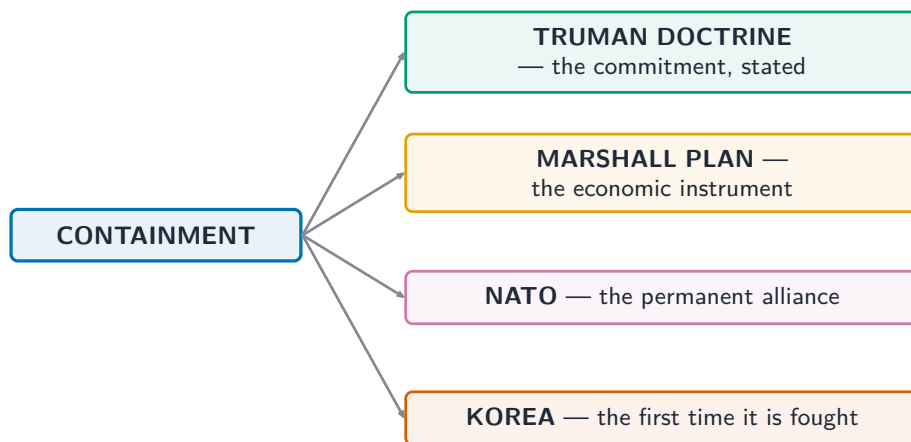
AP United States History

The Cold War, 1945 to 1980

Period 8 runs from **1945** to **1980**. Two arguments dominate it: how far the United States should go to contain communism abroad, and how far the federal government should go to guarantee rights and welfare at home. They are connected, because both are arguments about the reach of national power.

The **Cold War** began as wartime cooperation collapsed into rivalry with the Soviet Union. American policy settled on **containment** - preventing the spread of communism rather than attempting to remove it - expressed through the **Truman Doctrine**, the **Marshall Plan**, and **NATO**.

Containment then produced commitments the country had not anticipated: the **Korean War**, a permanent peacetime military establishment, an **arms race**, and the **space race**.



One policy, four **kinds** of instrument — stated, economic, military, fought. Naming the kind is what turns a list into an explanation

The Red Scare at Home

Fear of communism reshaped domestic politics. **Loyalty programmes**, congressional investigations, and **McCarthyism** targeted suspected communists in government, universities, unions, and the entertainment industry.

The examinable point is the **cost to civil liberties**: accusation often functioned as proof, and the fear narrowed the range of acceptable political debate for a decade.

Prosperity and Its Discontents

The postwar economy grew strongly. Federal spending on defence, highways, and the **GI Bill** supported home ownership and higher education, and the population moved to the **suburbs** and to the **Sun Belt**.

Culture changed with it: mass consumption, television, and a distinct **youth culture** with its own music and markets.

Prosperity was uneven. Suburban growth was frequently closed to African Americans by law and practice, cities lost tax base and jobs, and **poverty** persisted in ways the decade's self-image obscured - which is what later reform movements responded to.

THE BOOM

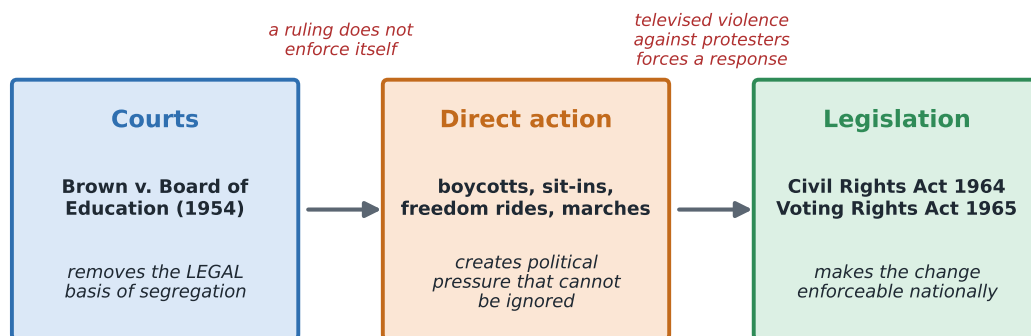
the **GI Bill** — education and mortgages
the **suburbs** and the **Sun Belt**
a youth culture with money of its own

AND WHO WAS OUTSIDE IT

poverty concentrated where
the boom did not reach
inner cities and rural regions left behind
benefits distributed unequally by race

The boom is the **context** for the 1960s, not a separate topic: the War on Poverty is aimed at the right-hand column

The Civil Rights Movement



each stage creates the conditions for the next - that chain is the argument

federal action consistently FOLLOWED the pressure rather than leading it

Litigation, direct action and legislation were not alternatives: each one created the conditions for the next

Early steps in the 1940s and 1950s worked mainly through the **courts** . Legal strategy produced **Brown v. Board of Education**, which held segregated schooling unconstitutional and stripped away the legal basis of segregation.

Court victories did not enforce themselves, so the movement turned to **direct action** : the Montgomery bus boycott, sit-ins, freedom rides, and mass marches, organised through churches and student groups and grounded in **nonviolent protest**

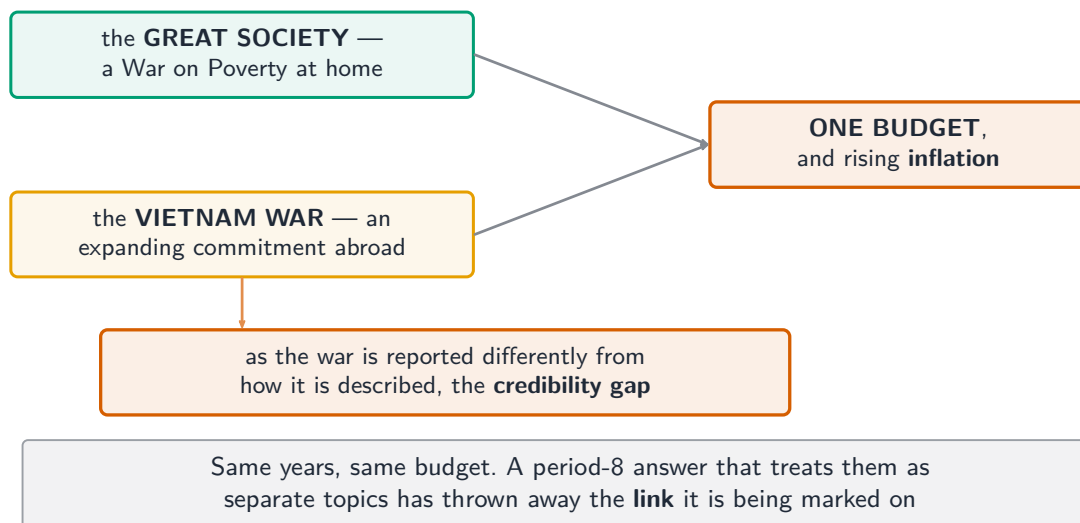
Sustained pressure and televised violence against protesters produced **legislation** : the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** 1964 and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965** 1965

The movement then **expanded** : later activists raised questions of economic inequality, housing, and policing, and some rejected nonviolence and integration in favour of **Black Power** . Its example also shaped movements by women, Latinos, American Indians, and others.

The Great Society and the Vietnam War

The **Great Society** extended federal responsibility furthest since the New Deal: Medicare and Medicaid, federal aid to education, and the **War on Poverty**

The **Vietnam War** grew out of containment and consumed the same presidency. Escalation without decisive results produced a large **antiwar movement** , deep political division, and a **credibility gap** between government statements and reported reality. Defeat abroad and disillusion at home weakened confidence in federal power just as its domestic role peaked.



Society in Transition

The later part of the period is defined by movements and by limits.

- The **women's movement** pressed for legal, economic and social equality; the **Equal Rights Amendment** had not gained enough state ratifications by 1980.
- **Environmental** concern grew into federal action on air, water, and endangered species between 1968 and 1980.

Try it – aim, response and outcome. Teacher-written cases grounded in CED Topics 8.11 and 8.13: A, feminist activists demanded legal, economic and social equality. Congress proposed the ERA in 1972, but enough states had not ratified it by 1980. B, growing concern about pollution helped prompt federal environmental action, including the EPA in 1970. Identify each aim and response. Which case shows that national approval did not complete the proposed change?

Worked comparison. A constitutional amendment required state ratification as well as congressional action. The ERA campaign had not secured that change within this period. The EPA was an operating federal agency bringing environmental responsibilities together. Its creation was a change in government, but not proof pollution had ended. Distinguish aims, responses and outcomes.

Try it – explain a connection. Improve this claim: “People worried about pollution. The EPA opened in 1970.” Explain how concern could lead to action and identify evidence needed to judge success.

Worked explanation. Pollution problems and accidents helped build public concern and pressure for protection. Officials responded partly by bringing federal responsibilities together in the EPA in 1970. To judge effectiveness, investigate enforcement and changes in pollution. Timing alone does not establish cause; no single accident explains all environmental policy.

- **Immigration** law was reformed in 1965, changing the origins of new arrivals.
- **Conservatism** organised in response to all of it, on taxes, social change, and the size of government - the movement Period 9 opens with.

Economic trouble sharpened everything: **inflation**, oil shocks, and industrial decline ended the postwar boom.

Continuity and Change in Period 8

One useful reasoning process is **continuity and change**. Rights expanded enormously in law; economic inequality and residential segregation persisted, and both statements belong in a strong answer.

Exam transfer – 2023 AP US History, Set 2, long essay Q4, paraphrased. Evaluate how far civil rights activism contributed to government action from 1940 to 1980. Use the ERA campaign to connect activism with a response and a limit, then

contrast another relevant example such as litigation and *Brown v. Board of Education*. Environmental policy alone would not answer this civil-rights prompt.

Teacher-written model passage. Women's rights organisations such as NOW pressed for the ERA. Congress proposed it in 1972, showing a national government response to demands for equality. Yet too few states had ratified it by 1980, so the campaign had not secured the proposed constitutional change within the essay's dates.

Why it fits. The official scheme accepts the ERA campaign as evidence of activism meeting limits at state level. This is one developed example, not a complete essay or official sample. A full essay needs an argument and further developed evidence. A limiting phrase alone does not establish complex understanding or guarantee credit.

Exam tips

- Define **containment** precisely - preventing spread, not rollback - and use it to explain Korea and Vietnam as consequences.
- For the Red Scare, the mark is in the **cost to civil liberties**, not in a narrative of accusations.
- Present civil rights as **courts** → **direct action** → **legislation**, each stage creating the next.
- Say what the **Great Society** actually did (Medicare, Medicaid, education aid) rather than calling it “reforms”.
- Vietnam's domestic effect - **division and the credibility gap** - matters as much as the military outcome.
- On continuity-and-change prompts, pair legal gains with persistent **economic and residential inequality**.

Vocabulary card meanings

containment: The policy of stopping Soviet power from spreading further. Truman Doctrine: The 1947 pledge to support countries resisting communist pressure. Marshall Plan: Large US economic aid to rebuild Western Europe after the Second World War. Korean War: The 1950-53 war in which the United States fought to stop a communist takeover of the South. arms race: Competition with the Soviet Union to build more nuclear weapons. space race: Competition to achieve firsts in rockets and human spaceflight. Loyalty programmes: Checks that aimed to remove suspected communists from government jobs. McCarthyism: Accusations of disloyalty, often with little evidence, in the early 1950s. cost to civil liberties: The freedoms restricted in the name of anti-communist security. GI Bill: The law that funded education and housing for returning veterans. suburbs: Residential districts built at the edge of cities. Sun Belt: The southern and western states that gained people and jobs after mid-century. youth culture: Styles and music identified with teenagers in the postwar decades. courts: The judicial bodies whose rulings advanced civil rights. direct action: Protests such as sit-ins that confront injustice in person. nonviolent protest: Resistance that refuses to answer force with force. legislation: Statutes passed by Congress, including

civil-rights laws. Civil Rights Act of 1964: The law that banned discrimination in public accommodations and employment. Voting Rights Act of 1965: The law that outlawed barriers used to stop Black citizens voting. expanded: Grew to include more people or more programmes. Black Power: A movement stressing racial pride, self-determination, and, for some, separatism. Great Society: Johnson's set of programmes on poverty, education, and health care. War on Poverty: Federal programmes of the 1960s aimed at reducing economic hardship. Vietnam War: The long war in which the United States tried to stop a communist victory in Vietnam. antiwar movement: Public opposition to US fighting in Vietnam. credibility gap: The distance between official claims about the war and what people believed. women's movement: The renewed campaign, from the 1960s, for equality in work, law, and family. Equal Rights Amendment: A proposed constitutional rule against denying rights on account of sex. The 1982 deadline closed without enough state approvals, and later approvals were not certified. Environmental: Concerned with pollution, conservation, and the health of natural systems. Conservatism: A politics of tradition, limited federal programmes, and strong defence.