

Period 9: 1980-Present

AP United States History

Reagan and the Conservative Turn

Period 9 runs from **1980** to the present. It examines continuing debates over government, economic and demographic change, and the United States' role in the world.

The **conservative movement** that organised in the 1960s and 1970s came to power with **Ronald Reagan**. Its programme had three strands:

- **Tax cuts and deregulation**, on the argument that reducing the burden on business would raise growth - often called **supply-side economics**
- Efforts to reduce domestic government programmes met resistance; **defence spending** increased as part of the military buildup.
- Appeals to **social conservatism**, on religion, family, and law and order.

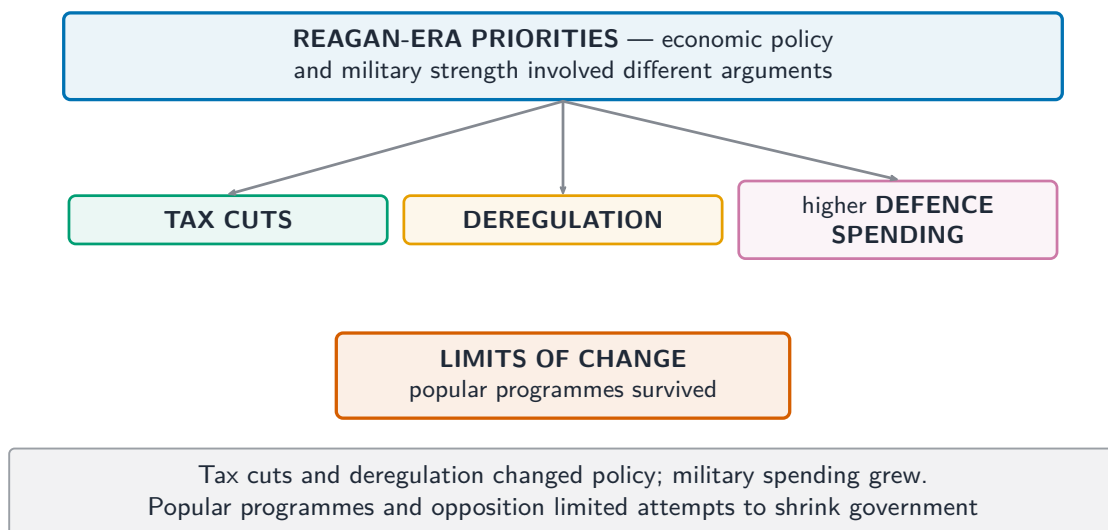
Tax cuts and deregulation changed policy, while opposition and the popularity of many programmes limited attempts to shrink government. Debates over free trade, the social safety net and financial regulation continued.

Try it – identify the goal. Teacher-written cases grounded in CED Topics 9.2 and 9.3: tax cuts and deregulation aimed to encourage private economic activity; the military buildup opposed communism; social conservatives promoted traditional values. Match these to economic, foreign-policy and social goals. Does the military case fit “less government in every field”?

Worked comparison. The coalition combined different goals. Supply-side reasoning stressed incentives for work, saving and investment; military policy used federal resources; social conservatism involved values beyond the economic argument. Reduced regulation did not mean federal power disappeared.

Source practice – Reagan’s September 1981 economic-recovery address, paraphrased. Reagan expected tax cuts to stimulate growth and jobs, spending restraint to reduce deficits, and less regulation to ease business burdens. Identify a policy and its intended effect. What further evidence would establish whether the aim was achieved?

Worked reading. A speech establishes the administration’s argument, not independent proof of success. Compare implementation, economic performance and budgets. The CED records tax cuts and deregulation alongside resistance to shrinking popular programmes. Do not treat expected growth as a universal rule that tax cuts pay for themselves.



The End of the Cold War

Renewed military build-up, negotiation, and above all internal weakness in the Soviet Union brought the **Cold War** to an end. The Soviet system collapsed between 1989 and 1991.

The consequences framed the decades that followed: the United States became the sole superpower, with unresolved questions about **when and where to intervene**, and about what commitments made sense once containment no longer organised policy.

A Changing Economy

Three developments help describe the economy after 1980:

- **Globalization** - cross-border trade, production and economic connections.
- **Deindustrialization** - declining manufacturing employment, alongside growth in service work.
- **Technological change** - computing and then the internet, which transformed productivity, work, and communication.

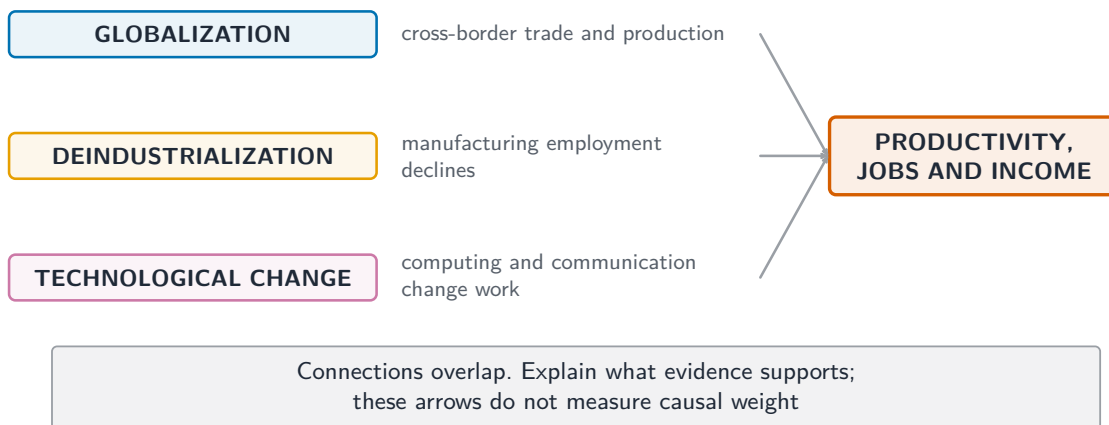
Digital communication increased productivity and worldwide economic opportunities. These gains coexisted with stagnant working- and middle-class real wages and growing **income inequality**.

Try it – identify developments and overlap. Teacher-written cases grounded in CED Topic 9.4: A, digital communication helps a business reach customers abroad; B, manufacturing employment falls while service employment rises; C, computing and the internet change work and access to information. Match the cases to globalization, deindustrialization and technological change. Can one case involve more than one development?

Worked classification. A involves global connections and technology. B describes a sectoral employment shift; it does not establish that every job moved abroad or that manufacturing vanished. C concerns technology's wider effects. Identify the pattern before explaining its cause.

Try it – assess distribution. The CED describes increased productivity alongside stagnant working- and middle-class real wages and rising inequality. Does higher productivity prove all workers gained equally?

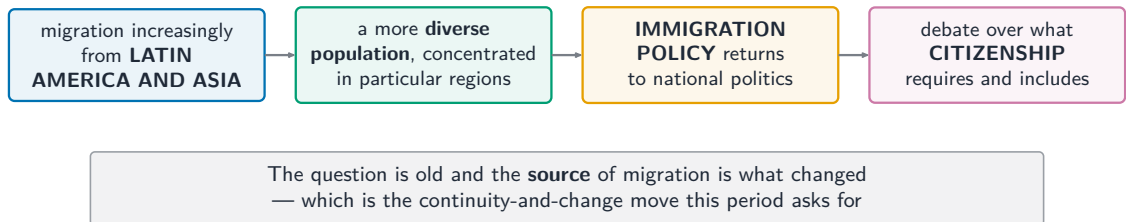
Worked judgment. Productive capacity and income distribution are different. Growth can coexist with unequal gains. Employment shifts and declining union membership describe the setting, but listing trends does not measure their causal weights. An explanation needs evidence about the group, dates and mechanism.



Migration and a Changing Population

Migration and immigration in the 1990s and 2000s continued to reshape the population, with growth in arrivals from **Latin America and Asia** following the 1965 reform of immigration law.

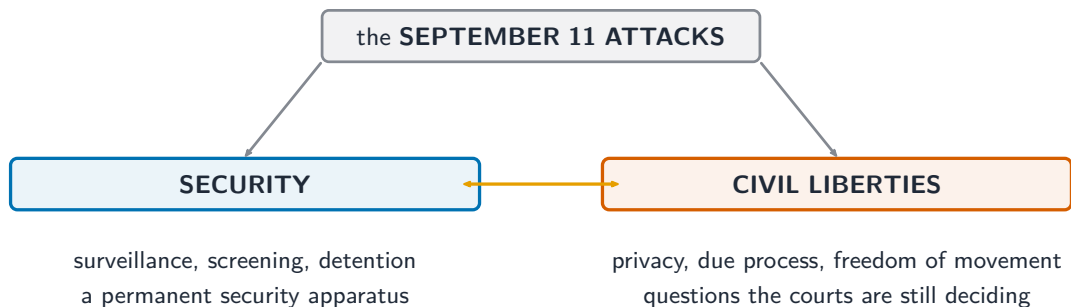
The consequences are the examinable part: population growth in the South and West, the growth of multi-ethnic cities, ongoing debate over **immigration policy** and border enforcement, and continuing arguments about **citizenship** and national identity - the same argument the course has traced since Reconstruction.



Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The period's later topics group around a small number of developments:

- The **September 11 attacks** and the response - military intervention abroad, a new security apparatus, and renewed debate over the balance between **security and civil liberties**.
- Economic crisis in 2008 and the argument over government's role in stabilising the economy.
- **Political polarisation**, amplified by changes in media and communication.
- Debate over **climate and energy** policy.



The arrow is the argument: each gain on one side is claimed **at the cost** of the other, and the exam wants that trade named, not a preference

Causation in Period 9

Practise **causation** by explaining mechanisms with relevant evidence. Possible connections across periods include deindustrialisation to the market revolution's regional specialisation, immigration debates to the nativism of the 1850s and 1920s, and arguments over federal power to the New Deal.

Exam transfer – 2025 AP US History, Set 2, long essay Q4, paraphrased. Evaluate how United States society responded to economic changes from 1960 to 2000. Explain a response rather than only naming a change. Connect computers to changing employment, then develop another relevant example such as migration toward the Sun Belt or a policy debate. This unit supplies evidence for part of the question's dates.

Teacher-written model passage. As computing became more important to the late-twentieth-century economy, Americans increasingly worked in service and information-related jobs. Computer-based work supported white-collar opportunities, while access to these opportunities was uneven, especially for workers without college education.

Why it fits. The official scheme accepts computers and the service economy as evidence when used to explain jobs and class opportunities. This is one developed passage, not a complete long essay or official sample. A full response needs an argument and further developed examples; a limiting phrase alone does not guarantee complex understanding or credit.

Exam tips

- Distinguish the **supply-side economics** argument from outcomes. Explain policy changes and the limits of attempts to shrink government.
- The Cold War's end matters for what it **opened**: sole-superpower status and unresolved questions about intervention.
- Keep **globalization**, **deindustrialization**, and **technological change** as distinct, sometimes overlapping developments. Explain mechanisms rather than only listing labels.
- For immigration after 1965, name the **shift in origins** and the political argument it produced.
- After 2001, the examinable tension is **security against civil liberties** - the same tension as the Red Scare and the First World War.
- Long-span prompts reward **connecting periods**. Link a recent development to an earlier one and say what continued.

Vocabulary card meanings

conservative movement: The organised rise of that politics from the 1960s into the Reagan years. Ronald Reagan: The president who cut taxes, raised defence spending, and spoke for the New Right. Tax cuts and deregulation: Lower tax rates and fewer rules on business. supply-side economics: The argument that cutting taxes on

producers can raise output, which is separate from a claim that revenue must then rise. defence spending: Money the government spends on the armed forces. social conservatism: Politics that defends traditional family and religious norms. Globalization: Tighter links among national economies through trade, capital, and production. Deindustrialization: The loss of factory jobs as production moved or became more automated. Technological change: New tools, especially computers, that altered work and daily life. Migration and immigration: Movement inside the country and arrival from abroad. Latin America and Asia: The regions that supplied most new immigrants in recent decades. immigration policy: The laws that decide who may enter and stay. September 11 attacks: The 2001 attacks that killed thousands and reshaped US security policy. security and civil liberties: The tension between protecting the public and protecting individual rights. Political polarisation: Parties and voters moving toward opposite extremes. climate and energy: Debates over warming, fossil fuels, and how power is produced.