Conservatism and Liberalism

Midge Decter’s article blaming liberalism for the riots in New York during the 1977 blackout exemplifies a debate in American politics that continues to the present day. On one side of the debate are people who call themselves liberals; on the other side are those who identify themselves as conservatives. Liberal ideas generally dominated American
The presidency of Ronald Reagan brought a new conservative attitude to government.

Key Terms and Names
supply-side economics, Reaganomics, budget deficit, Sandra Day O’Connor, William Rehnquist, Geraldine Ferraro, contra, Iran-Contra scandal, Oliver North, Mikhail Gorbachev

Main Idea
The presidency of Ronald Reagan brought a new conservative attitude to government.

Reading Strategy
Organizing As you read about the Reagan presidency, complete the graphic organizer below by filling in the major points of the supply-side theory of economics.

Reading Objectives
• Explain President Reagan’s economic recovery plan.
• Discuss Reagan’s policies toward the Soviet Union.

Section Theme
Global Connections President Reagan believed the United States should take strong action to resist Communist influence overseas.

An American Story
In 1926 when he was 15 years old, Ronald Reagan earned $15 a week as a lifeguard at Lowell Park on the Rock River in Illinois. Being a lifeguard, Reagan later wrote, taught him quite a bit about human nature:

“...Lifeguarding provides one of the best vantage points in the world to learn about people. During my career at the park, I saved seventy-seven people. I guarantee you they needed saving—no lifeguard gets wet without good reason. ... Not many thanked me, much less gave me a reward, and being a little money-hungry, I'd done a little daydreaming about this. They felt insulted. I got to recognize that people hate to be saved. ...”

—quoted in Where’s the Rest of Me?

The Road to the White House
Ronald Reagan grew up in Dixon, Illinois, the son of an Irish American shoe salesman. After graduating from Eureka College in 1932, Reagan worked as a sports broadcaster at an Iowa radio station. In 1937 he took a Hollywood screen test and won a contract from a movie studio. Over the next 25 years, he made over 50 movies. As a broadcaster and actor, Reagan learned how to speak publicly and how to project an image, skills that proved invaluable when he entered politics.
In the 1980s many young, ambitious professionals entered the heady world of finance. Julie Katzman, in her twenties, was on the fast track:

"I constantly spent my time at the firm. I mean, all the time. I worked probably eighty hours a week. At the end of the summer, that Labor Day weekend, I got involved in another huge acquisition. That weekend I worked two and a half days without sleeping, and from that point until early December I didn’t work a single week less than a hundred hours. You spend all your time working. You’re kind of wiped out, but there’s a lot of fulfillment. There’s an incredible adrenaline rush. This is what you live on. You live on the highs."

—from Sleepwalking Through History

**A Decade of Indulgence**

Cultural commentators and the media in the 1980s portrayed American society as one of wealth and success. Stories emphasized the limousines, yachts, corporate jets, and designer gowns of the wealthy. Status symbols such as expensive watches and luxury cars became important. Popular television shows such as Dallas and Dynasty glamorized the lives of the very wealthy.

By late 1983, the economy had revived after the 1981 recession. News stories described young stockbrokers, speculators, and real estate developers making multimillion-dollar deals. Hundreds of companies were bought and sold. Real estate and stock values soared. Developer Donald Trump said: “I don’t do it for the money. I’ve got enough, much more than I’ll ever need. I do it to do it. Deals are my art form. Other peo-

**Main Idea**
The 1980s was a decade characterized by wealth, but it was also a time of renewed activism.

**Key Terms and Names**
yuppie, AIDS, Sierra Club, American Association of Retired Persons, space shuttle, space station

**Reading Strategy**
Organizing As you read about life in the 1980s, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the kinds of social issues that the United States faced in this decade.

**Reading Objectives**
• Discuss the importance of money to the culture of the 1980s.
• Explain the growth in social activism during the decade.

**Section Theme**
Science and Technology Achievements in space and technology during the 1980s symbolized the optimism many associated with the Reagan era.

**An American Story**

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"I constantly spent my time at the firm. I mean, all the time. I worked probably eighty hours a week. At the end of the summer, that Labor Day weekend, I got involved in another huge acquisition. That weekend I worked two and a half days without sleeping, and from that point until early December I didn’t work a single week less than a hundred hours. You spend all your time working. You’re kind of wiped out, but there’s a lot of fulfillment. There’s an incredible adrenaline rush. This is what you live on. You live on the highs."

—from Sleepwalking Through History
Main Idea
President George Bush’s foreign policy commanded broad support, but his domestic agenda did not.

Key Terms and Names
perestroika, glasnost, Boris Yeltsin, Tiananmen Square, Saddam Hussein, downsizing, capital gains tax, H. Ross Perot, grassroots movement

Reading Strategy
Categorizing  As you read about the administration of President Bush, complete a chart similar to the one below by describing U.S. foreign policy in each of the places listed on the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Foreign Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
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<td>Middle East</td>
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Reading Objectives
• Identify the events that brought an end to the Cold War.
• Explain the domestic challenges facing the Bush administration.

Section Theme
Economic Factors  The deficit and an economic slowdown hurt George Bush’s attempt to win re-election in 1992.

An American Story
On October 31, 1990, General Colin Powell, who was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and other high-ranking officials met with President George Bush. In August the country of Iraq had invaded neighboring Kuwait. American troops had been rushed to the Middle East in response. Now the president had to decide whether to go to war.

General Brent Scrowcroft, a close adviser to Bush, began the meeting: “Mr. President, we are at a Y in the road. Down one branch we can continue sanctions. . . . Down the other branch we . . . go on the attack.” Powell then presented the plan for attacking Iraq. Several advisers gasped at the numbers, which called for over 500,000 American troops. “Mr. President,” Powell began, “I wish . . . that I could assure you that air power alone could do it but you can’t take that chance. We’ve gotta take the initiative out of the enemy’s hands if we’re going to go to war.” Cheney later recalled that Bush “never hesitated.” He looked up from the plans and said simply, “Do it.”

—adapted from Triumph Without Victory and PBS Frontline Gulf War Interviews

George Bush Takes Office
The war in the Persian Gulf was only one of many international crises that confronted President George Bush after his election in 1988. Fortunately, Bush’s strength was in foreign policy. In the 1970s, he had served as ambassador to the UN and as the nation’s first