

Unit 8: 1945-1980

Unit 8 covers 1945 to 1980, from Cold War containment through the affluent society, the civil rights movements, and the conservative turn (CED Topics 8.2-8.14).

AP U.S. History

1945-1980

10-17% of the exam

About 28 minutes to read

How to use this guide

Read this guide straight through the first time. The unit starts with the American power described at the end of Unit 7. That power was then organized into a Cold War abroad and an affluent society at home that still left many people anxious. Over time, people who were left out of that affluence demanded a fuller share, and those conflicts weakened the liberal order that had built the postwar system. As you read, notice what each topic says about how American power should be used. The Cold War topics deal with military dominance. The economy and culture topics deal with who shared in the prosperity. The movement topics deal with who counted as a full citizen. The final topic deals with what happened when the earlier answers stopped working for many Americans.

On the second pass, pay attention to what the framework does not name. NATO, the Voting Rights Act, and the 1965 immigration law all existed, but the framework never names them, and famous Cold War episodes appear only as examples. This guide gives those stories as background context, but your exam answers should still use the terms the framework uses. Work through the trap boxes and the Where Students Lose Points table first, then do the practice questions and read every explanation even when you answered correctly. Finish by answering the six self-check questions out loud with the guide closed, then use the 20-minute plan to move the material into your Rycal decks and Brain Dump.

What this unit is worth. Unit 8 carries 10-17% of the exam, which puts it in the top weight band with Units 3 through 7, and at 188 cards it is the largest unit in the course. The Cold War, the rights revolutions, and the conservative turn all matter for Unit 9 as well, so you will see this material again in later questions.

8.2 The Cold War from 1945 to 1980

The wartime alliance did not survive the peace. After 1945 the United States faced the **Soviet Union**, an authoritarian communist state, and set out to limit the growth of Soviet military power and ideological influence. The main strategy was **containment**, the policy of limiting the spread of communism, and it shaped American policy for the next forty years. George Kennan's 1946 **Long Telegram**, a dispatch from the American diplomat in Moscow analyzing the reasons for Soviet actions that threatened Western interests, gave the policy its intellectual basis. Containment worked through several instruments at once. It included collective security arrangements, international aid, and economic institutions that

strengthened non-Communist nations, and it also included major military engagements when Washington judged them necessary.

The first test was the **Greek Civil War**, in which President Truman pledged aid to the Greek government in its fight against a communist-led coalition, the occasion for the Truman Doctrine.

Korea showed that containment could lead to war. The **Korean War** was a major American military engagement undertaken to contain communism, and it was the Cold War's direct military confrontation. Confrontation was only part of the story, though. The Cold War also went through periods of **détente**, when the superpowers moved toward mutual coexistence and rivalry cooled into negotiation. The architect of that shift was **Henry Kissinger**, who served as Nixon's National Security Advisor and then Secretary of State and pursued détente from 1969 to 1976. You need to keep both phases in mind, because the same rivalry produced shooting wars and arms-control summits at different times.

John F. Kennedy also challenged the Eastern Bloc directly, in a 1963 speech in Berlin expressing solidarity with West Berlin against communist pressure.

CONTAINMENT INSTRUMENT	EXAMPLE
International aid	The Truman Doctrine: 1947 aid to Greece against a communist-led coalition; the Marshall Plan: Marshall's 1947 invitation to Europe to plan its own recovery
Military engagement	The Korean War, the Cold War's direct military confrontation
Confrontation short of war	The Berlin Airlift; the Cuban Missile Crisis, when Kennedy announced Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962
Negotiation within rivalry	Détente; SALT I in 1972; the Kitchen Debate and later Kissinger-era diplomacy

There are two things worth knowing about how this section was built. First, the famous names in that table, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the Cuban Missile Crisis, appear only as examples in the 2026 framework, not in its key-concept text. They are supporting terms, so study them as illustrations of containment and confrontation rather than as required vocabulary. Second, the framework never names **NATO** anywhere in Unit 8, even though the alliance existed in real life. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, founded in 1949, bound the United States, Canada, and Western Europe in a mutual-defense pact in which an attack on one member was treated as an attack on all. The framework's account of collective security runs through aid, economic institutions, and engagements like Korea, so answer exam questions from those ideas and keep NATO as background knowledge.

Trap: confusing containment with détente. Containment was the overall strategy of limiting the spread of communism, and it ran through the whole Cold War. Détente was a phase within that strategy, a period when the superpowers coexisted more and negotiated more. SALT I did not replace containment. It was an agreement made while containment was still the broader policy.

8.3 The Red Scare

Both parties agreed on containing communism abroad. At home, Americans argued bitterly over how to find communists inside the United States. That postwar debate over the policies and methods for exposing suspected communists was the **Red Scare**. It started at the top of the government. President Truman's **Executive Order 9835** in 1947 created a loyalty program for federal employees, driven by fear of communist influence in Washington.

The investigations spread quickly. The House Committee on Un-American Activities held hearings, and the **Hollywood Ten** went to prison for refusing to cooperate with it. **McCarthyism** takes its name from Senator Joseph McCarthy, who used accusations of infiltration to build his political career. The scare also reached beyond party politics. The **Lavender Scare** was the Cold War-era persecution of gays and lesbians in federal employment, who were driven out as supposed security risks. The investigations also reached Black artists and activists: **Paul Robeson** became the subject of a HUAC investigation after his political activism led to suspicion of communist associations, and he testified before the committee in 1956. In practice, loyalty came to mean conformity as well as opposition to communism.

There was pushback as well. Senator **Margaret Chase Smith**, a Republican, delivered her Declaration of Conscience before Congress and warned against the anti-communist fervor McCarthy had inspired. The framework includes her because the Red Scare was a debate rather than a consensus, and some of its sharpest critics were Republicans like Smith.

Trap: treating the Red Scare as only a hunt for communists. The Lavender Scare shows that the investigations reached anyone labeled a risk, and the Hollywood Ten show that they reached into culture as well as government. A question about the scope of the scare may be answered with conformity and persecution beyond party membership.

8.4 Economy after 1945

The postwar boom had four main sources working together. They were the **baby boom's** surge in births, a growing private sector, heavy federal spending, and technological development. The **GI Bill** put federal money behind benefits for World War II veterans, and that was one part of the public spending that supported private prosperity. The affluent society was built with government money as well as corporate energy, so keep that public role in mind when you study the boom.

Prosperity moved people, and that movement reshaped politics. The **Sun Belt** in the South and West emerged as a major political and economic force as middle-class Americans migrated there for jobs, space, and climates that air conditioning made more livable. The suburbs were the most visible landscape of the boom. **Levittown** modeled the corporate suburb, the Federal Housing Administration backed the mortgages, and the **Interstate Highway System** made it easier to leave the cities. The boom was segregated in practice, though. **Redlining**, the discriminatory mapping of neighborhoods that marked Black areas as risky, decided who could buy in which neighborhoods, so the suburban promise went overwhelmingly to white families.

Daily life changed in smaller ways as well. **Television** reshaped culture and advertising by bringing the same images into living rooms across the country. **Air conditioning** spread through homes and

workplaces, and the framework ties it to both consumption and migration because it made the Sun Belt boom physically bearable. **Credit cards**, with Diners' Club as the framework's example, changed how people paid for what they bought. Affluence meant more income for many families, and it also meant cooled homes, televised entertainment, and more buying on credit.

WHAT SPREAD PROSPERITY	WHO WAS LEFT OUT, AND HOW
Federal spending: the GI Bill, highways, FHA-backed mortgages	Redlining steered Black families away from the suburban wealth-building
The baby boom and private-sector growth	Prosperity's geography favored the Sun Belt and the suburbs over cities
New technologies: television, air conditioning, credit	The consumer economy's benefits tracked the same segregated map as its housing

Trap: describing the boom as purely private enterprise. Federal spending helped build the suburbs through veterans' benefits, highway concrete, and mortgage backing. A question that contrasts public and private causes of postwar growth is testing whether you see the government's role in the affluence.

8.5 Culture after 1945

Prosperity produced a strikingly uniform culture. **Mass culture**, with television shows like **I Love Lucy** and **Leave It to Beaver** as the framework's examples, gave Americans the same jokes, the same living rooms, and the same ideals across the country. Along with it came a social norm the framework names directly as **conformity**. People felt pressure to fit a familiar pattern that included the suburban house, the steady job, and a life that avoided controversy.

The framework also shows that mass culture was maintained and challenged at the same time. The challengers came from several directions. The **Beat movement's** writers rejected materialism and respectable routine. **Rock and roll**, driven by young performers like Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley, shifted social mores and showed how much power young people now held over the culture. John Kenneth Galbraith's **The Affluent Society** questioned what all the wealth was actually for. And the **Mattachine Society**, founded in 1950, built an early organization for fighting the prejudice gay Americans faced. Conformity was a strong pressure in the 1950s, but it was challenged from the start.

Trap: treating conformity as a fact about everyone in the 1950s. The framework presents conformity as a pressure that people lived under, and it presents the challenges to that pressure as important content. The Beats, rock and roll, and the Mattachine Society are evidence that the homogeneous culture was opposed at the time, and the exam tests that opposition.

8.6 Early Steps in the Civil Rights Movement (1940s and 1950s)

The federal government acted before a mass movement was in the streets. President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights issued **To Secure These Rights** in 1947, which laid the groundwork for federal

action, and the **desegregation of the armed services** meant the government stopped segregating the soldiers it sent to war. Then came **Brown v. Board of Education** in 1954. With Thurgood Marshall's arguments at the center of the legal fight, the Court made school segregation unconstitutional.

Jackie Robinson, who broke the color line with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, became a civil rights activist who called on President Eisenhower to act decisively for civil rights.

Court decisions still had to be enforced, and organizers worked to make that happen. The **Montgomery Bus Boycott**, sparked by Rosa Parks's arrest, with Claudette Colvin's earlier resistance and the era's racial violence, including Emmett Till's murder, in the background, was organized through the NAACP and newer groups like CORE. The 1957 **Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom**, a demonstration in Washington, D.C., was where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his 'Give Us the Ballot' speech, calling on the federal government to enforce the Brown v. Board of Education decision. **Browder v. Gayle** in 1956 ended bus segregation in law. President Eisenhower proposed the **Civil Rights Act of 1957**, the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, creating a federal Civil Rights Commission to investigate discrimination. The **Little Rock Nine** then tried to attend a previously white school in Arkansas, and the confrontation forced Washington to back up its own ruling.

The early movement included more than Black and white Americans. **Mendez v. Westminster** in 1946 found the segregation of Mexican-ancestry students in some California schools unconstitutional; Marshall filed a brief in the case and reused its arguments eight years later in Brown. **Hernandez v. Texas** belongs to the same Latino civil-rights context. The legal strategy crossed racial lines, and some of the arguments that won Brown had first been used in a California case about Mexican American schoolchildren.

Trap: saying Brown desegregated the schools. Brown declared segregation unconstitutional; the boycotts, the 1957 Act, and confrontations like Little Rock were the long fight to make the declaration real. A question about the limits of legal victories is usually pointing to that gap between a ruling and the work needed to enforce it.

8.7 America as a World Power

Dwight Eisenhower raised a warning about military spending as he left office. In his 1961 Farewell Address he warned of the **military-industrial complex**, the intertwined network of military and industrial interests, and urged the country to keep a balance between military spending and civilian needs. The warning mattered because the arsenal kept growing. **Mutually Assured Destruction**, laid out by Robert McNamara in 1967, described a situation in which each side could inflict unacceptable damage on any attacker. Deterrence rested on that shared capacity for destruction.

The United States also intervened abroad in many places. The **Bay of Pigs invasion** in 1961 sent 1,400 Cuban exiles to overthrow Fidel Castro and failed. The **Cuban Missile Crisis** in 1962 brought an indirect confrontation with the Soviets close to war. Beyond those crises, Washington intervened across the globe through the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, during the Suez Crisis of 1956, in covert and overt moves against leaders like Jacobo Árbenz, Mohammad Mosaddegh, and Salvador Allende, and

through involvement in the Angolan Civil War. These interventions added up over time, whether or not the public followed each one closely.

Détente led to negotiated limits on weapons. **SALT I**, the 1972 treaty Nixon signed with Soviet leader Brezhnev after negotiations begun in 1969, slowed the nuclear arms race. Nixon also opened détente with China while he negotiated arms limits with the Soviet Union. Under Carter, the **Camp David Accords** of 1978 brought Egypt and Israel to an agreement at the presidential retreat. Across this topic, you see buildup and warning at some moments and intervention and negotiation at others, with the military-industrial complex supporting the arsenal while diplomats tried to limit it.

Trap: treating the military-industrial complex as a foreign-policy doctrine. It is a warning about domestic political economy. Eisenhower feared the permanent arms establishment would gain too much influence over budgets and politics at home. He was not saying it would fail to deter enemies abroad.

8.8 The Vietnam War

Vietnam was containment applied to Asia, but the situation there was different from Europe. The United States intervened out of concern over expansionist Communist ideology and Soviet repression, but the war also became tangled with the era's **decolonization and nationalist movements**. Vietnamese nationalism did not divide neatly into communist and free, and many Vietnamese understood the conflict as an anti-colonial struggle as well as a Cold War conflict. President Eisenhower's **Domino Theory**, laid out in 1954 around the strategic importance of Indochina, gave officials a reason to intervene. It held that if one country fell to communism, nearby countries would follow.

President **Richard Nixon** later changed the American approach with Vietnamization, shifting the fighting burden to South Vietnamese forces while withdrawing American troops.

The war weakened the Cold War consensus at home. The **Pentagon Papers**, a secret Defense Department study of why America had intervened, leaked to the New York Times and exposed the gap between what leaders said publicly and what they knew privately. Congress answered with the **War Powers Act** of 1973, an attempt to reclaim the constitutional power to declare war by limiting the president's war-making ability. The framework sets Vietnam alongside an earlier episode. In the 1950s, the Chinese Revolution and the supposed loss of China had fed McCarthy's charges. Vietnam taught many Americans a different lesson, that intervention itself could turn into a disaster, and the country spent the 1970s debating which lesson to draw.

Trap: treating Vietnam as just a bigger Korea. Korea was a conventional containment war fought with broad domestic support. Vietnam fused containment with decolonization, shattered the domestic consensus, and produced institutional consequences, the Pentagon Papers and the War Powers Act, that Korea never did. Exam questions focus more on those consequences than on the battles themselves.

8.9 The Great Society

Liberalism reached its highest point in the mid-1960s. The framework defines it as anti-communism abroad paired with a firm belief that government power could achieve social goals at home. Lyndon Johnson's **Great Society** put that belief into law through federal legislation meant to end racial discrimination, eliminate poverty, and address the country's other social problems. Ending racial discrimination comes first in the framework's description, so the Great Society was not only an economic program.

The **War on Poverty** was a central part of that program. Head Start, the Job Corps, and the Food Stamp Act of 1964 addressed childhood, employment, and hunger. Michael Harrington's **The Other America** had exposed poverty inside a wealthy country and helped make the war on poverty politically possible. The **Poor People's Campaign** later carried the demand forward after the momentum faded.

The Great Society also created **Medicare**, signed in 1965, which provided federal health care for the elderly, and **Medicaid** for the poor.

The same liberal Congress also changed immigration law. The **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965**, the Hart-Celler Act, abolished the national-origins quota system that had favored northern and western Europe since the 1920s and replaced it with preferences for family reunification and skilled workers. The framework describes the change without using the act's name, so on the exam describe the pattern rather than the statute's title. That pattern is the end of the quota system. Related measures handled specific groups of migrants, including the **Cuban Adjustment Act** of 1966, **Operation Pedro Pan**, and the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act. Immigration reform was the third major part of the Great Society era, alongside civil rights and the War on Poverty, and it reshaped the country's demographics for the rest of the century.

Trap: shrinking the Great Society to the War on Poverty. The framework's first stated aim is ending racial discrimination, and the immigration rewrite belongs in the picture too. A question about the Great Society's scope can be answered with civil rights or immigration just as easily as with Medicare.

8.10 The African American Civil Rights Movement (1960s)

The 1960s movement used three tactics together. They were legal challenge, direct action, and nonviolent protest, and **Martin Luther King Jr.** is the framework's central figure in combining them. The **lunch counter sit-ins** put students at segregated counters across the South. **Freedom Summer** in 1964 carried the fight into Mississippi voter registration and deliberately drew national attention to local violence.

The movement often made injustice visible in public and then demanded that Washington act. The **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom** on August 28, 1963, joined economic demands and rights demands together, with John Lewis among those laying out the movement's strategy. The **Civil Rights Act of 1964** was the legislative breakthrough, and the framework cites it for the federal push toward racial equality. The **Selma to Montgomery March** of 1965 pressed the voting-rights claim. Violence against marchers on the first day, March 7, brought national attention, and the demand for federal action followed the same pattern.

The movement did not speak with one voice. The SCLC and SNCC organized differently and sometimes clashed; Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, and John Lewis built much of the infrastructure that made the marches possible. **Malcolm X**, Stokely Carmichael's **Black Power**, and the **Black Panther Party** challenged the idea that nonviolence and integration were the only path. White allies like James Reeb and Anne Braden, and courtroom victories in cases including *Loving v. Virginia* and *Gideon v. Wainwright*, with lawyers like **Constance Baker Motley** whose legal career contributed to the movement's courtroom victories, show that the struggle also ran through churches and courtrooms, not only through the streets.

The movement also contained different political approaches. **Angela Davis**, in a 1972 speech delivered on her release from prison, called for a class-based revolution to achieve freedom, a different approach from many others in the civil rights movement.

The courts kept ruling on the specifics of segregation. **Bailey v. Patterson** in 1962 made racial segregation of interstate and intrastate transportation illegal. **Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer Co.** in 1968 ruled that Congress had the authority to regulate the sale of private property to prevent discrimination. And **Pitts v. Cherry**, a 1968 DeKalb County, Georgia school desegregation suit, was later renamed *Pitts v. Freeman* and reached the Supreme Court as *Freeman v. Pitts* in 1992 on the question of ending court supervision.

Trap: treating nonviolence as the whole movement. The framework centers King's nonviolent protest but also names Malcolm X and Black Power as real alternatives. A question contrasting wings of the movement, integration versus Black Power, nonviolence versus self-defense, is testing that you know the movement contained its own debates.

8.11 The Civil Rights Movement Expands

From 1960 to 1980, the tactics and moral claims of the Black freedom struggle spread to other groups. Five movements took up the demand for social and economic equality and for redress of past injustices, each with its own organizations, leaders, and flashpoints. They followed a shared pattern of expansion, but they were five distinct struggles and should not be merged into one.

The Latino movement

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta built the **United Farm Workers**, and the **Delano Grape Strike** and the national grape boycott turned farm labor into a civil-rights cause. The **Brown Berets** and the broader **Chicano Movement** pressed the claim in the cities and schools. The demand joined economic dignity and cultural recognition together. Chavez, Huerta, and their allies wanted fair treatment in the fields and more honest treatment in the history books.

The American Indian movement

American Indian activists demanded the same equality and redress, aimed at a longer history of broken promises. The **Occupation of Alcatraz** seized a symbolic island to dramatize the claim; the **Trail of Broken Treaties** in 1972 carried it to Washington; the **Occupation of Wounded Knee** in 1973, with figures like Dennis Banks in the leadership, took place at a site connected to nineteenth-century

violence against American Indians. Activists like **Clyde Warrior**, who in 1967 testimony described the impact of government policies on Indigenous peoples and advocated self-determination and Indigenous-led community development, gave the movement a political voice.

The Asian American movement

Asian American activism named itself as a movement in these years. Scholars and organizers like **Yuji Ichioka** and Emma Gee, labor figures like **Larry Itliong**, and bridge-builders like **Yuri Kochiyama**, who connected Black and Asian American struggles, gave it leadership. The **San Francisco State Strike** of 1968 demanded ethnic studies and a curriculum that included Asian Americans. Dalip Singh Saund's career belongs to the longer background of Asian American political presence.

The feminist movement

Feminists mobilized for legal, economic, and social equality, and the framework ties the movement to the counterculture's rejection of the values of the parents' generation. Young women who rejected older values also demanded new sexual norms. Betty Friedan's **The Feminine Mystique** named the discontent; the **National Organization for Women** organized it; Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Audre Lorde, and Dorothy Pittman Hughes carried it into media, Congress, and Black feminist thought. The movement worked against cultural expectations and for legal protections at the same time.

The LGBTQ+ movement

The **Stonewall Uprising** of 1969 is the framework's foundational event for gay liberation, commemorated in the Christopher Street marches that followed. The **Gay Liberation Front** organized the new militancy; Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera stood at the street-level origins; Frank Kameny brought the organized Washington strategy; Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon connected lesbian organizing to the broader movement. From Stonewall forward, activists made the claim in public and demanded legal, economic, and social equality in the open.

Trap: merging the five movements into one story. They shared tactics, timing, and the language of rights, but each demanded redress for its own community's distinct injustices. The exam tests the expansion pattern, which is the spread of rights claims across groups, and a question can be answered with what made each movement specific rather than what made them similar.

8.12 Youth Culture of the 1960s

The **counterculture** was made up of young people rejecting their parents' generation in several areas. They rejected its social, economic, and political values, its formality, and its sexual norms. The rejection showed up in culture, through longer hair and new music, and in politics, through a refusal of the Cold War liberalism their parents had built. Greater informality spread through American life, and the generation gap became a political fact.

The political edge of that rejection was the **New Left**. These groups rejected liberal policies from the left and argued that leaders did too little to change the racial and economic status quo at home and pursued immoral policies abroad. **Students for a Democratic Society** gave the New Left its

organization, and the **Port Huron Statement** of 1962, drafted by some sixty students led by Tom Hayden, set out its call for participatory democracy in place of a managed society.

Vietnam turned the counterculture into a mass movement. **Anti-war protests** grew larger and more passionate as the war escalated, and they sometimes turned violent. The **March on the Pentagon** in 1967 brought the protest to the war's headquarters. The breaking point came at **Kent State** on May 4, 1970, when the Ohio National Guard, sent to quell unrest after Nixon announced American troops had entered Cambodia, fired on student protesters. The resistance reached popular culture too, where figures like **Muhammad Ali** became symbols of dissent.

Trap: aiming the New Left's anger at conservatives. The New Left's main criticism was aimed at liberal leaders. It charged that they did too little on race and poverty at home and acted immorally abroad. That is why the Port Huron generation broke with the Great Society coalition instead of joining it, and why the 1960s left split as well as grew.

8.13 The Environment and Natural Resources from 1968 to 1980

The **environmental movement** grew out of problems Americans could see and accidents they could not ignore. Its aim was to use legislation and public pressure to fight pollution and protect natural resources. The movement pushed the federal government to create new environmental programs and regulations. Rachel Carson's **Silent Spring** in 1962, on the dangers of chemical pesticides, helped start the discussion by making a threat that was hard to see into a public issue.

The disasters gave people concrete examples. The Cuyahoga River caught fire. **Love Canal** exposed a community to toxic chemical waste while residents described government inaction and silence about the contamination. **Three Mile Island**, the March 28, 1979 nuclear accident, put the fear of technology on the evening news. The framework's examples also include the legislative results, which were the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. None of those laws appears in the key-concept text itself. They are examples-page items, so learn them as illustrations of what the movement achieved, which is how the exam will use them.

Energy was closely connected to pollution as an issue. The **oil crises** of the 1970s, rooted in Middle East supply shocks, produced long lines and shortages at gas stations, which became some of the most familiar images of stagflation in the decade. The federal government answered by trying to build a **national energy policy**, creating the Federal Energy Administration and then the Department of Energy. The country had built much of its prosperity on cheap fuel, and the shortages showed the cost of depending on outside suppliers. Energy policy became the place where environmental concerns and economic anxiety met.

THE PROBLEM	THE RESPONSE
Invisible chemical threats	Silent Spring makes pesticides a public issue; regulation follows
Visible disasters: burning rivers, toxic neighborhoods, a nuclear accident	New programs and regulations; the EPA and pollution laws as the movement's bureaucratic wins
Middle East oil shocks and gas lines	Attempts at a national energy policy; new federal energy agencies

Trap: treating the movement as only cultural, all Earth Day sentiment and no law. The framework's point is institutional. Problems and accidents led to programs and regulations, and the exam tests those outcomes rather than the sentiment alone.

8.14 Society in Transition

While liberal and left-wing movements were active in the 1960s, conservatives were organizing at the same time, earlier than many students expect. The **conservative movement** of the 1960s challenged liberal laws and court decisions and what it saw as moral and cultural decline. It sought to limit the federal government's role and to pursue more assertive foreign policies. Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign gave the movement a national candidate and a platform of conservative principle. Nixon's **Silent Majority**, named in his 1969 address on Vietnam withdrawal, described a base of Americans who did not identify with the counterculture. Conservative institutions developed steadily during the same years. They included William F. Buckley's **National Review**, the American Conservative Union, Young Americans for Freedom and its 1960 **Sharon Statement**, the Heritage Foundation, and the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Religion became a political force. **Evangelical Christianity** grew rapidly, in churches and in organizations, and religious conservatives turned that growth into activism. Billy Graham gave the movement mass appeal; James Dobson's **Focus on the Family** and Pat Robertson's **700 Club** gave it media; Paul Weyrich helped organize it; evangelists and organizers like John and Anne Gimenez carried the **New Christian Right** into politics. The cultural targets were specific. Phyllis Schlafly campaigned against the **Equal Rights Amendment**, which feminists like Betty Friedan supported, and Anita Bryant's activism showed a movement fighting the 1960s on moral ground. Figures like Barbara Jordan and gatherings like the 1977 **International Women's Year Conference** showed the opposition it faced. Both sides built institutions to support their positions.

The 1970s gave the movement a wider opening. The framework's account is structural rather than partisan. **Stagflation**, a combination of inflation and stagnation that became visible in the 1973 gas lines, weakened confidence that liberal economics could manage prosperity. **Watergate**, the scandal and investigation that drove Nixon from office, weakened trust in government. The **Iran Hostage Crisis** of 1979, in which fifty-two diplomats were held for 444 days after Iranian youths stormed the Tehran embassy, weakened confidence that American power commanded respect abroad. Together, economic failure, scandal, and a foreign-policy setback discredited the liberal order on several fronts at once. The

conservative movement, which had been organizing since 1960, was ready to take advantage of that opening, and Unit 9 takes up what followed.

Trap: saying the 1970s created conservatism. The Sharon Statement dates to 1960 and Goldwater ran in 1964, so the movement predates the crises by a decade. The 1970s did not invent the conservative movement. They gave an existing movement a better opportunity, and that distinction is what exam questions test.

Note. The framework never uses the label New Right and never names the 1973 abortion decision, and this guide does not use the label. The decision itself, **Roe v. Wade**, is named in the FAQ below as context for the era's fights over gender and family. The conservative story here still runs on the framework's own terms. Those terms are limited government, assertive foreign policy, moral and cultural traditionalism, and the institutional growth from National Review to the New Christian Right.

Your 20-minute plan for this unit

- Minutes 0-5. Run the Unit 8 flashcards on Rycal in Learn mode. This unit has 188 cards, the most in the course, so filter to Core coverage first. You are checking the main terms, which are containment, détente, mass culture, Brown, the Great Society, liberalism, the five expansion movements, and the conservative movement. Star every miss; the supporting cards can wait.
- Minutes 5-12. Open Brain Dump and write for seven minutes on this question. How did the same Cold War that justified the Great Society end up discrediting liberalism by 1980? Do not look at the guide. Then compare your dump against sections 8.2, 8.9, and 8.14 and note which links you dropped, especially Vietnam and the 1970s crises.
- Minutes 12-18. Do a set of AP-style questions for Unit 8 on Rycal. For each miss, write one sentence naming the trap, using the Where Students Lose Points table. If you called the Truman Doctrine a required term, or said Brown desegregated the schools by itself, that sentence is your study note.
- Minutes 18-20. Open an FRQ drill on Rycal and outline a short-answer response that covers one continuity and one change in the federal government's role in American life between 1945 and 1980. Give yourself two minutes to plan, then stop after the outline.

Where students lose points

Unit 8 can feel familiar because students have seen its music, television, and protest images in popular culture. The exam, however, tests the framework's specific claims about that material.

THE MIX-UP	THE FIX
Containment and détente are opposites	Containment is the whole strategy; détente is a phase of coexistence inside it. SALT I did not replace containment.
The Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan are required terms	In the 2026 framework they are examples-page items, supporting, not key-concept text. Know them as illustrations of containment.
NATO explains American collective security	The framework never names NATO in Unit 8. Answer from aid, economic institutions, and Korea; keep the 1949 alliance as background, not as the answer.
Brown v. Board desegregated the schools	Brown declared the law; boycotts, the 1957 Act, and Little Rock were the fight to make it real.
Nonviolence was the whole civil rights movement	The framework also names Malcolm X and Black Power. The movement contained its own debates.
The New Left attacked conservatives	It attacked liberal leaders for doing too little on race and economics and acting immorally abroad.
The Great Society was only an economic program	Its first stated aim was ending racial discrimination, and the 1965 immigration rewrite belongs in the picture.
The 1970s created the conservative movement	The movement dates to 1960-1964; stagflation, Watergate, and the hostage crisis gave it its opportunity.

Practice Questions

Original questions written for this guide in the style of the AP exam. Answers and explanations follow. Do not peek.

1. The 1972 SALT I agreement, in which President Nixon and Soviet leader Brezhnev agreed to slow the nuclear arms race, best exemplifies which concept?

- A. Détente
- B. Containment
- C. Isolationism
- D. The Red Scare

2. Which statement best reflects the course framework's description of 1960s liberalism, the outlook behind the Great Society?

- A. Anti-communism abroad combined with faith in government power to achieve social goals at home
- B. Rejection of federal social programs in favor of private charity
- C. A political outlook that reached its high point in the late 1970s
- D. Opposition to the Vietnam War from the start

Answer Key

1. A. A is correct because détente names the Cold War's periods of mutual coexistence, and SALT I, a 1972 Nixon-Brezhnev agreement slowing the arms race, is an example of that coexistence being negotiated rather than confrontation continuing. B is incorrect because containment was the

overarching strategy of limiting communism. SALT I happened inside that strategy, but the agreement itself exemplifies coexistence, not limitation. C is incorrect because isolationism belongs to the pre-1945 tradition the Cold War abandoned. D is incorrect because the Red Scare was the domestic hunt for communists, a different topic.

2. A. A is correct because the framework defines 1960s liberalism as anti-communism abroad plus a firm belief that government power could achieve social goals at home, reaching its high point by the mid-1960s, and the Great Society was its program. B is incorrect because the Great Society expanded federal social programs rather than rejecting them. C is incorrect because liberalism peaked in the mid-1960s, and the 1970s crises discredited it. D is incorrect because opposition to Vietnam came from the New Left, which attacked liberal leaders. Liberalism itself paired domestic activism with anti-communism abroad.

If you missed one, turn the trap behind it into a flashcard and drill that card spaced over several days rather than in one sitting.

Six questions to answer without looking

Say each answer out loud or write it down. If you look at the guide first, you are rereading rather than practicing recall.

1. What is the difference between containment as a strategy and détente as a phase, and how does the Korean War illustrate the strategy?
2. How did the Red Scare's machinery of suspicion reach beyond suspected communists? Name two examples.
3. What federal actions built postwar suburbia, and how did redlining limit who benefited from it?
4. What three aims did the Great Society pursue, and what belief about government united them under liberalism?
5. How did the Selma to Montgomery March exemplify the civil rights movement's method of making injustice visible and then demanding federal action?
6. The conservative movement predates the 1970s crises. What did the crises of the 1970s give it, and why does that distinction matter?

Anything you cannot say out loud goes into the Unit 8 deck. Add it as a flashcard and review it spaced over the next few days.

Key terms for this unit

Soviet Union, Containment, Détente, Korean War, Collective security, Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, Berlin Airlift, Cuban Missile Crisis, Greek Civil War, The Long Telegram (George Kennan), Kitchen Debate, Henry Kissinger, John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Red Scare (after World War II), Executive Order 9835 (Loyalty Order), House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), Hollywood Ten, McCarthyism (Joseph McCarthy), Lavender Scare, Margaret Chase Smith, Paul Robeson, Baby boom, Sun Belt, GI Bill, Interstate Highway System, Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Redlining, Levittown, Television, Air conditioning, Credit cards (Diners' Club), Mass culture, Conformity, Beat movement, Rock and roll, I Love Lucy, Leave It to Beaver, The Affluent Society (John Kenneth Galbraith), Mattachine Society, Brown v. Board of Education (1954), Desegregation of the armed services, Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin, NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), Thurgood Marshall, CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), Civil Rights

Act of 1957, Browder v. Gayle (1956), Hernandez v. Texas, Mendez v. Westminster (1946), Little Rock Nine, Jackie Robinson, To Secure These Rights (1947), Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom (1957), Emmett Till, Military-industrial complex, Alliance for Progress, Bay of Pigs invasion (1961), Salvador Allende, Jacobo Árbenz, Mohammad Mosaddegh, Suez Crisis (1956), Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD), SALT I (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks), Angolan Civil War, Camp David Accords (1978), Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961), Vietnam War, Domino Theory, Chinese Revolution / 'loss of China', Pentagon Papers, War Powers Act (1973), Great Society, Liberalism, Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, Job Corps, Food Stamp Act (1964), War on Poverty, The Other America (Michael Harrington), Poor People's Campaign, Cuban Adjustment Act (1966), Operation Pedro Pan, Indochina Migration and Refugee Act, Martin Luther King Jr., Civil Rights Act of 1964, SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), Lunch counter sit-ins, Freedom Summer (1964), March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963), Selma to Montgomery March (1965), Malcolm X, Black Power (Stokely Carmichael), Black Panther Party, Ella Baker, John Lewis, Bayard Rustin, Fannie Lou Hamer, Angela Davis, Constance Baker Motley, James Reeb, Anne Braden, Gideon v. Wainwright (1963), Loving v. Virginia, Bailey v. Patterson (1962), Jones v. Alfred H. Mayer Co. (1968), Pitts v. Cherry (1968), Latino movement, American Indian movement, Asian American movement, Feminist movement, LGBTQ+ movement, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, United Farm Workers (UFW), Delano Grape Strike and grape boycott, Brown Berets, Chicano Movement, Occupation of Alcatraz, Occupation of Wounded Knee (1973), Trail of Broken Treaties (1972), Dennis Banks, Clyde Warrior, Emma Gee, Yuji Ichioka, Larry Itliong, Yuri Kochiyama, San Francisco State Strike (1968), Dalip Singh Saund, The Feminine Mystique (Betty Friedan), National Organization for Women (NOW), Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, Audre Lorde, Dorothy Pittman Hughes, Stonewall Uprising (1969), Gay Liberation Front, Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Frank Kameny, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, Counterculture of the 1960s, Anti-war protests (Vietnam), New Left, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Port Huron Statement (1962), Muhammad Ali, Kent State shooting (1970), March on the Pentagon (1967), Environmental movement, Oil crises of the 1970s, National energy policy, Silent Spring (Rachel Carson), Clean Air Act, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Endangered Species Act (1973), Department of Energy, Federal Energy Administration, Cuyahoga River fires, Love Canal, Three Mile Island (1979), Conservative movement (1960s), Evangelical Christianity, Watergate, Iran Hostage Crisis (1979), Stagflation, Silent Majority, Barry Goldwater, National Review (William F. Buckley), American Conservative Union (ACU), Young Americans for Freedom / Sharon Statement (1960), Phyllis Schlafly, Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), Heritage Foundation, Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), Anita Bryant, Barbara Jordan, International Women's Year Conference (1977), Billy Graham, Focus on the Family (James Dobson), The 700 Club (Pat Robertson), Paul Weyrich, John and Anne Gimenez

Questions students ask about Unit 8

How is the APUSH exam structured?

Section I: 55 multiple-choice questions in 55 minutes (40% of the score), then 3 short-answer questions in 40 minutes (20%). Starting with the May 2027 exam, all 3 short-answer questions are required, no choosing, and each includes a specified kind of source. Section II: one document-based question with 7 documents in 60 minutes, including a 15-minute reading period (25%); the 2027 DBQ draws evidence from a wider stretch of the course. Then one long essay in 40 minutes (15%), a single required prompt instead of a choice of three. Total exam time is 3 hours 15 minutes.

How much of the exam is Unit 8?

Unit 8 is worth 10-17% of the exam, in the top weight band with Units 3 through 7. It covers 1945 to 1980, the Cold War, the affluent society, the civil rights movement, and the conservative turn. Because the material feels familiar from movies and music, students sometimes under-study it, and the exam tests the framework's precise claims.

Why are famous things like the Truman Doctrine and the Cuban Missile Crisis only supporting terms?

The 2026 course framework is sparing in its key-concept text for this unit. The KC paragraphs name the larger structures, including containment, détente, the Red Scare, and the movements. Famous specifics like the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Cuban Missile Crisis appear only as examples, so they are supporting material rather than required terms. Study them as examples of containment and confrontation, and spend your deepest effort on the core concepts they illustrate.

Do I need to know about NATO for the Cold War?

Know what it was, but answer from the framework. NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization founded in 1949, was the real military alliance binding the United States, Canada, and Western Europe in mutual defense. The framework never names it anywhere in Unit 8's key-concept text or examples, and its account of collective security runs through aid, economic institutions, and military engagements like Korea. Answer from what the framework gives you; keep NATO as the background knowledge that makes the framework's version intelligible.

What about the Voting Rights Act, the Immigration and Nationality Act, and Roe v. Wade?

Here are the real names behind the framework's descriptions. The Selma marchers' demand for federal action became the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, which banned the literacy tests and other devices the South used to block Black voting. The 1965 immigration rewrite was the **Immigration and Nationality Act**, the Hart-Celler Act, which ended the national-origins quotas. The 1973 abortion decision the ERA-era fights circle around is **Roe v. Wade**. The framework names none of them, so on the exam describe the patterns the framework gives you. Those patterns are federal action being demanded, quotas being ended, and reproductive rights being contested.

How do the five movements of Topic 8.11 relate to the Black civil rights movement?

The five movements had separate agendas even though they shared tactics and timing. The five movements of Topic 8.11 borrowed the sit-ins, marches, and legal strategies of the Black freedom struggle and pressed their claims in the same decades. But each demanded redress for its own community's specific injustices. Farmworkers, American Indians, Asian Americans, women, and gay Americans were not fighting the same fight. The exam tests the expansion pattern, which is the spread of rights claims, rather than a single merged movement.

Where to go next

Turn every missed item from this guide into flashcards and drill them spaced over several days rather than in one sitting. The Unit 8 deck under AP U.S. History on Rycal covers the terms used here, and its practice questions hit the same traps described above. After you have added your misses, check them once more with the guide closed. If you are working toward a test date, put that date in the Test Planner and let it pace the next sessions, or open Brain Dump and write the throughline of this unit, how American power was organized into containment abroad and affluence at home and then challenged from several directions, from memory before you look anything up.