



PERIOD 8 (1945-1980) → Following World War II, the United States grappled with prosperity and unfamiliar global responsibilities, while struggling to live up to its ideals.

The College Board has identified the following **KEY CONCEPTS** for Period 8 (1945-1980). The total items (multiple-choice, short answer, and longer essay) related to Period 8 on the APUSH National Exam comprise approximately 15 percent of the test. Use the concepts to strategically frame and guide your personal review plan. Are you able to “make sense” of each statement? Could you generate a written response (short-answer or long) to each statement? Can you add meaningful supportive data to each statement? Can you recall a certain episode in history that would serve well as an example of the situation described by each statement? The bold-faced concepts are generally more encompassing; the others seem to lean toward specificity. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated. You cannot possibly know every square inch of the material.

The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable post-war world by asserting and attempting to defend a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.

After World War II, the United States sought to stem the growth of Communist military power and ideological influence, create a stable global economy, and build an international security system.

As the United States focused on containing communism, it face increasingly complex foreign policy issues, including decolonization, shifting international alignments and regional conflicts, and global economic, and environmental changes.

Cold War policies led to continued public debates over the power of the federal government, acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals, and the proper balance between liberty and order.

Liberalism, based on anti-Communism abroad and a firm belief in the ability of governmental and especially federal power to achieve social goals at home, reached its apex in the mid-1960s and generated a variety of political and cultural responses.

Seeking to fulfill Reconstruction-era promises, civil rights activists and political leaders achieved some legal and political successes in ending segregation, although progress toward equality was slow and halting.

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Stirred by a growing awareness of inequalities in American society and by the African American civil rights movement, activists also addressed issues of identity and social justice, such as gender/sexuality and ethnicity.

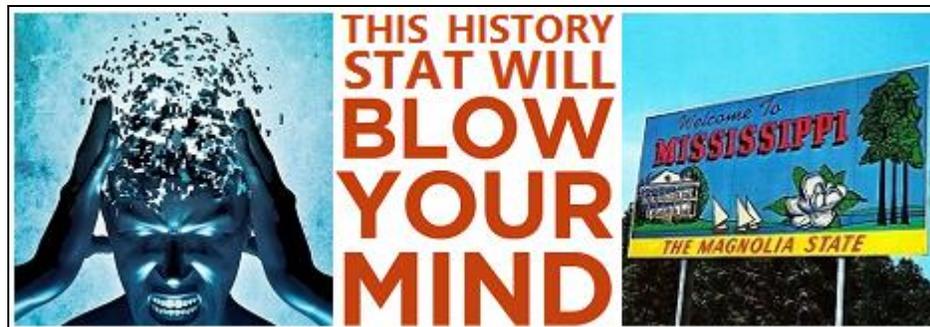
As many liberal principles came to dominate post-war politics and court decisions, liberalism came under attack from the political left as well as from resurgent conservative movements.

Post-war economic, demographic, and technological changes had a far-reaching impact on American society, politics, and the environment.

Rapid economic and social changes in American society fostered a sense of optimism in the post-war years, as well as underlying concerns about how these changes were affecting American values.

As federal programs expanded and economic growth reshaped American society, many sought greater access to prosperity even as critics began to question the mushrooming use of natural resources.

New demographic and social issues led to significant political and moral debates which sharply divided the nation.



After the departure of Radical Republican Reconstruction in 1877 and the implementation of the “separate but equal” doctrine in 1896 under *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the South fashioned its ruthless regime to deny civil rights while the rest of the country looked the other way. The modern civil rights movement reached a fervent peak during the 1960s when a number of southern states were called to task regarding their brazen endorsement of torture and murder to maintain white supremacy. There was no bloodier civil rights battleground than Mississippi, historically notorious among the Deep South alliance for its refusal to accept black equality in any manner whatsoever. Indeed, the state’s actions during the 1950s and 1960s to maintain black subservience were firmly rooted in a loathsome post-Reconstruction tradition of terror that was unparalleled. **Between 1880 and 1940, nearly 600 blacks were lynched in Mississippi. No measure of justice was exacted on behalf of the victims in any of these cases—not only were there no convictions or indictments, but astonishingly, not even a single arrest by state law enforcement officials!** A century after the Civil War, Mississippi was no closer to racial equality than it was the day Vicksburg fell. As Mississippi’s quasi-Confederate methodology proceeded unchecked, blacks were subjected to exalted levels of intimidation—loss of jobs for fabricated reasons, unjustified insurance cancellations, sudden jumps in loan interest rates, immediate mortgage foreclosures, and when all else failed, downright violence and unmerciful cruelty. **By 1960, only five percent of blacks living in Mississippi (which comprised over 40 percent of the state’s population) had managed to overcome the poll taxes, unfair literacy tests, and threats of terror to register for the vote.** There were specific terrorist incidents. In 1962, for example, the Magnolia State attracted nationwide attention when James Meredith attempted to become the first black student at the University of Mississippi. Such violence erupted that Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent 500 federal marshals to take control (days later, Meredith was attending class). During the so-called “Freedom Summer” of 1964, three young northern civil rights activists (one black, two white) were executed by a goon squad of Ku Klux Klaners headed by the local deputy sheriff (some evidence suggests that two state highway patrolmen were tacitly involved, as well). Federal intervention was again required to bring a trace of humanity to Mississippi.