

CHAPTER 32

THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION



BAGHDAD, MARCH 21, 2003 At the beginning of the American invasion of Iraq in spring 2003, the United States military used techniques honed in the first Gulf War in Kuwait—the use of heavy bombing of Iraqi targets before deploying troops in the field. This photograph shows explosions in downtown Baghdad at the beginning of the war as American bombers tried to hit strategic targets in the city. (*Getty Images*)



T 8:45 A.M. ON THE BRIGHT, SUNNY MORNING of September 11, 2001, as tens of thousands of workers—executives and financiers, secretaries and clerks, security guards and maintenance workers, chefs and waiters, citizens of dozens of nations—were beginning a day’s work in lower Manhattan,

September 11, 2001

a commercial airliner crashed into the side of one of the two towers of the World Trade Center, the tallest buildings in New York. The collision created a huge explosion and a great fire of extraordinary intensity. Less than half an hour later, as thousands of workers fled the burning building, another commercial airliner rammed into the companion tower, creating a second fireball. Within an hour after that, the burning floors of both towers gave way and fell onto the floors below them, pulling one of New York’s (and America’s) most famous symbols to the ground. At about the same time, in Washington, D.C., another commercial airliner crashed into a side of the Pentagon—the headquarters of the nation’s military—turning part of the building’s façade into rubble. And several hundred miles away, still another airplane crashed in a field not far from Pittsburgh.

These four almost simultaneous catastrophes—in which nearly 3,000 people died—were the result of a single, orchestrated plan by members of Al Qaeda, a previously little-known Middle Eastern terrorist group. The attacks they launched profoundly affected the United States and the world. They made what came to be known as the “war on terrorism” a central issue in American life. They turned George W. Bush, who had won the presidency in a bitterly controversial election, into a war leader with broad public support. They led to an American invasion of Afghanistan and, two years later, of Iraq, and they legitimized a major change in the foundations of American foreign policy. The dramatic new initiatives of the Bush administration were not without their critics. American foreign policy in the aftermath of 2001 was bitterly opposed by much of the rest of the world and attracted sharp criticism within the United States as well. But Bush survived the unpopularity of many of his initiatives to win reelection in 2004 by a thin margin.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, seemed to many Americans at the time to change everything—to alter fundamentally how they thought about the world, and to change decisively the way Americans would have to live. In fact, most aspects of life in the United States quickly returned to their normal patterns. And in many ways, September 11, rather than being an aberration in American life, was an example of one of the most important realities of the age. The United States, more than at any other time in its history, was becoming deeply entwined in a new age of globalism—an age that combined great promise with great peril.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1977 ▶ Apple introduces first personal computer
- 1979 ▶ Nuclear accident at Three Mile Island
- 1981 ▶ Existence of AIDS first reported in United States
- 1985 ▶ Crack cocaine appears in American cities
- 1989 ▶ Human genome project launched
- 1991 ▶ Controversy surrounds confirmation of Clarence Thomas to Supreme Court
- 1992 ▶ Major race riot in Los Angeles
- ▶ Bill Clinton elected president
- 1993 ▶ Congress approves tax increase as part of deficit reduction
- ▶ Congress ratifies North American Free Trade Agreement
- ▶ Clinton proposes national health-care system
- 1994 ▶ Congress rejects health-care reform
- ▶ Republicans win control of both houses of Congress
- 1995 ▶ New Republican Congress attempts to enact “Contract with America”
- ▶ Showdown between president and Congress leads to shutdown of federal government
- ▶ National crime rates show dramatic decline
- ▶ O. J. Simpson trial
- 1996 ▶ Congress passes and president signs major welfare reform bill, minimum wage increase, and health-insurance reform
- ▶ Clinton reelected president; Republicans retain control of Congress
- 1997 ▶ President and Congress agree on plan to balance budget
- ▶ Justice Department files antitrust suits against Microsoft
- 1998 ▶ Lewinsky scandal rocks Clinton presidency
- ▶ Democrats gain in congressional elections
- ▶ Clinton impeached by House
- 1999 ▶ Senate acquits Clinton in impeachment trial
- 2000 ▶ George W. Bush wins contested presidential election
- 2001 ▶ Terrorists destroy World Trade Center and damage Pentagon
- ▶ United States begins military action against Afghanistan
- 2002 ▶ Corporate scandals rock business world
- 2003 ▶ United States invades Iraq
- 2004 ▶ Prison abuse scandal in Iraq
- ▶ Bush defeats Kerry in presidential election
- 2005 ▶ Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans and the Gulf Coast
- 2006 ▶ Democrats gain control of both houses of Congress
- 2007 ▶ Troop “surge” in Iraq
- ▶ Mortgage crisis weakens economy
- 2008 ▶ Barack Obama wins Democratic nomination for president
- ▶ John McCain wins Republican nomination for president

A RESURGENCE OF PARTISANSHIP

Bill Clinton took the oath of office in January 1993 with a domestic agenda more ambitious than that of any other president in nearly thirty years. He entered the presidency carrying the extravagant expectations of liberals who had spent a generation in exile. But Clinton also had significant political weaknesses. Having won the votes of well under half the electorate, he had no powerful mandate. Democratic majorities in Congress were frail, and Democrats in any case had grown unaccustomed to bowing to presidential leadership. The Republican leadership in Congress was highly adversarial and opposed the president with unusual unanimity on many issues. A tendency toward reckless personal behavior, both before and during his presidency, caused the president continuing problems and gave his many enemies repeated opportunities to discredit him.

William Jefferson Clinton

Launching the Clinton Presidency

The new administration compounded its problems with a series of missteps and misfortunes in its first months. The president's failed effort to end the longtime ban on gay men and women serving in the military met with ferocious resistance from the armed forces themselves and from many conservatives in both parties. Several of his early appointments became so controversial he had to withdraw them. The suicide of a longtime friend of the president, Vince Foster, helped spark an escalating inquiry into some banking and real estate ventures involving the president and his wife in the early 1980s, in what became known as the Whitewater affair. An independent counsel began examining these issues in 1993 (the Clintons were eventually cleared of wrongdoing in 2000).

Despite its many problems, the Clinton administration could boast of some significant achievements in its first year. The president narrowly won approval of a budget that marked a significant turn away from the policies of the Reagan-Bush years. It included a substantial tax increase on the wealthiest Americans, a significant reduction in many areas of government spending, and a major expansion of tax credits to low-income working people.

Clinton was a committed advocate of free trade and a proponent of many aspects of what came to be known as globalism. He made that clear through his strong support of a series of new and controversial free trade agreements. After a long and difficult battle, he won approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (or NAFTA), which eliminated most trade barriers among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Later he won approval of other far-reaching trade agreements negotiated in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (or GATT).

NAFTA

The president's most important and ambitious initiative was a major reform of the nation's health-care system. Early in 1993, he appointed a task force chaired by his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, which proposed a sweeping reform designed to guarantee coverage to every American and hold down the costs of medical care. Substantial opposition from the right, from insurance companies, and from Republican leaders in Congress doomed the plan. In September 1994, Congress abandoned the health-care reform effort.

Failure of Health-Care Reform

The foreign policy of the Clinton administration was at first cautious and even tentative, but not without some successes. The small Balkan nation Bosnia was embroiled in a bloody civil war between its two major ethnic groups: one Muslim, the other Serbian and Christian. The American negotiator Richard Holbrooke finally brought the warring parties together in 1995 and crafted an agreement to partition Bosnia. The United States was among the nations to send peacekeeping troops to Bosnia to police the fragile settlement, which—despite many pessimistic predictions—was still largely in place over a decade later.

The Republican Resurgence

The trials of the Clinton administration, and the failure of health-care reform in particular, damaged the Democratic Party as it faced the congressional elections of 1994. For the first time in forty years, Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress.

Throughout 1995, the Republican Congress worked at a sometimes feverish pace to construct one of the most ambitious and even radical legislative programs in modern times. The members proposed a series of measures to transfer important powers from the federal government to the states. They proposed dramatic reductions in federal spending, including a major restructuring of the once-sacrosanct Medicare program to reduce costs. They attempted to scale back a wide range of federal regulatory functions. In all these efforts, they could count on a disciplined Republican majority in the House and an only slightly less united Republican majority in the Senate.

President Clinton responded to the 1994 election results by proclaiming that “the era of big government is over” and shifting his own agenda conspicuously to the center. He announced his own plan to cut taxes and balance the budget. Indeed, the gap between the Democratic White House and the Republican Congress on many major issues was relatively small. But compromise between the president and the highly partisan Republicans in Congress became difficult. In November 1995 and again in January 1996, the federal government shut down for several days because the president and Congress could not agree on a budget. Republican leaders had refused to pass a “continuing resolution” (to allow government operations to continue during negotiations) in hopes of pressuring the



BREAKING PRECEDENT Bill Clinton broke with precedent in 1993 when he appointed his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, to head a task force on health care reform. The prominent role of the first lady in the Clinton administration surprised many Americans, pleasing some and angering others. Here she campaigns for her plan at Johns Hopkins University in 1993. Hillary Clinton broke precedent again in 2000 when she was elected to the United States Senate from New York and when she was a candidate for president in 2008. (*AP Images/Joe Marquette*)

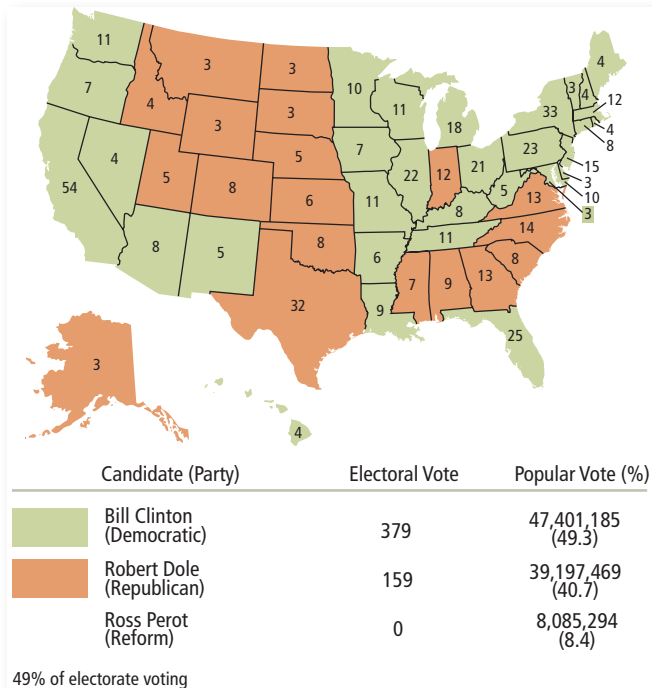
president to agree to their terms. That proved to be an epic political blunder. Public opinion turned quickly and powerfully against the Republican leadership, and against much of its agenda. House Speaker Newt Gingrich quickly became one of the most unpopular political leaders in the nation, while President Clinton slowly improved his standing in the polls.

The Election of 1996

By the time the 1996 presidential campaign began in earnest, President Clinton was in a commanding position to win reelection. Unopposed for the Democratic nomination, he faced a Republican opponent—Senator Robert Dole of Kansas—who inspired little enthusiasm even within his own party. Clinton's revival was in part a result of his adroitness in taking centrist positions that undermined the Republicans and in championing traditional

Democratic issues—such as raising the minimum wage—that were broadly popular. But his greatest strength came from the remarkable success of the American economy and the marked reduction in the federal deficit that had occurred during his presidency. Like Reagan in 1984, he could campaign as the champion of peace, prosperity, and national well-being.

As the election approached, the Congress passed several important bills. It raised the minimum wage for the first time in more than a decade. Most dramatically of all, the Congress passed a welfare reform bill, which President Clinton somewhat reluctantly signed, that marked the most important change in aid to the poor since the Social Security Act of 1935. It ended the fifty-year federal guarantee of assistance to families with dependent children and turned most of the responsibility for allocating federal welfare funds (now greatly reduced) to the states. Most of all, it shifted the bulk of welfare benefits away from those without jobs and toward support for low-wage workers.



THE ELECTION OF 1996 Ross Perot did much less well in 1996 than he had in 1992, and President Clinton came much closer than he had four years earlier to winning a majority of the popular vote. Once again, Clinton defeated his Republican opponent, this time Robert Dole, by a decisive margin in both the popular and electoral vote. After the 1994 Republican landslide in the congressional elections, Bill Clinton had seemed permanently weakened. ♦ *What explains his political revival?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech32maps

Clinton's buoyant campaign flagged slightly in the last weeks, but the president nevertheless received just over 49 percent of the popular vote to Dole's 41 percent; Ross Perot, running now as the candidate of what he called the Reform Party, received just over 8 percent of the vote. Clinton won 379 electoral votes to Dole's 159. But other Democrats made only modest gains and failed to regain either house of Congress.

Clinton Triumphant and Embattled

Bill Clinton was the first Democratic president to win two terms as president since Franklin Roosevelt. Facing a somewhat chastened but still hostile Republican Congress, he proposed a modest domestic agenda, consisting primarily of tax cuts and tax credits targeted at middle-class Americans to help them educate their children. He also negotiated effectively with the Republican leadership on a plan for a balanced budget, which passed with much fanfare late in 1997. By the end of 1998, the federal budget was generating its first surplus in thirty years.

Clinton's popularity would be important to him in the turbulent year that followed, when the most serious crisis

of his presidency suddenly erupted. Clinton had been bedeviled by alleged scandals almost from his first weeks in office, including a civil suit for sexual harassment filed against the president by a former state employee in Arkansas, Paula Jones.

In early 1998, inquiries associated with the Paula Jones case led to charges that the president had had a sexual relationship with a young White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, and that he had lied about it in his deposition before Jones's attorneys. Those revelations produced a new investigation by the independent counsel in the Whitewater case, Kenneth Starr, a former judge and official in the Reagan Justice Department. Clinton forcefully denied the charges, and the public strongly backed him. His popularity soared to record levels and remained high throughout the year that followed.

The Lewinsky scandal revived again in August 1998, when Lewinsky struck a deal with the independent counsel and testified about her relationship with Clinton. Starr then subpoenaed Clinton himself, who finally admitted that he and Lewinsky had had what he called an "improper relationship." A few weeks later, Starr recommended that Congress impeach the president.

Republican conservatives were determined to pursue the case. First the House Judiciary Committee and then, on December 19, 1998, the full House, both voting on strictly partisan lines, approved two counts of impeachment: lying to the grand jury and obstructing justice. The matter then moved to the Senate, where a trial of the president—the first since the trial of Andrew Johnson in 1868—began in early January. The trial ended with a decisive acquittal of the president. Neither of the charges attracted even a majority of the votes, let alone the two-thirds necessary for conviction.

Kosovo

In 1999, the president faced the most serious foreign policy crisis of his presidency, once again in the Balkans. This time, the conflict involved a province of Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia—Kosovo—most of whose residents were Albanian Muslims. A long-simmering conflict between the Serbian government of Yugoslavia and Kosovo separatists erupted into a savage civil war in 1998. Numerous reports of Serbian atrocities against the Kosovans slowly roused world opinion. In May 1999, NATO forces—dominated and led by the United States—began a bombing campaign against the Serbians, which after little more than a week led the leader of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic, to agree to a cease-fire. Serbian troops withdrew from Kosovo entirely, replaced by NATO peacekeeping forces. A precarious peace returned to the region.

Clinton finished his eight years in office with his popularity higher than it had been when he had begun. Indeed,

public approval of Clinton's presidency—a presidency marked by astonishing prosperity and general world stability—was consistently among the highest of any post-war president—despite the many scandals and setbacks he suffered in the White House. But his personal recklessness continued to trouble voters—and burden the Democratic Party.

The Election of 2000

The 2000 presidential election was one of the most extraordinary in American history—not because of the campaign that preceded it, but because of the sensational controversy over its results.

The two men who had been the front-runners for their parties' nominations a year before the election captured those nominations with only slight difficulty: George W. Bush—son of the former president and a second-term governor of Texas—and Vice President Al Gore.

George W. Bush Versus
Al Gore

Both men ran cautious, centrist campaigns, making much of their relatively modest differences over how to use the large budget surpluses forecast for the years ahead. Polls showed an exceptionally tight race right up to the end. In the congressional races, Republicans maintained control of the House of Representatives by five seats, while the Senate split evenly between Democrats and Republicans. (Among the victors in the Senate was First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who won a highly publicized race in New York.) In the presidential race, Gore won the national popular vote by the thin margin of about 540,000 votes out of about 100 million cast (or .05%). But

Florida

on election night, both candidates remained short of the 270 electoral votes needed for victory because no one could determine who had won Florida. After a mandatory recount over the next two days, Bush led Gore in the state by fewer than 300 votes.

In a number of Florida counties, including some of the most heavily Democratic ones, votes were cast by notoriously inaccurate punch-card ballots, which were then counted by machines. Many voters failed fully to punch out the appropriate holes, leaving the machines unable to read them. Into this morass, the Gore campaign moved quickly with a demand—sanctioned by Florida law—for hand recounts of punch-card ballots in three critical counties.

When a court-ordered deadline arrived, the recount was not yet complete. The Florida secretary of state, a Republican, then certified Bush the winner in Florida by a little more than 500 votes. The Gore campaign immediately contested the results in the Florida Supreme Court, which ordered hand recounts of all previously uncounted ballots in all Florida counties.

In the meantime, the Bush campaign appealed to the United States Supreme Court. Late on December 12, the



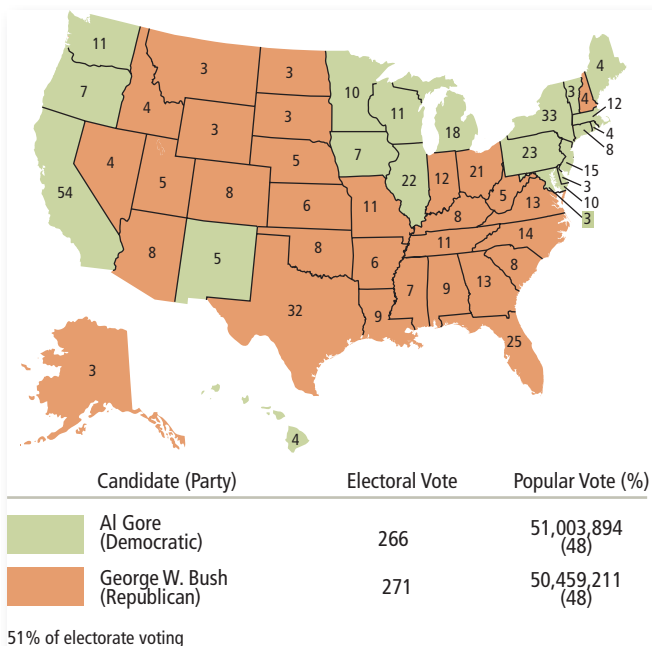
ELECTION NIGHT, 2000 The electronic billboard in New York City's Times Square, showing network coverage of the presidential contest, reports George Bush the winner of the 2000 presidential race late on election night. A few hours later, the networks retracted their projections because of continuing uncertainty over the results in Florida. Five weeks later, and then only because of the controversial intervention of the Supreme Court, Bush finally emerged the victor. (Chris Hondros/Getty Images)

Court issued one of the most unusual and controversial decisions in its history. In a 5-4 vote, divided sharply along party and ideological lines, the conservative majority overruled the Florida Supreme Court and insisted that any revised recount order be completed by December 12 (an obviously impossible demand, since the Court issued its ruling late at night on the 12th). The Court had decided the election. Absent a recount, the original certification of Bush's victory stood.

The Supreme Court's
Decision

The Second Bush Presidency

George W. Bush assumed the presidency in January 2001 burdened by both the controversies surrounding his



THE ELECTION OF 2000 The 2000 presidential election was one of the closest and most controversial in American history. It also starkly revealed a new pattern of party strength, which had been developing over the previous decade. Democrats swept the Northeast and most of the industrial Midwest and carried all the states of the Pacific Coast. Republicans swept the South, the plains states, and the mountain states (with the exception of New Mexico) and held on to a few traditional Republican strongholds in the Midwest. Compare this map to those of earlier elections, in particular the election of 1896, and ask how the pattern of party support changed over the course of the twentieth century.

election and the widespread perception, even among some of his own supporters, that he was ill prepared for the office.

Bush's principal campaign promise had been that he would use the predicted budget surplus to finance a massive tax reduction. By relying on his own party's control of both houses of Congress, he won passage of the largest tax cut in American history—\$1.35 trillion over several years.

Having campaigned as a moderate adept at building coalitions across party lines, Bush governed as a staunch conservative, relying on the most orthodox members of his own party for support. As preparation for the 2004 election, the president's political adviser, Karl Rove, encouraged the administration to take increasingly conservative positions on a number of divisive social issues. The president appealed to the gun lobby by refusing to support a renewal of the assault weapons ban that Clinton had enacted. He proposed a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, thus making the debate over the rights of homosexuals a potent issue in the campaign. The Bush administration's proposals for incorporating "faith-based" organizations into the circle of institutions that administer federally funded social programs was part of a broad and successful effort to mobilize evangelical

Christians as an active part of the Republican coalition. But almost from the beginning, the aftermath of the September 11 attacks dominated both Bush's presidency and the nation's politics.

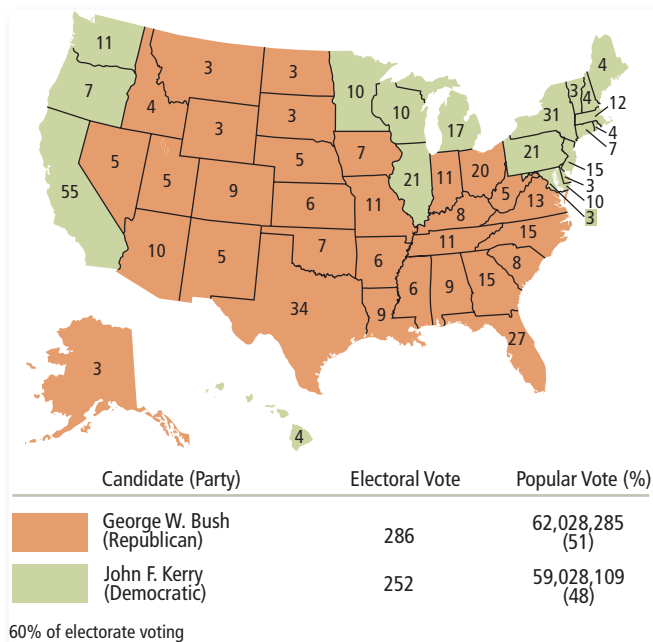
The Election of 2004

The 2004 election pitted President Bush, who was unopposed within his party, against John Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts who won the Democratic nomination. Throughout the months before the election, the electorate was almost evenly divided.

The election itself, although very close, was more decisive than the election of 2000. Bush won 51 percent



RELIGION AND POLITICS, 2004 Although many issues were at stake in the election of 2004, the campaign of that year was distinctive in the degree to which religion became a major issue. For many evangelical Christians, in particular, the reelection of President George W. Bush became a religious as well as a political cause, in part because of Bush's stances on such religiously charged subjects as abortion, gay rights, stem-cell research, and the role of "faith-based" institutions in public life. These participants in a Bush campaign rally carry crosses made out of Bush campaign posters. (Bill O'Leary/The Washington Post)



THE ELECTION OF 2004 The 2004 election repeated the pattern established in 2000. The Democrats, led this time by Massachusetts senator John F. Kerry, swept the Northeast, most of the industrial Midwest, and the Pacific Coast. The Republicans, led by President Bush, carried almost everything else. Although Bush's popular and electoral margins were both larger than they had been in 2000, the election remained extremely close. The shift of about 100,000 votes from Bush to Kerry in Ohio would have produced a Democratic victory.

of the popular vote to Kerry's 48. The electoral vote was much closer, 286 for Bush, 252 for Kerry. A Kerry victory in Ohio, a hotly contested state that Bush won by a very narrow margin, would have given him the presidency.

THE ECONOMIC BOOM

The last two decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first saw remarkable changes in American life—some a result of the end of the Cold War, some the changing character of the American population, and some a product of a rapidly evolving culture. But most of these changes were at least in part a product of the dramatic transformation of the American economy.

From “Stagflation” to Growth

The roots of the economic growth of the 1980s and 1990s lay in part in the troubled years of the 1970s, when the United States seemed for a time to be losing its ability to produce long-term prosperity. In the face of the sluggish growth and persistent inflation of those years, however, many American corporations began making important

changes in the way they ran their businesses—changes that contributed to both the prosperity of the last decades of the twentieth century and the growing inequality that accompanied it. Businesses invested heavily in new technology, to make themselves more efficient and productive. Corporations began to consider mergers to provide themselves with a more diversified basis for growth. Many enterprises—responding to the energy crises of the 1970s—created more energy-efficient plants and offices. Perhaps most of all, American businesses sought to reduce their labor costs, which were among the highest in the world and which many economists and business leaders believed had made the United States uncompetitive against the many emerging economies that relied on low-wage workers.

Businesses cut labor costs in many ways. They took a much harder line against unions. Nonunion companies became more successful in staving off unionization drives. Companies already unionized won important concessions from their union members on wages and benefits in exchange for preserving jobs. Some companies moved their operations to areas of the country where unions were weak and wages low—the American South and West in particular. And many companies moved much of their production out of the United States entirely, to such nations as Mexico and China, where there were large available pools of cheaper labor.

Another important driver of the new economy was the growth of technology industries.

Digital technology made possible an enormous range of new products: computers, the Internet, cellular phones, digital music, video, and cameras, personal digital assistants, and many other products. The technology industries created many new jobs and produced new consumer needs and appetites.

For these and many other reasons, the American economy experienced rapid growth in the last decades of the twentieth century. The gross national product (the total of goods and services produced by the United States) quadrupled in twenty years—from \$2.7 trillion in 1980 to over \$9.8 trillion in 2000. Inflation was low throughout these decades, never rising above 3 percent in any year. Stock prices soared to unprecedented levels, and with few interruptions, from the mid-1980s to the end of the century. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the most common index of stock performance, stood at 1,000 in late 1980. Late in 1999, it passed 11,000. Economic growth was particularly robust in the last years of the 1990s. In 1997 and 1998, annual growth rates reached 5 percent for the first time since the 1960s. Most impressive of all was the longevity of the boom. From 1994 to 2000, the economy recorded growth—at times very substantial growth—in every year, indeed in every quarter, something that had never before happened so continuously in

New Business Practices

Technology Industries

peacetime. Except for the brief recession of 1992–1993, the period of dramatic growth actually extended unbroken from late 1983 until an economic downturn began in spring 2000.

Downturns

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, warned in 1999 of the “irrational exuberance” with which Americans were pursuing profits in the stock market. A few months later, the market vindicated his concerns when, in April 2001, there was a sudden and disastrous collapse of a booming new “dot.com” sector of the economy, made up of start-up companies and new, profitable businesses making use of the Internet.

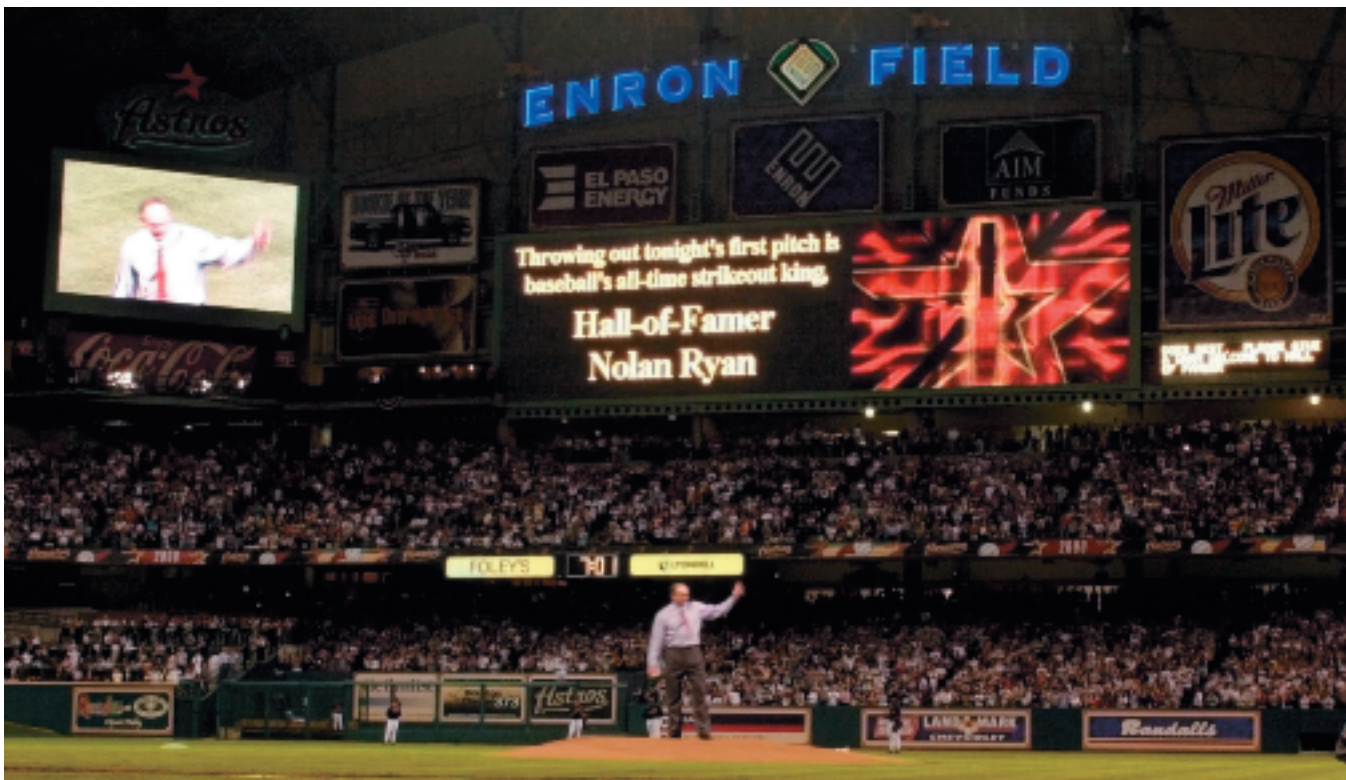
At first, the bursting of the “tech bubble” seemed to have few effects on the larger economy. But by the beginning of 2001, the stock market—a great engine of growth over the previous decade—began a substantial decline, which continued for almost a year. Even when it recovered, beginning in 2002, it could not match the booming growth of the 1990s. In the fall of 2001, the economy as a whole slipped into a recession. Even after recovery in 2002, stock market growth remained relatively slow. And

in early 2008, a disastrous collapse of the home mortgage market drove both the stock market and the national economy into a recession.

The Two-Tiered Economy

Although the American economy revived from the sluggishness that had characterized it in the 1970s and early 1980s, the benefits of the new economy were less widely shared than those of earlier boom times. The increasing abundance of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries created enormous new wealth that enriched those talented, or lucky, enough to profit from the areas of booming growth. The rewards for education—particularly in such areas as science and engineering—increased substantially. Between 1980 and 2000, the average family incomes of the wealthiest 20 percent of the population grew by nearly 20 percent (to over \$100,000 a year); the average family income of the next 20 percent of the population grew by more than 8 percent. Incomes remained flat for most of the remaining 60 percent of the public, and actually declined for many in the bottom 20 percent.

Rising Income
Inequality



ENRON FIELD In happier days, Enron was a high-profile corporation eager to spread its reputation widely. It built a gleaming curved skyscraper in downtown Houston and was nearing completion of a second tower when bankruptcy stopped construction in December 2001. It also paid to have the new Houston baseball stadium named Enron Field. In spring 2002, as scandal tarnished the reputation of the company and its leaders, the Houston Astros paid several million dollars to allow itself to remove the now-notorious Enron name from its stadium. (David J. Phillip/AP/Wide World Photos)

The jarring changes in America's relationship to the world economy that had begun in the 1970s—the loss of cheap and easy access to raw materials, the penetration of the American market by foreign competitors, the restructuring of American heavy industry so that it produced fewer jobs and paid lower wages—continued and in some respects accelerated in the following decades. For families and individuals outside the circle of knowledgeable people benefiting from the new technologies, the results of these contractions were often devastating.

Poverty in America had declined steadily and at times dramatically in the years after World War II, so that by the end of the 1970s the percentage of people living in poverty had fallen to 12 percent (from about 20 percent in preceding decades). But the decline in poverty did not continue. In the 1980s, the poverty rate rose again, at times as high as 15 percent. By 2005, it had dropped to

Growing Poverty Rates

the end of the 1970s the percentage of people living in poverty



THE GLOBAL ECONOMY Hundreds of shipping containers, virtually all of them from China, stand waiting for delivery at the Yang Ming container terminal in Los Angeles in February 2001—an illustration of the increasing penetration of the American market by overseas manufacturers and of the growing interconnections between the United States economy and that of the rest of the world. (Reed Saxon/AP/Wide World Photos)

13.3 percent, about the same as it had been twenty years before.

Globalization

Perhaps the most important economic change was what became known as the “globalization” of the economy. The great prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s had rested on, among other things, the relative insulation of the United States from the pressures of international competition. As late as 1970, international trade still played a relatively small role in the American economy as a whole, which thrived on the basis of the huge domestic market in North America.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the world had intruded on the American economy in profound ways, and that intrusion increased unabated into the twenty-first century. Exports rose from just under \$43 billion in 1970 to over \$1 trillion in 2006. But imports rose even more dramatically: from just over \$40 billion in 1970 to over \$1.8 trillion in 2006. Most American products, in other words, now faced foreign competition inside the United States. The first American trade imbalance in the postwar era occurred in 1971; only twice since then, in 1973 and 1975, has the balance been favorable.

Globalization brought many benefits for the American consumer: new and more varied products, and lower prices for many of them. Most economists, and most national leaders, welcomed the process and worked to encourage it through lowering trade barriers. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) were the boldest of a

Costs of Globalization

long series of treaties designed to lower trade barriers stretching back to the 1960s. But globalization had many costs as well. It was particularly hard on industrial workers, who saw their jobs disappear as American companies lost market share to foreign competitors or moved production to low-wage countries.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW ECONOMY

The “new economy” that emerged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was driven by, and in turn helped to drive, dramatic new scientific and technological discoveries that had profound effects on the way Americans—and peoples throughout the world—lived.

The Digital Revolution

The most visible element of the technological revolution to most Americans was the dramatic growth in the use of computers and other digital electronic devices in almost every area of life.

Among the most significant innovations that contributed to the digital revolution was the development of the microprocessor, first introduced in 1971 by Intel, which represented a notable advance in the technology of integrated circuitry. A microprocessor miniaturized the central processing unit of a computer, making it possible for a small machine to perform calculations that in the past only very large machines could do. Considerable technological innovation was needed before the microprocessor could actually become the basis of what was at first known as a “minicomputer” and then a personal computer. But in 1977, Apple launched its Apple II personal computer, the first such machine to be widely available to the public. Several years later, IBM entered the personal computer market with the first “PC.” IBM had engaged a small software development company, Microsoft, to design an operating system for their new computer. Microsoft produced a program known as MS-DOS (DOS for “disk operating system”). No PC could operate without it. The PC, and its software, made its debut in August 1981 and immediately became enormously successful. Three years later, Apple introduced its Macintosh computer, which marked another major innovation in computer technology, among other things because its software—very different from DOS—was much easier to use than that of the PC. But Apple could not match IBM’s marketing power, and by the mid-1980s the PC had clearly established its dominance in the booming personal computer market—a dominance enhanced by the introduction of a new software package to replace DOS in 1985: Windows, also developed by Microsoft, which borrowed many concepts (most notably the Graphical User Interface, or GUI) from the Apple operating system.

The computer revolution created thousands of new, lucrative businesses: computer manufacturers themselves; makers of the tiny silicon chips that ran the computers and allowed smaller and smaller machines to become more and more powerful (most notably Intel); and hardware manufacturers.

The Internet

Out of the computer revolution emerged another dramatic source of information and communication: the Internet. The Internet is, in essence, a vast, geographically far-flung network of computers that allows people connected to the network to communicate with others all over the world. It had its beginning in 1963, in the U.S. government’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which funneled federal funds into scientific research projects, many of them defense related. In the early 1960s, J. C. R.

Arpanet

Licklider, the head of ARPA’s Information Processing Technique Office, was working on a project he called Libraries of the Future, through which he hoped to make vast

amounts of information available electronically to people in far-flung areas. In 1963, he launched a program to link together computers over large distances. It was known as the Arpanet. For several years, the Arpanet served mainly as a way for people to make use of what were then relatively scarce computer facilities without having to go to the site of the computer. Gradually, however, both the size and the uses of the network expanded.

This expansion was facilitated in part by two important new technologies. One was a system developed in the early 1960s at the RAND Corporation in the United States and the National Physical Laboratory in England. It was known as “store-and-forward packet switching,” and it made possible the transmission of large quantities of data between computers without directly wiring the computers together. The other technological breakthrough was the development of computer software that would allow individual computers to handle the traffic over the network—the Interface Message Processor.



WIRED 6.01 The January 1998 issue of *Wired*, a magazine aimed at young, hip, computer-literate readers, expressed the optimistic, even visionary approach to the possibilities of new electronic technologies that was characteristic of many computer and Internet enthusiasts in the 1990s. *Wired*, which began publication in 1992, was careful to differentiate itself from the slick, commercial computer magazines that were principally interested in trumpeting new products. It tried, instead, to capture the simultaneously skeptical and progressive spirit of a generation to whom technology seemed to define much of the future. (Designer, John Plunkett; Writer, Louis Rossetto. Copyright © 2002 by the Condé Nast Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.)

By 1971, twenty-three computers were linked together in the Arpanet, which served mostly research labs and universities. Gradually, interest in the system began to spread, and with it the number of computers connected to it. In the early 1980s, the Defense Department, a major partner in the development of the Arpanet, withdrew from the project for security reasons. The network, soon renamed the Internet, was then free to develop independently. It did so rapidly, especially after the invention of technologies that made possible digital mail (e-mail) and the emergence of the personal computer, which vastly increased the number of potential users of the Internet. As late as 1984, there remained fewer than a thousand host computers connected to the Internet. A decade later, there were over 6 million. And in 2007, over a billion computers were in use around the world, including 250 million in the United States.

As the amount of information on the Internet proliferated, without any central direction, new forms of software emerged to make it possible for individual users to navigate through the vast number of Internet sites. In 1989,

World Wide Web

Tim Berners-Lee, a British scientist working at a laboratory in

Geneva, introduced the World Wide Web, through which individual users could publish information for the Internet, which helped establish an orderly system for both the distribution and retrieval of electronic information.

Access to the Internet, although very widespread, remains unequally distributed. Computers are now commonplace in American homes, but the lower the income level of families, the less likely they are to have computers and Internet access. Similarly, poor schools have much more limited computer and Internet capacity than wealthier ones. This gap in access has come to be known as the “digital divide,” a widening gulf between those who have the skills to navigate the new electronic world, skills now essential to all but the least lucrative forms of employment, and those who lack those skills.

Breakthroughs in Genetics

Computer technology helped fuel explosive growth in all areas of scientific research, particularly genetics. Early discoveries in genetics by Gregor Mendel, Thomas Hunt Morgan, and others laid the groundwork for more dramatic breakthroughs—the discovery of DNA by the



THE HUMAN GENOME This computerized image is a digital representation of part of the human genome, the constellation of genetic material that makes up the human body. The Human Genome Project, one of the most ambitious in the history of science, set out in the late 1990s to chart the human genetic structure. Each color in this image represents one of the four chemical components of DNA, the principal material of genes. (Mario Tama/Getty Images)

British scientists Oswald Avery, Colin MacLeod, and Maclyn McCarty in 1944; and in 1953, the dramatic discovery by the American biochemist James Watson and the British biophysicist Francis Crick of its double-helix structure, and thus of the key to identifying genetic codes. From these discoveries emerged the new science—and ultimately the new industry—of genetic engineering, through which new medical treatments and new techniques for hybridization of plants and animals became possible.

Little by little, scientists began to identify specific genes in humans and other living things that determine particular traits, and to learn how to alter or reproduce them. But the identification of genes was painfully slow; and in 1989, the federal government appropriated \$3 billion to fund the National Center for the Human Genome, to accelerate the mapping of human genes. The Human Genome Project set out to identify all of the more than 100,000 genes by 2005. But new technologies for research, and competition from other privately funded projects, drove the project forward faster than expected, and it was completed in April 2003.

In the meantime, DNA research had already attracted considerable public attention. The DNA structure of an individual, scientists have discovered, is as unique and as identifiable as a fingerprint. DNA testing, therefore, makes it possible to identify individuals through their blood, semen, skin, or even hair. It played a major role first in the O. J. Simpson trial in 1995 and then in the 1998 investigation into President Clinton's relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Also in 1998, DNA testing appeared to establish with certainty that Thomas Jefferson had fathered a child with his slave Sally Hemings, by finding genetic similarities between descendants of both, thus resolving a political and scholarly dispute stretching back nearly 200 years.

But genetic research is also the source of great controversy. Many people are uneasy about the predictions that the new science might give scientists the ability to alter aspects of life that had previously seemed outside the reach of human control. Some critics fear genetic research on religious grounds, seeing it as an interference with God's plan. Others use moral arguments and express fears that it will allow parents, for example, to choose what kinds of children they will have. And a particularly heated controversy has emerged over the way in which scientists obtained genetic material.

One of the most promising areas of medical research involves the use of stem cells, genetic material obtained in large part from undeveloped fetuses—mostly fetuses created by couples attempting in vitro fertilization. (In vitro fertilization is the process by which couples unable to conceive a child have a fetus conceived outside the womb using their eggs and sperm and then

Human Genome Project

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Moral and Ethical Dilemmas

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fertilization. (In vitro fertilization is the process by which couples unable to conceive a child have a fetus conceived outside the womb using their eggs and sperm and then

implanted in the mother.) Anti-abortion advocates denounce stem-cell research, claiming that it exploits (and endangers) unborn children. Supporters of stem-cell research—which shows promising signs of offering cures for Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, ALS, and other previously incurable illnesses—argue that the stem cells they use come from fetuses that would otherwise be discarded, since in vitro fertilization always produces many more fetuses than can be used.

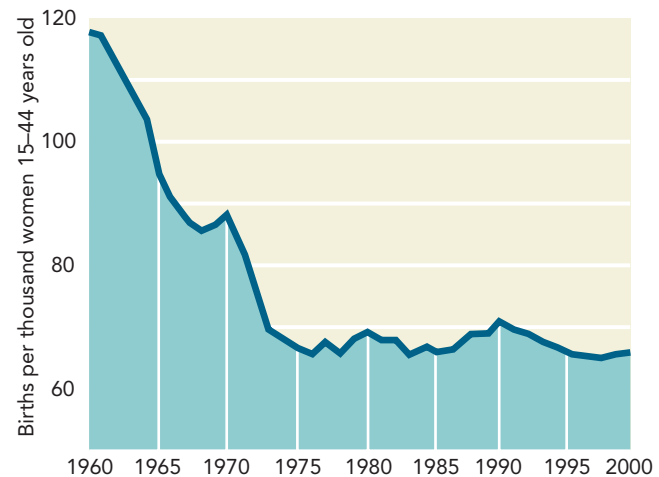
The controversy over stem-cell research became an issue in the 2000 campaign. George W. Bush, once he became president, kept his promise to anti-abortion advocates and in the summer of 2001 issued a ruling barring the use of federal funds to support research using any stem cells that scientists were not already using at the time of his decision. Stem-cell research continued, although on a much reduced scale, in institutions whose research was privately funded. Several state governments—among them California and New York—also began to support stem-cell research.

A CHANGING SOCIETY

The American population changed dramatically in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It grew larger, older, and more racially and ethnically diverse.

A Shifting Population

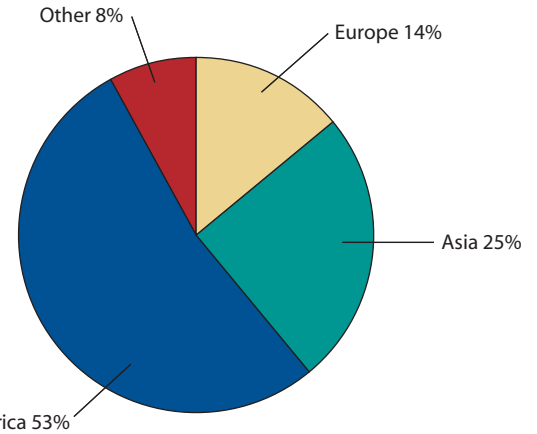
Decreasing birth rates and growing life spans contributed to one of the most important characteristics of the American population in the early twenty-first century:



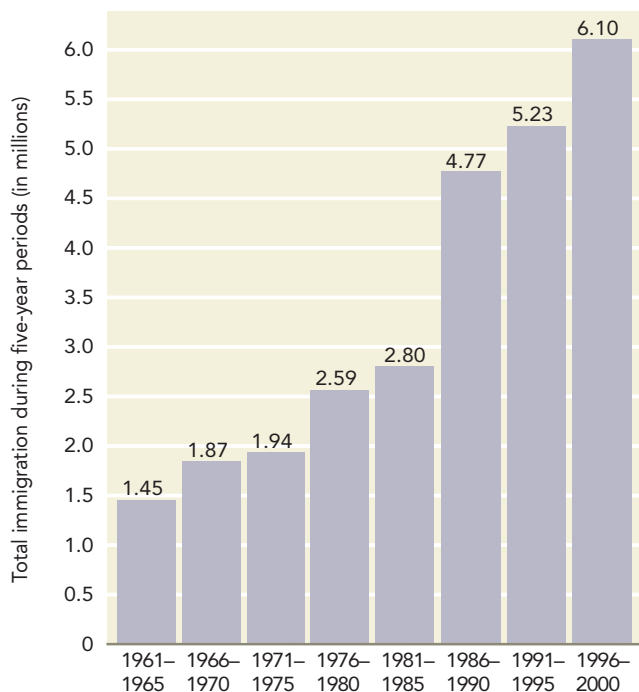
THE AMERICAN BIRTH RATE, 1960–2000 This chart shows the striking change in the pattern of the nation's birth rate from the twenty years after 1940, which produced the great "baby boom." From 1960 onward, the nation's birth rate steadily, and in the 1960s and 1970s dramatically, declined. ♦ *What effect did this declining birth rate have on the age structure of the population?*

its increasing agedness. The enormous “baby boom” generation—people born in the first ten years after World War II—drove the median age steadily upward (from 34 in 1996 to 36 in 2006 to a projected 39 by 2035. This growing population of aging Americans contributed to stresses on the Social Security and Medicare systems. It also had important implications for the work force. In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, the number of people aged 25–54 (known statistically as the prime work force) grew by over 26 million. In the first ten years of the twenty-first century, the number of workers in that age group will not grow at all.

The slowing growth of the native-born population, and the workforce shortages it has helped to create, is one reason for the rapid growth of immigration. In 2006, the number of foreign-born residents of the United States was the highest in American history—more than 35 million people, over 11 percent of the total population. These immigrants came from a wider variety of backgrounds than ever before, as a result of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act, which eliminated national origins as a criterion for admission. The growing presence of the foreign-born contributed to a significant drop in the percentage of white residents in the United States—from 90 percent in 1965 (the year of the Immigration Reform Act) to 78 in 2006. Latinos and Asians were by far the largest groups of immigrants in these years. But others came in significant numbers from Africa, the Middle East, Russia, and eastern Europe.



SOURCES OF IMMIGRATION, 1995–2003 The Immigration Reform Act of 1965 lifted the national quotas imposed on immigration policy in 1924 and opened immigration to large areas of the world that had previously been restricted. In 1965, 90 percent of the immigrants to the United States came from Europe. As this chart shows, by 2003 almost the reverse was true. Well over 80 percent of all immigrants came from non-European sources. The most important countries of origin in this period were (in order) Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, and Cuba. ♦ *What impact did this new immigration have on American politics?*



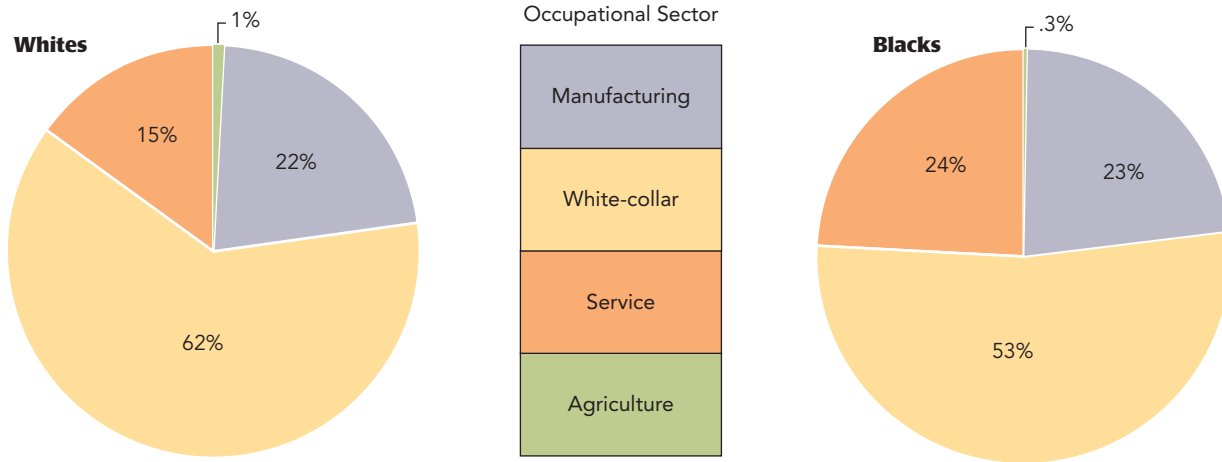
TOTAL IMMIGRATION, 1960–2000 This chart shows the tremendous increase in immigration to the United States in the decades since the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. The immigration of the 1980s and 1990s was the highest since the late nineteenth century. ♦ *What role did the 1965 act have in increasing immigration levels?*

African Americans in the Post-Civil Rights Era

The civil rights movement and the other liberal efforts of the 1960s had two very different effects on African Americans. On the one hand, there were increased opportunities for advancement available to those in a position to take advantage of them. On the other hand, as the industrial economy declined and government services dwindled, there was a growing sense of helplessness and despair among large groups of nonwhites who continued to find themselves barred from upward mobility.

For the black middle class, which by the early twenty-first century constituted over half of the African-American population of America, progress was remarkable in the decades after the high point of the civil rights movement. Disparities between black and white professionals did not vanish, but they diminished substantially. African-American families moved into more affluent urban communities and, in many cases, into suburbs—at times as neighbors of whites, more often into predominantly black communities. The percentage of black high-school graduates going on to college was virtually the same as that of white high-school graduates by the early twenty-first century (although a smaller proportion of blacks than whites managed to complete high school). Just over 17 percent of African Americans over the age of twenty-four held bachelor’s degrees or higher in 2005, compared to 29 percent of whites, a significant advance from twenty years earlier. And African Americans were making rapid strides in many professions from which, a

Economic Progress for African Americans



COMPARISON OF BLACK AND WHITE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION, 2005 By the early twenty-first century, as this chart makes clear, the African-American middle class had grown dramatically. Over half of all employed black workers in the United States worked in “white-collar” jobs. Perhaps even more striking, given the distribution of the black population a half century earlier, is that almost no African Americans (about one-third of 1 percent) were working in agriculture by the early 2000s. But the gap between black and white workers remained wide in several areas, particularly in the percentage of each group employed in low-wage service jobs. ♦ *What factors contributed to the increase of the black middle class in the years after 1960?*

generation earlier, they had been barred or within which they had been segregated. Over half of all employed blacks in the United States had skilled white-collar jobs in 2005. There were few areas of American life from which blacks were any longer entirely excluded.

But the rise of the black middle class also accentuated (and perhaps even helped cause) the increasingly desperate plight of other African Americans, whom the economic growth and the liberal programs of the 1960s and beyond had never reached. These impoverished people—sometimes described as the “underclass”—made up as much as a third of the nation’s black population. Many of them lived in isolated, decaying, and desperately poor inner-city neighborhoods. As more successful blacks moved out of the inner cities, the poor were left virtually alone in their decaying neighborhoods. Less than half of young inner-city blacks finished high school in 2006; more than 60 percent were unemployed. The black family structure suffered as well from the dislocations of urban poverty. There was a radical increase in the number of single-parent, female-headed black households. In 1970, 59 percent of all black children under 18 lived with both their parents (already down from 70 percent a decade earlier). In 2006, only 35 percent of black children lived in such households, while 74 percent of white children did.

Nonwhites were disadvantaged by many factors in the changing social and economic climate of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Among them was a growing impatience with affirmative action and welfare programs for the poor, as well as a steady decline in the number of unskilled jobs in the economy; the departure

of businesses from their neighborhoods; the absence of adequate transportation to areas where jobs were more plentiful; and failing schools that did not prepare them adequately for employment.

The anger and despair such conditions were creating among inner-city residents became clear in many ways. It was expressed at times artistically, as in some aspects of the most popular new black musical form of the late twentieth century, rap. (See “Patterns of Popular Culture,” pp. 908–909.) The anger and frustration became visible even more graphically in the summer of 1992 in Los Angeles.

The previous year, a bystander had videotaped several Los Angeles police officers beating an apparently helpless black man, Rodney King, whom they had captured after an auto chase. But an all-white jury in a suburban community just outside Los Angeles acquitted the officers when they were tried for assault. Black residents of South Central Los Angeles, one of the poorest communities in the city, erupted in anger—precipitating the largest single racial disturbance of the twentieth century. There was widespread looting and arson. More than fifty people died.

What Americans had long called “race relations” grew increasingly sour in these difficult years. Nowhere was this mutual suspicion more evident than in the celebrated trial of the former football star O. J. Simpson, who was accused of murdering his former wife and a young man in Los Angeles in 1994. The long and costly “O. J. trial” was an enormous media sensation for over a year. Throughout the proceedings, opinions about Simpson’s guilt broke down strikingly along racial lines. Simpson’s acquittal in

The “Underclass”

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Rodney King

O. J. Simpson Trial



“IGNORANCE = FEAR” The artist Keith Haring (whose work was inspired in large part by urban graffiti) created this striking poster in 1989, the year before he himself died of AIDS, to generate support for the battle against the disease. “ACT UP,” the organization that distributed it, was among the most militant groups in demanding more rapid efforts to search for a cure. (© *The Estate of Keith Haring*)

the fall of 1995, after a trial in which the defense tried to portray him as a victim of police racism, caused celebrations in many black communities and a quiet disgust among many whites.

Modern Plagues: Drugs and AIDS

Two new and deadly epidemics ravaged many American communities beginning in the 1980s. One was a dramatic increase in drug use, which penetrated nearly every community in the nation. The enormous demand for drugs, and particularly for “crack” cocaine in the late 1980s and early 1990s, spawned what was in effect a multibillion-dollar industry. Drug use declined significantly among middle-class people beginning in the late 1980s, but the epidemic declined much more slowly in the poor urban neighborhoods where it was doing the most severe damage.

The drug epidemic was related to another scourge of the late twentieth century: the epidemic spread of a new and lethal disease first documented in 1981 and soon named AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

AIDS Epidemic AIDS is the product of the HIV virus, which is transmitted by the exchange of bodily fluids (blood or semen). The virus gradually destroys the body’s immune system and makes its victims highly vulnerable to a number of diseases

(particularly to various forms of cancer and pneumonia) to which they would otherwise have a natural resistance. Those infected with the virus (i.e., HIV positive) can live for a long time without developing AIDS, but for many years those who became ill were certain to die. The first American victims of AIDS (and for many years the group among whom cases remained the most numerous) were homosexual men. But by the late 1980s, as the gay community began to take preventive measures, the most rapid increase in the spread of the disease occurred among heterosexuals, many of them intravenous drug users, who spread the virus by sharing contaminated hypodermic needles.

In 2005, there were an estimated 434,000 Americans living with the AIDS virus. But the United States represented only a tiny proportion of the worldwide total of people afflicted with HIV, an estimated 39.5 million people in 2006. Over two-thirds (approximately 25 million) of those cases were concentrated in Africa. Governments and private groups, in the meantime, began promoting AIDS awareness in increasingly visible and graphic ways—urging young people, in particular, to avoid “unsafe sex” through abstinence or the use of latex condoms. The success of that effort in the United States was suggested by the drop in new cases from 70,000 in 1995 to approximately 44,000 in 2005.

RAP

For many generations, much of American popular music has been the product of musical forms created by African Americans: gospel, ragtime, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock, soul, disco, funk, and—in the 1980s and 1990s—rap. Conservative guardians of American culture have repeatedly denounced these new forms of music as subversive, excessively sexual, violent, dangerous. But the music has always survived the attacks.

Rap's musical lineage is a long and complicated one. It has elements of the disco and street funk of the 1970s; of the fast-talking jive of black radio DJs in the 1950s; of the on-stage patter of Cab Calloway and other African-American stars of the first half of the twentieth century. Hence, it contains reminders of tap and break dancing—even of the boxing-ring poetry of Muhammad Ali.

Rap's most important element is its words. It is as much a form of language as a form of music. It bears a distant resemblance to some traditions of African-American pulpit oratory, which also included forms of spoken song. It draws from some of the verbal traditions of urban black street life, including the “dozens”—a ritualized trading of insults particularly popular among young black men.

But rap is also the product of a distinctive place and time: the South Bronx in the 1970s and 1980s and the

hip hop culture that was born there and that soon dominated the appearance and public behavior of many young black males. “Hip hop is how you walk, talk, live, see, act, feel,” one Bronx hip hopper described it. It created many of the patterns of dress and behavior that became common among inner-city youths: the popularity of athletic clothes, hats, and shoes; the practice of young men giving themselves “street names”; and—in the 1980s at least—graffiti and break dancing. In the 1990s, break dancing lost its popularity, clothes became baggier, hats became larger, and the most popular element of hip hop culture was rap, which had by then been developing for nearly twenty years.

Beginning in the early 1970s, Bronx DJs began setting up their equipment on neighborhood streets and staging block parties, where they not only played records but also put on shows of their own—performances that featured spoken rhymes, jazzy phrases, and pointed comments about the audience, the neighborhood, and themselves. Gradually, the DJs began to bring “rappers” into shows—young men who took the DJ style and developed it into a much more elaborate form of performance, usually accompanied by dancing. As rap grew more popular in the inner city, record promoters began signing some of its new stars. In 1979, the Sugarhill Gang's

“Rapper's Delight” became the first rap single to be played on mainstream commercial radio and the first to become a major hit. In the early 1980s, Run-DMC became the first national rap superstars. From there, rap moved quickly to become one of the most popular and commercially successful forms of popular music. In the 1990s and 2000s, rap recordings routinely sold millions of copies.

Rap has taken many forms. There have been white rappers (Eminem, House of Pain), female rappers (Missy Elliot, Queen Latifah), even religious rappers and children's rappers. But it has always been primarily a product of the young male culture of the inner city, and some of the most successful rap has conveyed the frustration and anger that these men have felt about their lives—“a voice for the oppressed people,” one rap artist said, “that in many other ways don't have a voice.” In 1982, the rap group Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five released a rap called “The Message,”* a searing description of ghetto culture:

Got a bum education, double-digit inflation

*Edward Fletcher, M. Glover, and S. Robinson, “The Message,” recorded 1982 by Grand Master Flash & The Furious Five. Reprinted by permission of Sugar Hill Music Publishing Ltd.

In the mid-1990s, AIDS researchers, after years of frustration, began discovering effective treatments for the disease. By taking a combination of powerful drugs on a rigorous schedule, among them a group known as protease inhibitors, even people with advanced cases of AIDS experienced dramatic improvement—so much so that in many cases there were no measurable quantities of the virus left in their bloodstreams. The new drugs gave promise for the first time of dramatically extending the lives of people with AIDS, perhaps to normal life spans. The drugs were not a cure for AIDS; people who stopped taking them experienced a rapid return of the disease. And the effectiveness of the drugs varied from person to person. In addition, the drugs were very expensive and difficult to administer; poorer AIDS patients often could not

obtain access to them, and the drugs remained very scarce in Africa and other less affluent parts of the world where the epidemic was rampant. The United Nations, many philanthropic organizations, and a number of governments, including the United States, committed significant funds to fight the AIDS crisis in Africa in the 2000s, but progress remained slow.

A CONTESTED CULTURE

Few things created more controversy and anxiety in the 1980s and 1990s than the battles over the character of American culture. That culture had changed dramatically in many ways since World War II. It had seen a profound



RUN DMC The group Run DMC, shown here in concert, was one of rap music's first superstars. They released their first album in 1983 and remained popular fifteen years later, although by then—given the short life span of most groups—they were, by their own admission, senior citizens on the rap circuit. At a concert in New York in 1997, they asked the audience to “put your hands in the air if you love old-school.” A critic from *Rolling Stone* wrote that “from the crowd’s ecstatic reaction,” the answer was clearly yes. (© Lisa Leone)

Can't take the train to the job, there's a
strike at the station

Don't push me, 'cause I'm close to the
edge

I'm tryin' not to lose me head

It's like a jungle sometime it makes me
wonder

How I keep from going under.

Similar songs by other artists came to be known as “message rap.” In the late 1980s, the Compton and Watts neighborhoods of Los Angeles—two of the most distressed minority communities in the city—produced their own style, known

as West Coast rap, with such groups as Ice Cube, Ice T, Tupac Shakur, and Snoop Doggy Dog. Even more than the New York version, West Coast rap often had a harsh, angry character. At its extremes (the so-called gangsta' rap), it could be strikingly violent and highly provocative. Scandals erupted again and again over controversial lyrics—Ice T's “Cop Killer,” which some critics believed advocated murdering police; the sexually explicit lyrics of 2 Live Crew and other groups, which critics accused of advocating violence against women.

But it was not just the lyrics that caused the furor. Rap artists were

almost all products of tough inner-city neighborhoods, and the rough-edged styles many took with them into the public eye made many people uncomfortable. Some rappers found themselves caught up in highly publicized trouble with the law. Several—including two of rap's biggest stars, Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G.—were murdered. The business of rap, and particularly the confrontational business style of Death Row Records (founded by Dr. Dre, a veteran of the first major West Coast rap group NWA), was a source of public controversy as well.

These controversies at times unfairly dominated the image of rap as a whole in national culture. Some rap is angry and cruel, as are many of the realities of the world from which it comes. But much of it is explicitly positive, some of it deliberately gentle. Chuck D and other successful rappers use their music to exhort young black men to avoid drugs and crime, to take responsibility for their children, to get an education. And the form, if not the content, of the original rappers has spread widely through American culture. Rap has come to dominate the music charts in America, and its styles have made their way onto *Sesame Street* and other children's shows, into television commercials, Hollywood films, and the everyday language of millions of people, young and old, black and white. It has become another of the arresting, innovative African-American musical traditions that have shaped American culture for more than a century.

redefinition of the roles of women. It had produced a mobilization of many minorities and an at least partial inclusion of them into mainstream culture. It had experienced a sexual revolution. It had become much more explicit in its depiction of sex, violence, and dissent. American culture was more diverse, more open, less restrained, and more contentious than it had been in the past. As a result, new controversies and new issues emerged.

Battles over Feminism and Abortion

Among the principal goals of the New Right as it became more powerful and assertive in the late twentieth century, and as it focused on cultural changes it did not like, was

to challenge feminism and its achievements. Leaders of the New Right had campaigned successfully against the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution. And they played a central role in the most divisive issue of the late 1980s and 1990s: the controversy over abortion rights.

For those who favored allowing women to choose to terminate unwanted pregnancies, the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) had seemed to settle the question. By the 1980s, abortion was the most commonly performed surgical procedure in the country. But at the same time, opposition to abortion was creating a powerful grassroots movement. The right-to-life movement, as it called itself, found its most fervent supporters

“Right-to-Life”
Movement

among Catholics; and indeed, the Catholic Church itself lent its institutional authority to the battle against legalized abortion. Religious doctrine also motivated the anti-abortion stance of Mormons, fundamentalist Christians, and other groups. The opposition of some other anti-abortion activists had less to do with religion than with their commitment to traditional notions of family and gender relations. To them, abortion was a particularly offensive part of a much larger assault by feminists on the role of women as wives and mothers. It was also, many foes contended, a form of murder. Fetuses, they claimed, were human beings who had a “right to life” from the moment of conception.

Although the right-to-life movement was persistent in its demand for a reversal of *Roe v. Wade* or, barring that, a constitutional amendment banning abortion, it also attacked abortion in more limited ways, at its most vulnerable points. Starting in the 1970s, Congress and many state legislatures began barring the use of public funds to pay for abortions, thus making them almost inaccessible for many poor women. The Reagan and the two Bush administrations imposed further restrictions on federal funding and even on the right of doctors in federally funded clinics to give patients any information on abortion. Extremists in the right-to-life movement began picketing, occupying, and at times bombing abortion clinics. Several anti-abortion activists murdered doctors who performed abortions; other physicians were subject to campaigns of terrorism and harassment. The changing composition of the Supreme Court between 1981 and 2008 (during which time new conservative justices were appointed to the Court) renewed the right-to-life movement’s hopes for a reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

The changing judicial climate of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries mobilized defenders of abortion as never before. They called themselves the “pro-choice” movement, because they were defending not so much abortion itself as every woman’s right to choose whether and when to bear a child. It soon became clear that the pro-choice movement was in many parts of the country at least as strong as, and in some areas much stronger than, the right-to-life movement. With the election of President Clinton in 1992, a supporter of “choice,” the immediate threat to *Roe v. Wade* seemed to fade. Clinton’s reelection in 1996 was, among other things, evidence that the pro-choice movement maintained considerable political strength. But abortion rights remained highly vulnerable. And Clinton’s successor, George W. Bush, openly opposed abortion.

“Pro-Choice”
Movement

The Growth of Environmentalism

The environmental movement, which had grown so dramatically in the late 1960s and early 1970s, continued to expand in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. In the decades after the first Earth Day, environmental issues gained increasing attention and support. Although the federal government displayed only intermittent interest in the subject, environmentalists won a series of significant battles, mostly at the local level. They blocked the construction of roads, airports, and other projects that they claimed would be ecologically dangerous, taking advantage of new legislations protecting endangered species and environmentally fragile regions.

Environmental
Activism

In the late 1980s, the environmental movement began to mobilize around a new and ominous challenge, which

MARCH FOR WOMEN’S LIVES This large rally, which began with a march by thousands of women (and some men) down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, occurred in April 2004, several months before the presidential election and was meant to demonstrate support for abortion rights in a city whose political institutions were dominated by leaders opposed to abortion. Pro-choice advocates feared that a Bush victory would lead to new appointments to the Supreme Court that would put the 1973 *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion, in jeopardy. (Ron Sachs/Cordis)



WOMEN'S HISTORY

The rise of women's history in recent decades has produced many debates among historians. But its most important impact has been to challenge scholars to look at the past through a new lens. Historians had long been accustomed to considering the influence of ideas, of economic interests, and of race and ethnicity on the course of history. Women's history challenged them to consider as well the role of gender. Throughout history, many scholars now argue, societies have created distinctive roles for men and women. How those roles have been defined, and the ways in which the roles affect how people and cultures behave, should be central to our understanding of both the past and the present.

Women's history was not new to the 1960s. Just as women had been challenging traditional gender roles long before the 1960s, so too have women (and some men) been writing women's history for many years. In the nineteenth century, such scholarship generally stressed the unrecognized contributions of women to history—for example, Sarah Hale's 1853 *Record of All Distinguished Women from "the Beginning" till A.D. 1850*. Work of the same sort continued into the twentieth century and, indeed, continues today.

But after 1900, people committed to progressive reform movements began to produce a different kind of women's scholarship, in many ways more sociological than historical. It revealed, above all, ways in which women were victimized by a harsh new system of industrialism. In the process, it attempted to raise popular support for reform. Feminist scholars such as Edith Abbott, Margaret Byington, and Katherine Anthony examined the impact of economic change on working-class families, with a special focus on women; and they looked at the often terrible conditions in which women worked in factories, mills, and other people's homes. Their goal was less to celebrate women's contributions than to direct attention to the oppression of women by a harsh capitalist system and arouse sentiment for reform.

Feminism receded from prominence after the victory of the suffrage

movement in 1920, and women's history entered a half-century of relative inactivity as well. Women continued to write important histories in many fields, and some—for example, Eleanor Flexner, whose *Century of Struggle* (1959) became a classic history of the suffrage crusade—wrote explicitly about women. Mary Beard, best known for her sweeping historical narratives written in collaboration with her husband, Charles Beard, published a book of her own in 1964, *Women as a Force in History*, in which she argued for the historical importance of ordinary women as shapers of society. But such work at first had little impact on the writing of history as a whole.

As modern feminism began to sweep across society in the 1960s and 1970s, interest in women's history revived as well. Gerda Lerner, one of the pioneers of the new women's history, once wrote of the impact of feminism on historical studies: "The recognition that we had been denied our history came to many of us as a staggering insight, which altered our consciousness irretrievably." For a time, the new women's history repeated the pattern of earlier studies of women. Much of the early work was in the "contributionist" tradition, stressing the way in which women had played more notable roles in major historical events than men had usually acknowledged. Other work stressed ways in which women had been victimized by their subordination to men and by their powerlessness within the industrial economy.

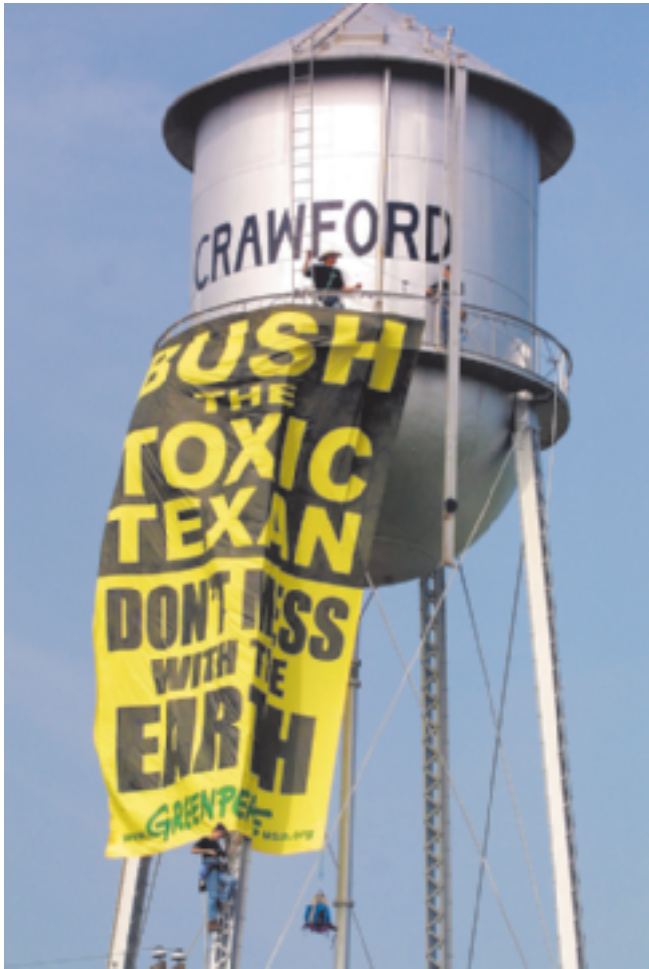
Increasingly, however, women's history began to question the nature of gender itself. Some scholars began to emphasize the artificiality of gender distinctions. The difference between women and men, they argued, was socially constructed. It was also superficial and (in the public world, at least) unimportant. The history of women was, therefore, the history of how men (with the unwitting help of many women) had created and maintained a set of fictions about women's capacities that modern women were now attempting to shatter.

By the early 1980s, some feminists had begun to make a very different

argument: that there were basic differences between women and men—not just biological differences, but differences in values, sensibilities, and culture. This, of course, was what most men and many women had believed for decades (indeed centuries) before the feminist revolution. But the feminists of the 1970s and 1980s did not see these differences as evidence of women's incapacities. They saw them, rather, as evidence of an alternative female culture capable of challenging (and improving) the male-dominated world. Some historians of women, therefore, began exploring areas of female experience that revealed the special character of women's culture and values: family, housework, motherhood, women's clubs and organizations, female literature, the social lives of working-class women, women's sexuality, and many other subjects that suggested "difference" more than "contributions" or "victimization." Partly in response, some historians began to make the same argument about men—that understanding "masculinity" and its role in shaping men's lives was as important as understanding notions of "femininity" in explaining the history of women.

The notion of gender as a source of social and cultural difference was responsible for the most powerful challenge women's history has raised to the way in which scholars view the past. It is not enough simply to expand the existing story to make room for women, Joan Scott, one of the most influential theorists of gender studies, has written. Feminist history is, rather, a way of reconceptualizing the past by accepting that notions of gender have been a central force in the lives of societies.

Many historians continue to believe that other categories (race and class in particular) have in fact been more important in shaping the lives of men and women than has gender. But even those who do so are increasingly willing to accept the argument of women's historians: that understanding concepts of gender is an essential part of understanding women's (and men's) lives.



GREENPEACE IN TEXAS Activists from the environmental movement Greenpeace climbed the water tower in Crawford, Texas, the site of President Bush's ranch, and hung this banner attacking his environmental policies in April 2001. At the time, the Bush administration was advocating opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling and was rejecting the Kyoto Accords, negotiated before the 2000 election, which sought to obligate nations to cooperate in fighting global warming. (Getty Images)

became known as “global warming”—a steady rise in the earth’s temperature as a result of emissions from the burning of fossil fuels (most notably coal and oil). Although considerable controversy continued for years over the pace, and even the reality, of global warming, by the early twenty-first century a broad consensus was growing around the issue—thanks in part to the efforts of significant public figures such as former vice president Al Gore, who won a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts, to draw attention to the problem. In 1997, representatives of the major industrial nations met in Kyoto, Japan, and agreed to a broad treaty establishing steps toward reducing carbon emissions and thus slowing or reversing global warming. Opposition to the treaty from Republicans in Congress prevented President Clinton from winning ratification of the treaty. In March 2001, President

George W. Bush denounced the treaty for placing too great a burden on the United States and withdrew it from consideration.

The rising popularity of environmental issues reflected an important shift both in the character of the American left and in the tone of American public life generally. Through much of the first half of the twentieth century, American politics had been preoccupied with debates over economic power and disparities of wealth. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, even though inequality in the distribution of wealth and power was reaching unprecedented levels, such debates had largely ceased. There were, of course, economic implications to environmentalism and other no-growth efforts. But what drove such movements was less a concern about class than a concern about the quality of individual and community life.

Shift away from
Class Politics

The Fragmentation of Mass Culture

One of the most powerful cultural trends throughout much of the twentieth century was the growing power and the increasing standardization of mass culture. The institutions of the media—news, entertainment, advertising, and others—grew steadily more powerful. Almost without exception, they also strove to attract the largest possible audience or market. In doing so, they attempted to standardize their products so that they would be familiar and accessible to everyone. This standardization began with mass merchandising in the late nineteenth century; it accelerated in the early twentieth century with the rise of Hollywood movies, national radio networks, and powerful, mass-circulation magazines; it became dramatically more important in the 1950s, with the rise of network television.

Beginning in the 1970s, and accelerating in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, the character of mass culture changed in important ways. There was, of course, continued standardization in many areas. McDonald’s, Burger King, and other fast-food chains became the most widely known restaurants in America (and indeed the world). Huge retail chains—Kmart, Wal-Mart, Barnes & Noble, Blockbuster, the Gap, and others—dominated retail sales in many communities. The most popular Hollywood films attracted larger audiences than ever before; and the most powerful media companies produced merchandise that made their film and television characters familiar to almost everyone in the world. But there was also a very different trend at work at the same time: a tendency in both retailing and entertainment to appeal less to mass markets and more to specific segments of the market.

This segmentation was first visible in new ideas about advertising that became powerful in the 1970s, ideas known as “targeting.” Instead of finding promotional techniques

Target Marketing

to appeal to everyone, advertisers sought to identify a product with a particular “segment” of the market (men, women, young people, old people, health-conscious people, the rich, people of modest means, children) and create advertisements designed to appeal to it. As if in response, the television networks began to produce programming that focused on particular segments of the audience. Some programs were aimed at women, some at African Americans, some at affluent, urban, middle-class viewers, some at rural and provincial people.

Even more important was the rapid proliferation of media outlets. As late as the 1970s, American television audiences overwhelmingly watched programs on the three major networks: NBC, CBS, and ABC. In the 1980s, that began to change. One reason was the growth of videocassette recorders and, later, digital video discs, which made it easier for viewers to choose their own programming. Another reason was the increasing availability of cable and satellite television, which allowed homes to receive many more channels than ever before. And many people turned away from television and began to explore the powerful new medium of the Internet, with its huge variety of sites tailored to almost every interest and taste.

THE PERILS OF GLOBALIZATION

The celebration of the beginning of a new millennium on January 1, 2000, was a notable moment not just because of the change in the calendar. It was notable above all as a global event—a shared and for the most part joyous experience that united the world in its exuberance. But if the

millennium celebrations suggested the bright promise of globalization, other events at the dawn of the new century suggested its dark perils.

Opposing the “New World Order”

In the United States and other industrial nations, opposition to globalization—or to what President George H.W. Bush once called “the new world order”—took several forms. To many Americans on both the left and the right, the nation’s increasingly interventionist foreign policy was deeply troubling. Critics on the left charged that the United States was using military action to advance its economic interests, in the 1991 Gulf War and, above all, in the Iraq War that began in 2003. Critics on the right claimed that the nation was allowing itself to be swayed by the interests of other nations—as in the humanitarian interventions in Somalia in 1993 and the Balkans in the late 1990s—and was ceding its sovereignty to international organizations.

Critics of Intervention

But the most impassioned opposition to globalization in the West came from an array of groups that challenged the claim that the “new world order” was economically beneficial. Labor unions insisted that the rapid expansion of free-trade agreements led to the export of jobs from advanced nations to less developed ones. Other groups attacked working conditions in new manufacturing countries on humanitarian grounds, arguing that the global economy was creating new classes of “slave laborers” working in conditions that few Western nations would tolerate. Environmentalists argued that globalization, in exporting industry to low-wage countries, also exported industrial pollution



PROTESTS IN SEATTLE, 1999 When the World Trade Organization held its annual meeting in Seattle, Washington, in late 1999, thousands of demonstrators crowded into the city to protest the WTO’s role in the globalization of the economy and, they believed, the exploitation of working people in the United States and around the world. Their rowdy and at times violent demonstrations postponed the opening of the conference. In this photograph, a protester faces Seattle police in a cloud of tear gas, waiting to be arrested. Similar demonstrations disrupted other meetings of global economic organizations over the next several years, including protests in Washington and Genoa, Italy. (Reuters NewMedia Inc./Corbis)

and toxic waste into nations that had no effective laws to control them, and contributed significantly to global warming. And still others opposed global economic arrangements on the grounds that they enriched and empowered large multinational corporations and threatened the freedom and autonomy of individuals and communities.

The varied opponents of globalization were agreed on the targets of their discontent: not just free-trade agreements, but also the multinational institutions that policed and advanced the global economy. Among them were the World Trade Organization, which monitored the enforcement of the GATT treaties of the 1990s; the International Monetary Fund, which controlled international credit and exchange rates; and the World Bank, which made money available for development projects in many countries. In November 1999, when the leaders of the seven leading industrial nations (and the leader of Russia) gathered for their annual meeting in Seattle, Washington, tens of thousands of protesters—most of them peaceful, but some of them violent—clashed with police, smashed store windows, and all but paralyzed the city. A few months later, a smaller but still substantial demonstration disrupted meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington. And in July 2001, at a meeting of the same leaders in Genoa, Italy, an estimated 50,000 demonstrators clashed violently with police in a melee that left one protester dead and several hundred injured. The participants in the meeting responded to the demonstrations by pledging \$1.2 billion to fight the AIDS epidemic in developing countries, and also by deciding to hold future meetings in remote locations far from major cities.

Defending Orthodoxy

Outside the industrialized West, the impact of globalization created other concerns. Many citizens of nonindustrialized nations resented the way the world economy had left them in poverty and, in their view, exploited and oppressed. In some parts of the nonindustrialized world—particularly in some of the Islamic nations of the Middle East—the increasing reach of globalization created additional grievances, rooted not just in economics but also in religion and culture.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979, in which orthodox Muslims ousted a despotic government whose leaders had embraced many aspects of modern Western culture, was one of the first large and visible manifestations of a phenomenon that would eventually reach across much of the Islamic world and threaten the stability of the globe. In one Islamic nation after another, waves of fundamentalist orthodoxy emerged to defend traditional culture against incursions from the West.

One product of these resentments was a growing resort to violence as a way to fight the influence of the

West. Militants used isolated incidents of violence and mayhem, designed to disrupt societies and governments and to create fear among their peoples. Such tactics are known to the world as terrorism.

The Rise of Terrorism

The term “terrorism” was used first during the French Revolution in the 1790s to describe the actions of the radical Jacobins against the French government. It continued to be used intermittently throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to describe the use of violence as a form of intimidation against peoples and governments. But the widespread understanding of terrorism as an important fact of modern life is largely a product of the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Acts of what we have come to call terrorism have occurred in many parts of the world. Irish revolutionaries engaged in terrorism regularly against the English through much of the twentieth century. Jews used it in Palestine against the British before the creation of Israel, and Palestinians have used it frequently against Jews in Israel—particularly in the past several decades. Revolutionary groups in Italy, Germany, Japan, and France have engaged in terrorist acts intermittently over the past several decades.

The United States, too, has experienced terrorism for many years, much of it against American targets abroad. These included the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the explosion that brought down an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, the bombing of American embassies in 1998, the assault on the U.S. naval vessel *Cole* in 2000, and other events around the world. Terrorist incidents were relatively rare, but not unknown, within the United States itself prior to September 11, 2001. Militants on the American left performed various acts of terror in the 1960s and early 1970s. In February 1993, a bomb exploded in the parking garage of the World Trade Center in New York killing six people and causing serious, but not irreparable, structural damage to the towers. Several men connected with militant Islamic organizations were convicted of the crime. In April 1995, a van containing explosives blew up in front of a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people. Timothy McVeigh, a former Marine who had become part of a militant antigovernment movement of the American right, was convicted of the crime and eventually executed in 2001.

Most Americans, however, considered terrorism a problem that mainly plagued other nations. One of the many results of the terrible events of September 11, 2001, was to jolt the American people out of complacency and alert them to the presence of continuing danger. That awareness increased in the years following September 11. New security measures changed the way in which Americans traveled. New government regulations altered

Globalization Protested

Origins of Terrorism

Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism



SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 One great American symbol, the Statue of Liberty, stands against a sky filled with the thick smoke from the destruction of another American symbol, New York City's World Trade Center towers, a few hours after terrorists crashed two planes into them. (*Daniel Hulsbizer/AP/Wide World Photos*)

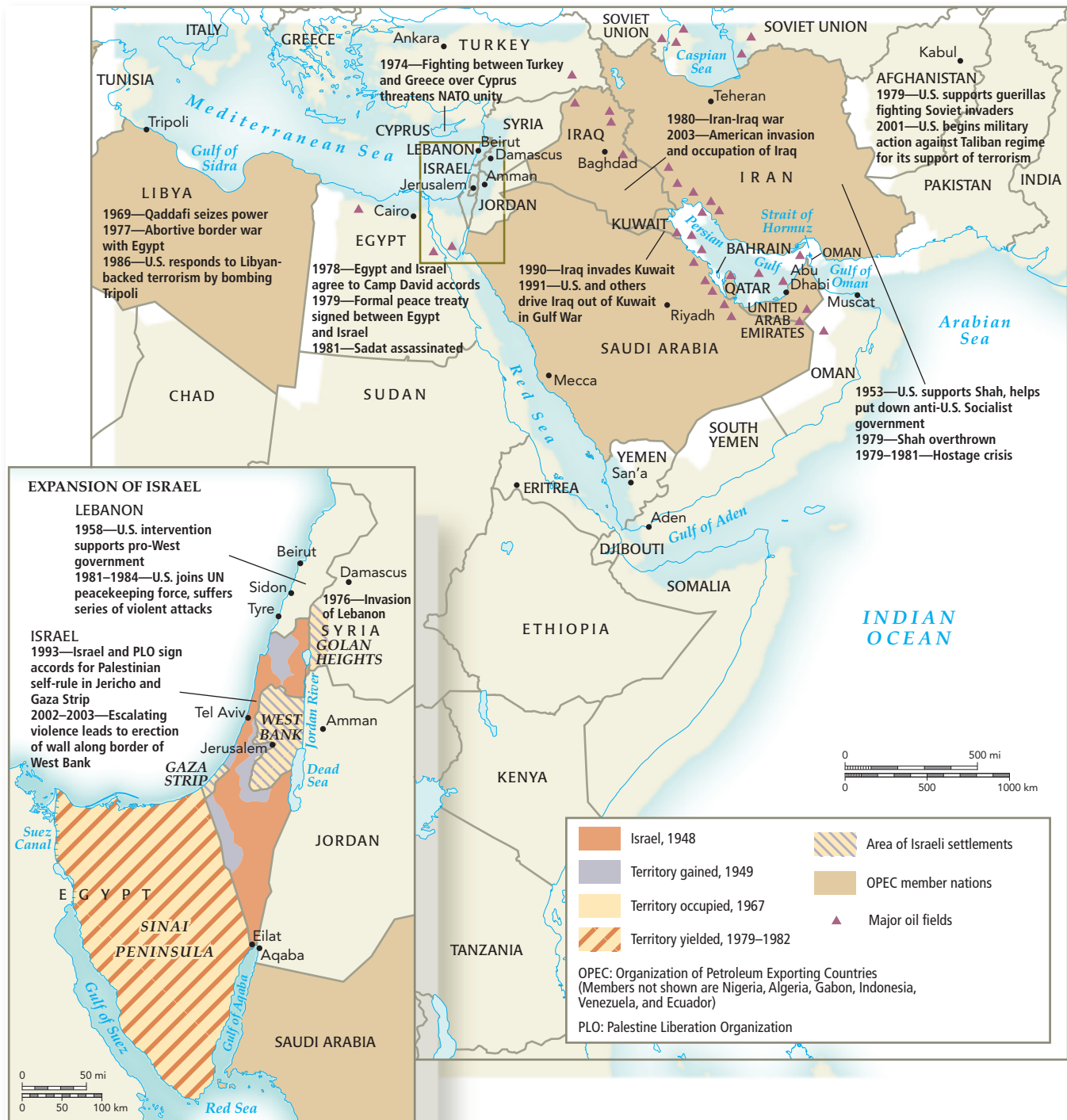
immigration policies and affected the character of international banking. Warnings of possible new terrorist attacks created widespread tension and uneasiness.

The War on Terrorism

In the aftermath of September 2001, the United States government launched what President Bush called a “war against terrorism.” The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, government intelligence indicated, had been planned and orchestrated by Middle Eastern agents of a powerful terrorist network known as Al Qaeda. Its leader, Osama Bin Laden—until 2001 little known outside the Arab world—quickly became one of the most notorious figures in the world. Convinced that the militant “Taliban” government of Afghanistan had sheltered and supported Bin Laden and his organization, the United States began a sustained campaign of bombing against the regime and sent in ground troops to help a resistance organization overthrow the Afghan government. Afghanistan’s Taliban regime quickly collapsed, and its leaders—along with the

Al Qaeda fighters allied with them—fled the capital, Kabul. American and anti-Taliban Afghan troops pursued them into the mountains, but failed to capture Bin Laden and the other leaders of his organization.

American forces in Afghanistan rounded up several hundred people suspected of connections to the Taliban and Al Qaeda in the aftermath of the fighting and eventually moved these prisoners to a facility at the American base in Guantanamo, Cuba. They were among the first suspected terrorists to be handled under the new and more draconian standards established by the federal government in dealing with terrorism after September 11, 2001. Held for months, and in many cases years, without access to lawyers, without facing formal charges, subjected to intensive interrogation and torture, they became examples to many critics of the dangers to basic civil liberties they believed the war on terror had created. Similar criticisms were directed at the Justice Department and the FBI for their roundup of hundreds of people within the United States, most of them of Middle Eastern descent, on suspicion of terrorism. These suspects too were held for many weeks and months without access to counsel or



CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST In the 1970s and beyond, the Middle East became one of the most turbulent regions of the world and one of the regions most vital to, and difficult for, the United States. The United States intervened in the Middle East frequently during the Cold War and beyond, in ways both large and small, as this map reveals. After the events of September 2001, those interventions increased. ♦ *Why did the United States have so much at stake in the Middle East?*

ability to communicate with their families. Only one such suspect was ever charged with a crime.

Several Supreme Court rulings, including one in 2008, dismissed the Bush administration’s argument that detainees in Guantanamo were outside the reach of American law. But the administration was slow to comply.

The Iraq War

In his State of the Union Address to Congress in January 2002, President Bush spoke of an “axis of evil,” which included the nations of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—all nations with anti-American regimes, all nations that either possessed or were thought to be trying to acquire nuclear

weapons. Although Bush did not say so at the time, many people around the world interpreted these words to mean that the United States would soon try to topple the government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

For over a year after that, the Bush administration slowly built a public case for invading Iraq. Much of that case rested on two claims. One was that Iraq was supporting terrorist groups that were hostile to the United States. The other, and eventually the more important, was that Iraq either had or was developing what came to be known as “weapons of mass destruction,” which included nuclear weapons and agents of chemical and biological warfare. Less central to these arguments, at least in the United States, was the charge that the Hussein government was responsible for major violations of human rights. Except for the last, none of these claims turned out to be accurate.

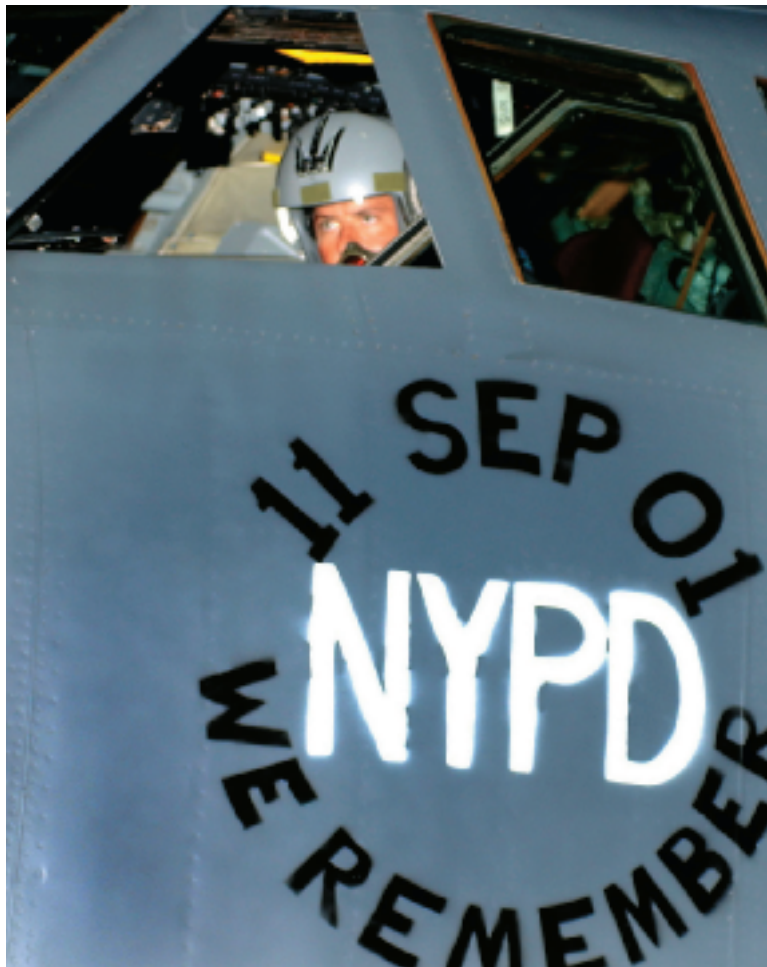
In March 2003, American and British troops, with only scant support from other countries and only partial authorization from the United Nations, invaded Iraq and quickly toppled the Hussein regime. Hussein himself went into hiding but was eventually captured in December 2003. In May 2003, shortly after the American capture of Baghdad, President Bush made a dramatic appearance on an aircraft

carrier off the coast of California, where, standing in front of a large sign reading “Mission Accomplished,” he declared victory in the Iraq War.

In the months following this event, events in Iraq persuaded many people that the president’s claim had been premature. Of the more than 4,000 American soldiers killed in Iraq as of mid-2008, 3,600 of them died after the “Mission Accomplished” speech. And despite significant efforts by the United States and its coalition allies to hand over authority to an Iraqi government and to restore order to the country, insurgents continued to disrupt the recovery with persistent attacks and terrorist actions throughout the fragile nation.

Support for the war in the United States steadily declined in the years after the first claim of victory. The failure of the invaders to find evidence of the “weapons of mass destruction” that the president had so energetically claimed was one blow to the war’s credibility. Another blow came from reports of the torture and humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by American soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad and other sites in Iraq.

The invasion of Iraq was the most visible evidence of a basic change in the structure of American foreign policy



FIGHTING AND REMEMBERING An American B-52 pilot prepares for a night bombing mission in Afghanistan in November 2001, his plane carrying a symbol of the events that precipitated the conflict. (*Department of Defense Visual Information Center/US Air Force Photo by SSgt Larry A. Simmons*)



“MISSION ACCOMPLISHED,” 2003 President George W. Bush chose the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, an aircraft carrier moored just off the coast of San Diego, for his first major address after the end of formal hostilities in the Iraq War on May 1, 2003. To strengthen his own identification with the military, he flew in on an S-3 Viking that landed on the carrier’s deck and appeared before cameras wearing a flight suit and carrying a helmet. Later, dressed in a conventional business suit, he addressed a crowd of service men and women on the deck, standing beneath a large banner reading “Mission Accomplished.” Later, as fighting in Iraq continued with no clear end in sight, and as the war became increasingly unpopular, Bush received much criticism and ridicule for what many Americans considered a premature celebration of victory. (*Reuters/Corbis*)

under the presidency of George W. Bush. Ever since the late 1940s, when the containment policy became the cornerstone of America’s role in the world, the United States had worked to maintain stability in the world by containing, but not often directly threatening or attacking, its adversaries. Even after the Cold War ended, the United States continued to demonstrate a reasonable level of constraint, despite its now unchallenged military preeminence. In the administrations of George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, for example, American leaders worked closely with the United Nations and NATO to achieve

U.S. international goals and resisted taking unilateral military action.

There had always been those who criticized these constraints. They believed that America should do more than maintain stability, and should move actively to topple undemocratic regimes and destroy potential enemies of the United States. In the administration of George W. Bush, these critics took control of American foreign policy and began to reshape it. The legacy of containment was almost entirely repudiated. Instead, the public stance of the American government was that the United States had the right and the responsibility to spread freedom throughout the world—not just by exhortation and example, but also, when necessary, by military force. In Latvia in May 2005, President Bush spoke of the decision at the end of World War II not to challenge Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, a decision that had rested on the belief that such a challenge would lead the United States into another war. The controversial agreement negotiated at Yalta in 1945 by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, which failed to end the Soviet occupation of Poland and other Eastern European nations, was, the president said, part of an “unjust tradition” by which powerful governments sacrificed the interests of small nations. “This attempt to sacrifice freedom for the sake of stability,” the president continued, “left a continent divided and unstable.” The lesson, Bush suggested, was that the United States and other great powers should value stability less and freedom more, and should be willing to take greater risks in the world to end tyranny and oppression.

The Decline of the Bush Presidency

For most of the first three years of his presidency, George W. Bush enjoyed broad popularity. Although his domestic policies never had large public support, Bush was revered by many Americans because of his resolute stance against terrorism. Even the controversial Iraq War helped sustain his popularity for a time in ways that wars almost always draw support to a president during crises.

Bush’s domestic policies did little to strengthen him politically. The massive tax cuts of 2001 went disproportionately to very wealthy Americans, reflecting the view of White House economists that the best way to ensure growth was to put money into the hands of people most likely to invest. Other than the tax cuts, Bush’s major accomplishment was an education reform bill, known as “No Child Left Behind,” which tied federal funding in schools to the success of students in taking standardized tests. Seven years after its passage, there was no significant evidence that the bill had markedly improved student performance. Still other proposals—an effort to privatize some aspects of the Social Security system, for example—never attracted significant support in Congress. Even before the Democrats regained control of the Congress in 2006, Bush found himself unable to make

progress on any significant legislation. As a result, the Bush administration began to make much greater use of executive orders—laws and policies that did not require congressional approval—to achieve its goals, especially in the conduct of the “war on terror.”

By 2004, when the president faced reelection, his popularity was already in decline, and it seemed by no means certain that he would be reelected. The Democrats rallied behind Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, a Vietnam veteran with many years of experience in government. Kerry strongly opposed the war in Iraq and based much of his campaign on criticizing the president’s policies. But harsh attacks on Kerry, combined with the mobilization of large numbers of conservatives, helped Bush win a narrow victory in an election notable for its very high voter turnout.

The 2004 election was one of the last successful moments in the Bush administration. The war in Iraq continued to go badly, and its unpopularity contributed to the rapidly declining approval ratings of the president himself—ratings that by mid-2008 had reached the lowest level of presidential approval in the history of polling. Perhaps even more damaging to Bush’s popularity was the government’s response to a disastrous hurricane, Katrina, that devastated a swath of the coastline of the Gulf of Mexico in August 2005 and gravely damaged the city of New Orleans. The federal government’s incompetent response to Katrina aroused anger throughout the nation and greatly damaged the reputation of the president and his administration. Scandals in the Justice Department, revelations of illegal violations of civil liberties, revulsion from tactics used against suspected terrorists, and declining economic prospects—culminating in a disastrous financial crisis in early

2008—all reinforced the growing repudiation of the president.

The Election of 2008

The 2008 presidential election was the first since 1952 that did not include an incumbent president or vice president. Both parties began the campaign with large fields of candidates, but by the spring of 2008 the contest had narrowed considerably. Senator John McCain of Arizona, who had lost the Republican nomination to George W. Bush in 2000, emerged from the early primaries with his nomination assured. In the Democratic race, the primaries quickly eliminated all but two candidates. They were Senator Hillary Clinton of New York, the former first lady, and Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, a young, charismatic politician and the son of an African father and a white, Kansas mother. As the first woman and the first African American to have a realistic chance of being elected president, their candidacies aroused high expectations and enormous enthusiasm. The passions driving both campaigns led to a primary contest that lasted much longer than usual. Not until the last primaries in June was it clear that Obama would be the nominee.

McCain and Obama entered the fall campaign with starkly different programs. McCain supported the war in Iraq and pledged continued support for it. Obama proposed a gradual reduction of American troops over a fixed period. McCain opposed national health insurance; Obama supported it. McCain supported additional tax cuts to spur investment, while Obama urged tax increases on the wealthiest Americans. The campaign occurred amid continuing, and indeed escalating, controversy over the policies of the Bush administration and in the face of an economy that continued to weaken.

Text to Come

Text to Come

CONCLUSION

America in the first years of the twenty-first century was a nation beset with many problems and anxieties. American foreign policy after September 11, 2001, had not only divided the American people but also deeply alienated much of the rest of the world, reinforcing a deep animus toward the United States that had been building slowly for decades. The American economy was struggling to sustain even modest growth in the face of a weakened dollar, rapidly rising public and private debt, and increasing inequality of wealth and incomes. Deep divisions and resentments threatened the unity of the nation and led some Americans to believe that the country was dividing into two fundamentally different cultures.

These and other serious problems do not, however, provide a full picture of the United States in the early

twenty-first century. America remains unquestionably the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world. It remains, as well, among the most idealistic—in the willingness of its people to contribute time, money, and effort to the solution of grave social problems at home and in the world, and in its commitment to principles of freedom and justice that, however contested, remain at the core of the nation's identity. Moving forward into an uncertain future, Americans are not only burdened by difficult challenges, but are also armed with the extraordinary energy and resilience that has allowed the nation—through its long and often turbulent history—to endure, to flourish, and continually to imagine and strive for a better future.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator* CD-ROM offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- Interactive maps: **U.S. Elections** (M7); **Middle East** (M28); and **International Organizations** (M61).
- Documents, images, and maps related to American politics and society in the past fifteen years, including an image from Bill Clinton's inauguration, the text of California's controversial Proposition 187 regarding

services for undocumented immigrants, and images and documents related to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e)

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book's Online Learning Center.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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