

Chapter 33 Outline - Into the Global Millennium, America Since 1992

- I. Introduction

Although his successes in international affairs earned George H. W. Bush great popularity in 1991, concerns over domestic problems ultimately hurt him in his 1992 bid for reelection. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton made the economy and healthcare into issues that helped him defeat Bush. Although Republicans won control of both houses of Congress in 1994, Clinton won reelection in 1996. While most Americans enjoyed economic good times during the years of the Clinton administration, the years were also marked by violence, a continuation of the “culture wars,” and political divisions.

During Clinton’s second term, he was plagued by the Monica Lewinsky affair and was impeached by the House for allegedly committing perjury and obstructing justice, but he was subsequently acquitted by the Senate.

In the close and controversial 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush won election. At first his administration attempted to find its footing, but the president was galvanized into action by the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Declaring a “war on terrorism,” Bush first carried the nation into war against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and then against the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Although both operations initially went well militarily, Al Qaeda continued to be a threat, fighting resumed in Afghanistan, and U.S. occupying forces battled a large-scale insurgency in Iraq. Bush’s approval ratings began to drop, and, although he won reelection in 2004, his second term was plagued by continued bloodshed in Iraq and scandal at home.

- II. Social Strains and New Political Directions

- A. Turmoil in L.A.

In 1992, the acquittal of policemen accused of beating an African American sparked a massive riot in South Central Los Angeles. Roots for the violence could be found in poverty among South Central residents, police tactics that alienated residents, and deteriorating relations between African Americans and Korean immigrants.

- B. Clinton's Victory

The United States suffered a recession under Bush, and by 1992 the number of poor people in America reached its highest level since 1964.

Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton won the Democratic nomination.

Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot mounted a third-party candidacy in 1992.

The Clinton-Gore ticket made inroads into some Republican strongholds, and the Clinton-Gore ticket won 43 percent of the popular vote in the three-way race.

Clinton was characterized by a *New York Times* journalist as “breathhtakingly bright while capable of doing really dumb things.” His wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, was attacked by conservatives and anti-feminists.

- C. Clinton and the “New Democrats”

Clinton, as a “new Democrat,” advocated a centrist position for the Democratic Party. Although some Democrats saw Clinton's policies as too conservative, he was attacked by the political right.

Clinton's acceptance of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy for gays in the military alienated liberals, conservatives, the gay community, and the military.

Clinton's major goal was to make healthcare affordable and accessible for all Americans. Special interests opposed healthcare reform, and the healthcare task force, chaired by Hillary Rodham Clinton, was not able to create a political coalition strong enough to defeat these interests.

- D. "Republican Revolution" and Political Compromise

In September 1994, Republican Congressmen made a pledge to reform the nation by endorsing the "Contract with America."

Republicans in the 1994 midterm elections scored one of the most smashing victories in America political history, taking control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1954.

Under the leadership of Newt Gingrich, Republicans in the 104th Congress angered many voters.

Clinton signed the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, which reformed the nation's welfare system. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 permitted companies to own more television and radio stations.

By compromising and by reclaiming some of the issues from the conservatives, Clinton easily defeated his opponent, Robert Dole.

- E. Political Partisanship and Scandal

President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Clinton were vehemently attacked from the political right. A probe into the Clintons' real estate dealings and a presidential sex scandal plagued the administration. In 1998, Clinton was impeached but not removed from office.

- F. Politics, the Media, and Celebrity Culture

Since Watergate the media no longer turned a blind eye to presidential misconduct. Twenty-four hour news channels relied on scandal, spectacle, and crisis to lure viewers.

Clinton's impeachment is seen by some as part of the "culture wars" that divided Americans.

- G. Violence and Anger in American Society

American terrorist Timothy McVeigh, seeking revenge for the deaths of members of a religious cult, bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City killing 168 people. In the ensuing investigation previously unknown militias, tax cheats, and white-supremacist groups were found throughout the country. School shootings and racial hate crimes also rocked the nation in the 1990s.

- H. Clinton's Diplomacy

Even though the United States was the world's only superpower, Clinton was very suspicious of foreign military involvements.

President Bush sent American troops to Somalia in 1992 in an effort to stabilize the nation and forestall the effects of widespread famine. Clinton withdrew U.S. forces in 1993 after Americans came under deadly attack from forces loyal to a local warlord.

- I. Balkan Crisis

Many officials in the Clinton administration favored the use of America's power to contain ethnic hatreds, support human rights, and promote democracy around the world.

At first Clinton emphasized diplomacy in attempting to deal with the ethnic wars that erupted in the Balkans.

In 1999, NATO forces led by the United States conducted an aerial

bombardment of Serbia to stop Milosevic's policy of ethnic cleansing. A U.N. peacekeeping force was stationed in Kosovo. Milosevic was indicted for atrocities by the International War Crimes Tribunal.

- J. Agreements in the Middle East

Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat signed an agreement in 1993 for Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Israel signed a peace accord with Jordan in 1994.

Terrorists attacks on Israelis continued. Rabin was assassinated by an extremist Israeli in 1995.

The Clinton administration signed the Kyoto Protocol. Because of opposition in the Republican-controlled Senate, Clinton did not submit the treaty to the Senate for ratification.

- K. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda

Administration officials worried about the threat to U.S. and Western interests posed by Al Qaeda.

Bin Laden was known to be the mastermind behind the 1995 Riyadh bombing, the 1998 bombings at American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 bombing of the destroyer U.S.S. *Cole*.

Clinton approved a 1998 plan to assassinate bin Laden, but the attempt failed.

- III. Globalization and Prosperity

- A. Digital Revolution

The 1990s economic boom had its roots in the restructuring of American corporations that began in the 1970s.

The rapid development of "information technology" began to have an economic impact in the 1980s and that impact accelerated in the

1990s.

The technology-driven sector of the economy was called “The New Economy.”

The Clinton administration contributed to the economic boom by making deficit reduction a major priority. As the deficit was reduced and then eliminated, interest rates came down and investments increased.

- B. Globalization of Business

Clinton perceived that the technology revolution would make the world more interconnected. He also believed that the triumph of capitalism throughout the world would lead to the globalization of business.

To lower trade and investment barriers, the Clinton administration supported completion of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico in 1993 and the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1994.

Multinational corporations were the hallmark of the global economy.

- C. Critics of Globalization

Labor unions were critical of the free-trade agreements of the 1990s. Some critics charged that globalization caused the gap to widen between rich and poor countries.

Environmentalists warned of the environmental costs of globalization. Other critics warned of the dangers of multinational corporations to national sovereignty and traditional cultures.

Meetings of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank were met with sizable protests.

- D. Target: McDonald's

Antiglobalist activists targeted individual corporations, especially McDonald's.

Some economists and researchers countered the arguments of the antiglobalist activists by saying that poor countries that increased their economic openness enjoyed higher growth rates, while no country had prospered by turning its back on the world economy.

Some also criticized the idea of a homogeneous global culture.

- E. The Bush-Gore Race

Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore were their parties' standard bearers in the 2000 presidential race. Consumer rights activist Ralph Nader was the Green Party candidate.

- F. The Contested Election of 2000

Although Gore won the popular vote, Florida's electoral votes, which would decide the election, were contested.

After thirty-six days of confusion, the Supreme Court voted 5 to 4 to stop the recount process. Florida's electoral votes and the 2000 presidential election went to George W. Bush.

- IV. 9/11 and the War in Iraq

- A. 9/11

On September 11, 2001, 19 hijackers seized control of four passenger jets. One plane flew into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City, a second flew into the South Tower, a third crashed into the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed in Pennsylvania after the passengers stormed the cockpit.

More than 3,000 people died in the attacks. Not since Pearl Harbor

had the U.S. experienced such a devastating attack on its soil.

- B. Afghanistan War

In October 2001, the United States began a bombing campaign against Taliban and Al Qaeda positions in Afghanistan and sent special operations forces into northern Afghanistan. Within two months, the Taliban was driven from power, but bin Laden had not been captured.

Some questioned if a “war on terrorism” could ever be won in a meaningful way because the foe was a nonstate actor with little to lose.

- C. PATRIOT Act

Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act, which made it easier for law enforcement to conduct searches, wiretap telephones, and obtain electronic records on individuals.

The discovery of anthrax-laden letters further increased the anxiety and fear of the American people.

Congress created the Department of Homeland Security in November 2002 to coordinate intelligence and consolidate defenses against terrorism.

- D. Economic Uncertainty

Before the 9/11 attacks, the dot-com bubble burst.

Stock prices dropped sharply in the weeks after 9/11.

Despite questions about the overall health of the economy, Republicans retook control of the Senate and increased their majority in the House in the 2002 midterm elections.

- E. International Responses

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 there was an outpouring of international support for the United States. Many foreign governments began to object when it appeared Bush might unilaterally strike Saddam Hussein or take a forceful stand against North Korea or Iran.

The Bush administration advanced the strategy of preemptive action, thus abandoning the doctrine of containment and deterrence that had guided the nation's foreign policy for more than fifty years.

Critics of the strategy charged that it was recklessly aggressive and contrary to international law.

- F. Why Iraq?

Some of Bush's top advisors saw an opportunity to fold their objective of ousting Saddam Hussein into the larger war against terrorism.

The administration offered a variety of reasons for getting tough with Iraq.

Beneath the surface, neoconservatives saw in Iraq a chance to use U.S. power to reshape the region in America's image, to oppose tyranny and spread democracy.

- G. Congressional Approval

In October 2002, the House and Senate authorized the president to use force against Iraq.

In November 2002, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 1441, imposing rigorous new arms inspections on Iraq.

As debate continued in the Security Council over the January 2003 report from weapons inspectors, 250,000 U.S. troops and some 45,000 British troops were sent to the Persian Gulf region.

- H. Fall of Baghdad

The Bush administration abandoned the attempt to get U.N. Security Council backing as well as further diplomatic efforts when, on March 17, 2003, it ordered Hussein to leave Iraq within forty-eight hours or face attack.

The aerial bombardment of Iraq began on March 19, with a ground invasion following a few days later.

Baghdad fell to American troops on April 9, 2003.

Although careful planning went into military preparations, there was little interest among senior policymakers in planning for postwar Iraq. Top officials emphasized best-case scenarios regarding how Iraqis would react to “liberation,” how many U.S. troops would be required to secure the country, and how quickly a stable Iraq would emerge.

- I. Election of 2004

With the electorate deeply split, Bush won reelection in the 2004 president election, and Republicans increased their majorities in both house of Congress.

Bush’s plan to partially privatize Social Security failed. However, Bush was successful in appointing conservative U.S. Circuit Court judge John Roberts as chief justice of the Supreme Court. Upon the resignation of Sandra Day O’Connor, Samuel Alito, another strong conservative, won confirmation as a junior associate justice on the Court.

As the war continued to go badly, the confidence of people in President Bush and his administration was undermined. The government’s reaction to Hurricane Katrina led to growing perceptions of incompetence.



- J. America Isolated

International criticism of the Bush administration grew as a result of Iraq, Abu Ghraib, and the administration's lack of engagement in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

As the number of American war dead and deaths of Iraqi civilians mounted, the Bush administration denied that Iraq had degenerated into civil war. The Iraq war seemed to have increased the threat of terrorism to Americans, and the war in Afghanistan suffered neglect.

In the 2006 midterm election, Democrats won control of both houses of Congress.

- V. Domestic Politics in Post-9/11 America

- A. The Presidency of George W. Bush

The centerpiece of the Bush administration was tax cuts – the largest in U.S. history. President Bush was open about his religious faith, was a strong advocate of economic deregulation, and was not adverse to “big government” programs. Education and health care were two areas of increased federal government participation.

- B. Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in August 2005. Broken levees caused 80% of New Orleans to be flooded and more than 1800 people died. The Superdome became an emergency shelter as supplies of food and water were slow to reach the city. The administration was blamed for mismanagement of the crisis, which became public spectacle.

- C. Economic Recession

During the 1980s financial institutions made mortgages more accessible to individuals with little money for down payments and less than stellar credit ratings. The increasing demand for homes resulted

in a “bubble” of overly-inflated housing prices. This unsustainable situation failed in 2007 – defaults increased and real estate values declined. Banks were in danger of failing, which in turn affected business and industry across the country.

- D. Election of 2008

A growing worldwide economic crisis set the stage for the presidential election of 2008. The Republican party candidate, John McCain, was never able to mobilize his own party much less the nation during the troubled times. On the other hand, Barack Obama was a fresh face who energized grassroots movements among the youth, African Americans, and political independents and was able to win the election handily.

- E. Barack Obama

Barack Obama was born in Hawai'i in 1961, graduated from Harvard Law School, and served as a community organizer in Chicago before entering state politics in Illinois. He was an inspirational speaker for “hope” and “change” and made bold promises on the campaign trail and early in his presidency. Partisanship in Congress, however, would continue.

- VI. Americans in the First Decade of the New Millennium

- A. Race and Ethnicity in Recent America

The homogenizing trends of the 1920s through the 1965 were reversed during the last third of the twentieth century.

In the 2000 U.S. government census, Americans were allowed to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race.

During the 1990s, the nonwhite population grew twelve times as fast as the white population.

American popular culture was influenced by the new multiethnic

American population.

- B. The Changing American Family

The number of people living together outside of marriage increased during the 1990s. Unmarried, opposite-sex couples made up about 5% of households while the number of same-sex couples stood at around 1%.

Although support rose for the legal equality of gay, lesbian, transgendered, and bisexual Americans and many states and corporations offered domestic-partner benefits to gay couples, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996.

Births to unmarried women increased significantly; in two-parent households, both parents were more likely to work; baby boomers began to retire, resulting in more concern about the solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

- C. Medicine, Science, and Religion

New reproductive technologies allowed infertile women or couples to bear children. This, along with stem-cell research and the possibility of human cloning, raised philosophical, legal, and ethical questions

- D. Century of Change

The twentieth century had seen more momentous change than any previous century.

Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century were more connected to other humans than ever before.

- E. Globalization and World Health

International air travel meant that infectious diseases could be disseminated globally, as with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003.

Environmental degradation was a global health threat.

- F. Confronting Terrorism

9/11 made it clear that in an age of globalization the United States was no longer invulnerable to attack. The attacks also demonstrated that small terrorist cells could pose true transnational threats.

In 2007, the armed forces of the United States looked colossal, but its obligations looked even larger.