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America Confronts the Post–Cold War Era

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1992–2004

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH AMERICA THAT CANNOT
BE CURED WITH WHAT IS RIGHT IN AMERICA.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON, INAUGURAL, 1993

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the democratization of its client regimes in Eastern Europe ended the four-decade-old Cold War and left the United States the world's sole remaining superpower. Americans welcomed these changes but seemed unsure how to exercise their unprecedented economic and military might in this new international framework. The culture wars that had started in the 1960s fed ferociously partisan political squabbles that distracted the nation from the urgent task of clearly defining its role in the dawning age of globalization. In 2000, George W. Bush won a bitterly contested presidential election that left the nation more rancorously divided than ever, until a spectacular terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, called forth, at least temporarily, a resurgent sense of national unity. Bush responded to the 9/11 attacks by invading the terrorist haven of Afghanistan. Amidst roiling controversy over his claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and had ties to terrorists, Bush proceeded to invade Iraq as well. Despite the failure to discover WMD in Iraq, and the loss of more than 1,100 American lives to insurgents, Bush was reelected by a comfortable margin in 2004.



Bill Clinton: The First Baby-Boomer President

As the last decade of the twentieth century opened, the slumbering economy, the widening gender gap, and the rising anti-incumbent spirit spelled opportunity for Democrats, frozen out of the White House for all but four years since 1968. In a bruising round of primary elections, Governor William Jefferson Clinton of Arkansas weathered blistering accusations of womanizing and draft evasion to emerge as his party's standard-bearer. Breaking with the tradition of a "balanced ticket," he selected a fellow fortysomething southern white male Protestant moderate, Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee, as his vice-presidential running mate.

Clinton claimed to be a "new" Democrat, chastened by the party's long exile in the political wilderness. With other centrist Democrats, he had formed the Democratic Leadership Council to point the party away from its traditional antibusiness, dovish, champion-of-the-underdog

orientation and toward progrowth, strong defense, and anticrime policies. Clinton campaigned especially vigorously on promises to stimulate the economy, reform the welfare system, and overhaul the nation's health-care apparatus, which had grown into a scandalously expensive contraption that failed to provide medical coverage to nearly 40 million Americans.

Trying to wring one more win out of the social issues that had underwritten two Reagan and one Bush presidential victories, the Republican convention in Houston in August 1992 emphasized “family values” and, as expected, nominated George Bush and Vice President J. Danforth Quayle for a second term. But Bush's listless campaign and his penchant for spaghetti sentences set him sharply apart from his youthful rival, the superenergetic and phenomenally articulate Clinton. Bush claimed credit for ending the Cold War and trumpeted his

Presidential Campaign Debate, 1992 George Bush, Ross Perot, and Bill Clinton squared off at the University of Richmond (Virginia) on October 16, 1992. The telegenic Clinton handily dominated the television debates, especially in the “talk-show” format used on this occasion.

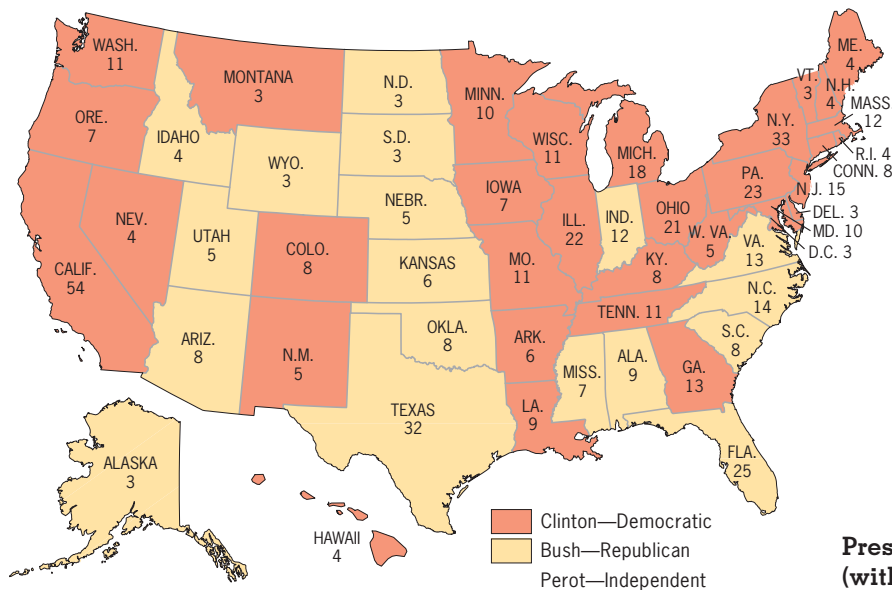


leadership role in the Persian Gulf War. But fear for the economic problems of the future swayed more voters than pride in the foreign policies of the past. The purchasing power of the average worker's paycheck had actually declined during Bush's presidency.

At Clinton's campaign headquarters, a simple sign reminded staffers of his principal campaign theme: “It's the economy, stupid.” Reflecting pervasive economic unease and the virulence of the throw-the-bums-out national mood, nearly 20 percent of voters cast their ballots for independent presidential candidate H. Ross Perot, a bantamweight, jug-eared Texas billionaire who harped incessantly on the problem of the federal deficit and made a boast of the fact that he had never held any public office.

Perot's colorful presence probably accounted for the record turnout on election day, when some 100 million voters—55 percent of those eligible—went to the polls. The final tallies gave Clinton 44,909,889 popular votes and 370 votes in the Electoral College. He was the first baby boomer to ascend to the White House, a distinction reflecting the electoral profile of the population, 70 percent of whom had been born after World War II. Bush polled some 39,104,545 popular votes and 168 electoral votes. Perot won no electoral votes but did gather 19,742,267 popular votes—the strongest showing for an independent or third-party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt ran on the Bull Moose ticket in 1912. Democrats also racked up clear majorities in both houses of Congress, which seated near-record numbers of new members, including thirty-nine African Americans, nineteen Hispanic Americans, seven Asian Americans, one Native American, and forty-eight women. Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois became the first African American woman elected to the U.S. Senate, where she joined five other women in the largest female contingent ever in the upper chamber.

Women also figured prominently in President Clinton's cabinet, including the first female attorney general, Janet Reno, and former University of Wisconsin president Donna Shalala, who became the secretary of health and human services. Vowing to shape a government that “looked like America,” Clinton appointed several ethnic and racial minority members to his cabinet, including former San Antonio mayor Henry Cisneros at Housing and Urban Development and an African American, Ron Brown, as secretary of commerce. Clinton also seized the opportunity in 1993 to nominate Ruth Bader Ginsburg to the Supreme Court, where she joined Sandra Day O'Connor to make a pair of women justices.



**Presidential Election of 1992
(with electoral vote by state)**

A False Start for Reform

Badly overestimating his electoral mandate for liberal reform, the young president made a series of costly blunders upon entering the White House. In one of his first initiatives on taking office, he stirred a hornet's nest of controversy by advocating an end to the ban on gays and lesbians in the armed services. Confronted with fierce opposition, the president finally had to settle for a “don't ask, don't tell” policy that quietly accepted gay and lesbian soldiers and sailors without officially acknowledging their presence in the military.

Even more damaging to Clinton's political standing, and to his hopes for lasting liberal achievement, was the fiasco of his attempt to reform the nation's health-care system. In a dramatic but personally and politically risky move, the president appointed his wife, nationally prominent lawyer and children's advocate Hillary Rodham Clinton, as the director of a task force charged with redesigning the medical-service industry. Their stupefyingly complicated plan was dead on arrival when it was presented to Congress in October 1993. The First Lady was doused with a torrent of abuse, although she eventually rehabilitated herself sufficiently to win election as a U.S. senator from New York in 2000—the first First Lady ever to hold elective office.

Clinton had better luck with a deficit-reduction bill in 1993, which combined with an increasingly buoyant economy by 1996 to shrink the federal deficit to its

lowest level in more than a decade. By 1998 Clinton's policies seemed to have caged the ravenous deficit monster, as Congress argued over the unfamiliar question of how to manage federal budget *surpluses*.

The new president also induced Congress in 1993 to pass a gun-control law, the “Brady Bill,” named for presidential aide James Brady, who had been wounded and disabled by gunfire in the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in 1981. In July 1994, Clinton made further progress against the national plague of firearms when he persuaded Congress to pass a \$30 billion anticrime bill, which contained a ban on several types of assault weapons.

With these measures the government struggled to hold the line against an epidemic of violence that rocked American society in the 1990s. A huge explosion destroyed a federal office building in Oklahoma City in 1995, taking 168 lives, presumably in retribution for a 1993 standoff in Waco, Texas, between federal agents and a fundamentalist sect known as the Branch Davidians. That showdown ended in the destruction of the sect's compound and the deaths of many Branch Davidians, including women and children. These episodes brought to light a lurid and secretive underground of paramilitary private “militias” composed of alienated citizens armed to the teeth and ultrasuspicious of all government.

Even many law-abiding citizens shared to some degree in the antigovernment attitudes that drove the militia members to murderous extremes. Thanks largely



Bombing of Federal Building in Oklahoma City, 1995 Investigation into the truck bombing that destroyed this federal office building in downtown Oklahoma City led to the arrest and conviction for murder of Timothy McVeigh, an antigovernment extremist.

to the disillusioning agony of the Vietnam War and the naked cynicism of Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal, the confidence in government that had come naturally to the generation that licked the Great Depression and won the Second World War was in short supply by century's end. Reflecting that pervasive disenchantment with politics and politicians, several states passed term-limit laws for elected officials, although the Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that the restrictions did not apply to federal officeholders.

Before the decade was out, the logic of Clinton's emphasis on gun control was tragically confirmed. On an April morning in 1999, two students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, killed twelve fellow students and a teacher. Debate flared over the origins of school violence. Some observers targeted the violence portrayed in movies, TV shows, and video games; others pointed to the failings of parents. But the culprit that attracted the most sustained political attention was

guns—their abundance and accessibility, especially in suburban and rural communities. Clinton engaged in a pugnacious debate with the progun National Rifle Association over the need to toughen gun laws, and filmmaker Michael Moore agitated for gun control in his popular 2002 documentary, *Bowling for Columbine*. The “Million Mom March” in Washington, D.C., in May 2000 further demonstrated the growing public support for new anti-gun measures, which, however, were slow in coming.

The Politics of Distrust

Clinton's failed initiatives and widespread antigovernment sentiment afforded Republicans a golden opportunity in 1994, and they seized it aggressively. Led by outspoken Georgia representative Newt Gingrich, Republicans offered voters a “Contract with America”

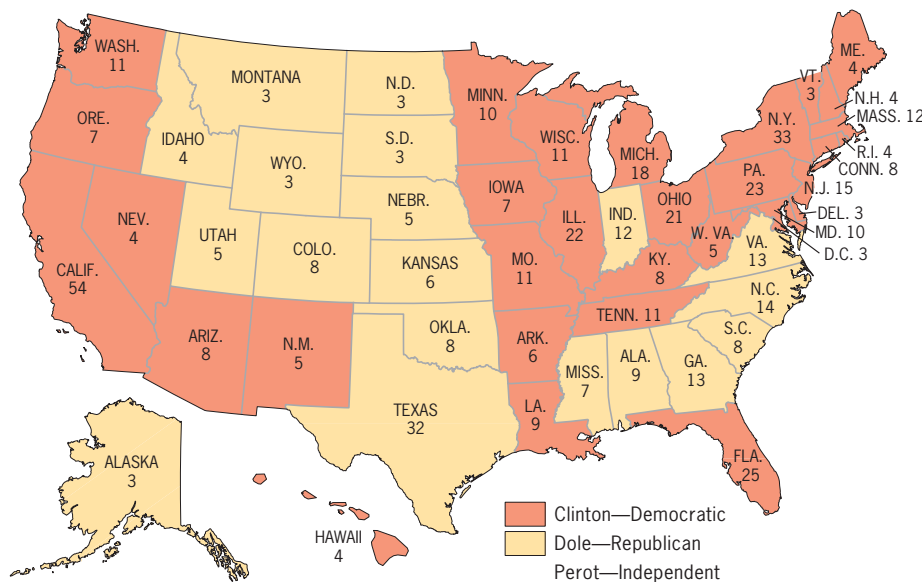
that promised an all-out assault on budget deficits and radical reductions in welfare programs. Their campaign succeeded fabulously, as a right-wing tornado roared across the land in the 1994 congressional elections. Every incumbent Republican gubernatorial, senatorial, and congressional candidate was reelected. Republicans also picked up eleven new governorships, eight seats in the Senate, and fifty-three seats in the House (where Gingrich became speaker), giving them control of both chambers of the federal Congress for the first time in forty years.

But if President Clinton had overplayed his mandate for liberal reform in 1993, the congressional Republicans now proceeded to overplay their mandate for conservative retrenchment. The new Republican majority did legislate one long-standing conservative goal when they restricted “unfunded mandates”—federal laws that imposed new obligations on state and local governments without providing new revenues. And in 1996 the new Congress achieved a major conservative victory when it compelled a reluctant Clinton to sign the Welfare Reform Bill, which made deep cuts in welfare grants and required able-bodied welfare recipients to find employment. The new welfare law also tightly restricted welfare benefits for legal and illegal immigrants alike, reflecting a rising tide of anti-immigrant sentiment as the numbers of newcomers climbed toward an all-time high. Old-line liberal Democrats howled with pain at the president’s alleged betrayal of his party’s heritage, and some prominent

administration members resigned in protest against his decision to sign the welfare bill. But Clinton’s acceptance of the welfare reform package was part of his shrewd political strategy of accommodating the electorate’s conservative mood by moving to his right.

President Clinton was at first stunned by the magnitude of the Republican congressional victory in 1994. But many Americans gradually came to feel that the Gingrich Republicans were bending their conservative bow too far, especially when the new Speaker advocated provocative ideas like sending the children of welfare families to orphanages. In a tense confrontation between the Democratic president and the Republican Congress, the federal government actually had to shut down for several days at the end of 1995 until a budget package was agreed upon. These outlandishly partisan antics bred a backlash that helped President Clinton rebound from his political near-death experience.

As the 1996 election approached, the Republicans chose Kansas senator Robert Dole as their presidential candidate. A decorated World War II veteran, Dole ran a listless campaign. Clinton, buoyed by a healthy economy and by his artful trimming to the conservative wind, breezed to an easy victory, with 47,401,898 popular votes to Dole’s 39,198,482. The Reform party’s egomaniacal leader, Ross Perot, ran a sorry third, picking up less than half the votes he had garnered in 1992. Clinton won 379 electoral votes, Dole only 159. But Republicans remained in control of Congress.



Presidential Election of 1996 (with electoral vote by state)
The “solid South,” once a safe Democratic stronghold, had by century’s end largely become Republican territory.



Clinton Again

As Clinton began his second term—the first Democratic president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt to be reelected—the heady promises of far-reaching reform with which he had entered the White House four years earlier were no longer heard. Still facing Republican majorities in both houses of Congress, he proposed only modest legislative goals, even though soaring tax revenues generated by the prosperous economy produced in 1998 a balanced federal budget for the first time in three decades.

Clinton cleverly managed to put Republicans on the defensive by claiming the political middle ground. He now warmly embraced the landmark Welfare Reform Bill of 1996 that he had initially been slow to endorse. Juggling the political hot potato of affirmative action, Clinton pledged to “mend it, not end it.” When voters in California in 1996 approved Proposition 209, prohibiting affirmative-action preferences in government and higher education, the number of minority students in the state’s public universities temporarily plummeted. A federal appeals court decision, *Hopwood v. Texas*, had a similar effect in Texas. Clinton criticized these broad assaults on affirmative action but stopped short of trying to reverse them, aware that public support for affirmative action, especially among white Americans, had diminished since the 1970s.

Clinton’s major political advantage continued to be the roaring economy, which by 2000 had sustained the longest period of growth in American history, driven by new Internet (“dot.com”) businesses and other high-tech and media companies. While unemployment crept down to 4 percent and businesses scrambled madly for workers, inflationary pressure remained remarkably low.

Prosperity did not make Clinton immune to controversy over trade policy. During his first term, he had displayed political courage by supporting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), creating in 1993 a free-trade zone encompassing Mexico, Canada, and the United States. In doing so, he reversed his own stand in the 1992 election campaign and bucked the opposition of protectionists in his own party, especially labor leaders fearful of losing jobs to low-wage Mexican workers. Clinton took another step in 1994 toward a global free-trade system when he vigorously promoted the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and a cherished goal of free-trade advocates since the end of the Second World War.



Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan (b. 1926)

Many observers credited the robust prosperity of Clinton’s presidency to Alan Greenspan’s skillful management of the money supply. A Republican first appointed by Ronald Reagan, Greenspan led the Federal Reserve Board in carefully adjusting interest rates to control inflation while promoting economic growth.

Simmering discontent over trade policy boiled over in 1999 when Clinton hosted the meeting of the WTO in Seattle. The city’s streets filled with protesters railing against what they viewed as the human and environmental costs of economic “globalization.” Trade talks fizzled in Seattle, with Clinton taking a hefty share of the blame.

Money spurred controversy of another sort in the late 1990s. Campaign finance reform, long smoldering as a potential issue, suddenly flared up after the 1996

presidential contest. Congressional investigators revealed that the Clinton campaign had received funds from many improper sources, including contributors who paid to stay overnight in the White House and foreigners who were legally prohibited from giving to American candidates. But Republicans and Democrats alike had reason to avoid reform. Both parties had grown dependent on vast sums to finance television ads for their candidates. Clinton did little more than pay lip service to the cause of campaign finance reform. But within the ranks of both parties, a few mavericks proposed to eliminate the corrupting influence of big donors. Senator John McCain from Arizona made campaign finance reform a centerpiece of his surprisingly strong, though ultimately unsuccessful, bid for the Republican presidential nomination in the 2000 campaign.



Problems Abroad

The end of the Cold War dismantled the framework within which the United States had conducted foreign policy for nearly half a century. Clinton groped for a diplomatic formula to replace anticommunism as the basic premise of American diplomacy.

Absorbed by domestic issues, President Clinton at first seemed uncertain and even amateurish in his conduct of foreign policy. He followed his predecessor's lead in dispatching American troops as part of a peacekeeping mission to Somalia and reinforced the U.S. contingent after Somali rebels killed more than a dozen Americans in late 1993. But in March 1994, the president quietly withdrew the American units, without having accomplished any clearly defined goal. Burned in Somalia, Washington stood on the sidelines in 1995 when catastrophic ethnic violence in the central African country of Rwanda resulted in the deaths of half a million people. A similar lack of clarity afflicted policy toward Haiti, where democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide had been deposed by a military coup in 1991. Clinton at last committed twenty thousand American troops to return Aristide to the Haitian presidency in 1994, after thousands of desperate Haitian refugees had sought asylum in the United States. Forced from power once again in 2004, Aristide sought political asylum in Africa.

Clinton also struggled to define a policy with respect to China, which was rapidly emerging as an economic and political powerhouse. Candidate Clinton had denounced George Bush in 1992 for not imposing

economic sanctions on China as punishment for Beijing's wretched record of human rights abuses. But President Clinton learned what Bush had long known: China's economic importance to the United States did not permit Washington the luxury of taking the high road on human rights. Clinton soon soft-pedaled his criticism of the Beijing regime and instead began seeking improved trade relations with that robustly industrializing country and potential market bonanza. By 2000 Clinton was crusading for a controversial China trade bill. Congress passed it in May 2000, making the Asian giant a full-fledged trading partner of the United States.

Clinton's approach to the tormented Balkans in southeastern Europe showed a similar initial hesitation, followed eventually by firm leadership. In the former Yugoslavia, as vicious ethnic conflict raged through Bosnia, the Washington government dithered until finally deciding to commit American troops to a NATO peacekeeping contingent in late 1995. Deadlines for removing the troops were postponed and then finally abandoned altogether as it became clear that they were the only force capable of preventing new hostilities. NATO's expansion to include the new member states of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1997, and its continuing presence in Bosnia, failed to pacify the Balkans completely. When Serbian president Slobodan Milosević in 1999 unleashed a new round of "ethnic cleansing" in the region, this time against ethnic Albanians in the province of Kosovo, U.S.-led NATO forces launched an air war against Serbia. The bombing campaign initially failed to stop ethnic terror, as refugees flooded into neighboring countries, but it eventually forced Milosević to accept a NATO peacekeeping force on the ground in Kosovo. Milosević was arrested in 2001 and put on trial before the International Criminal Court in The Hague. With ethnic reconciliation still a distant dream in the Balkans, Washington accepted the reality that American forces had an enduring role as peacekeepers in the region.

The Middle East remained a major focus of American diplomacy right up to the end of Clinton's tenure. In 1993 Clinton presided over a historic meeting at the White House between Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasir Arafat. They agreed in principle on self-rule for the Palestinians within Israel. But hopes flickered two years later when Rabin fell to an assassin's bullet. Clinton and his second-term secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, spent the rest of the 1990s struggling in vain to broker the permanent settlement that continued to elude



Clinton's Middle East Peace Initiatives

In the last year of his presidency, President Clinton pushed hard for a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli stalemate, hoping to deliver long-sought peace to the Middle East and secure his reputation as an international peacemaker. Despite extensive meetings with Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat (right) and Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak (left), neither goal was accomplished, and, tragically, tensions in the area only escalated.

Israelis and Palestinians. Arafat died in 2004 with his dream of creating a Palestinian state still unrealized.

In his final year as president, Clinton stepped up his efforts to leave a legacy as an international peacemaker. Along with his work in the Middle East, he sought to bring peace to Northern Ireland and the Korean peninsula, and he traveled to India and Pakistan in hopes of reducing the rivalry between the two nuclear powers of southern Asia. But the guiding principles of American foreign policy in the post–Cold War era remained ill-defined and elusive.



Scandal and Impeachment

Scandal had dogged Bill Clinton from the beginning of his presidency. Allegations of wrongdoing, reaching back to his prepresidential days in Arkansas, included a failed real estate investment known as the Whitewater Land Corporation. The Clintons' involvement in that deal prompted the appointment of a federal special prosecutor to investigate—though an indictment for Whitewater wrongdoing never materialized.

All the previous scandals were overshadowed when it was revealed in January 1998 that Clinton had engaged in a sexual affair with a young White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, and then lied about it when he testified under oath in another woman's civil lawsuit accusing him of sexual harassment.

The accusation that Clinton had lied under oath presented a stunning windfall to the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr. Clinton, now suddenly caught in a legal

and political trap, issued repeated denials of involvement with “that woman,” Ms. Lewinsky. But he was finally forced to make the humiliating admission that he had had an “inappropriate relationship” with her. In September 1998 Starr accordingly presented to the House of Representatives a stinging report, including lurid sexual details, charging Clinton with eleven possible grounds for impeachment, all related to the Lewinsky matter.

The House quickly cranked up the rusty machinery of impeachment. As an acrid partisan atmosphere enveloped the Capitol, House Republicans in December 1998 passed two articles of impeachment against the president: perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice. Crying foul, the Democratic minority charged that, however deplorable Clinton's personal misconduct, sexual transgressions did not rise to the level of “high crimes and misdemeanors” prescribed in the Constitution (see Art. II, Sec. IV in the Appendix). The House Republican managers (prosecutors) of impeachment for the Senate trial replied that perjury and obstruction were grave public issues and that nothing less than the “rule of law” was at stake.

As cries of “honor the Constitution” and “sexual McCarthyism” filled the air, the nation debated whether the president's peccadilloes amounted to high crimes or low follies. Most Americans apparently leaned toward the latter view. In the 1998 midterm elections, voters reduced the House Republicans' majority, causing fiery House speaker Newt Gingrich to resign his post. Although Americans held a low opinion of Clinton's slipshod personal morals, most liked the president's political and economic policies and wanted him to stay in office.

In early 1999, for the first time in 130 years, the nation witnessed an impeachment proceeding in the U.S. Senate. Dusting off ancient precedents from Andrew Johnson's trial, the one hundred senators solemnly heard arguments and evidence in the case, with Chief Justice William Rehnquist presiding. With the facts widely known and the two parties' political positions firmly locked in, the trial's outcome was a foregone conclusion. On the key obstruction of justice charge, five northeastern Republicans joined all forty-five Democratic senators in voting not guilty. The fifty Republican votes for conviction fell far short of the constitutionally required two-thirds majority. The vote on the perjury charge was forty-five guilty, fifty-five not guilty.



Clinton's Legacy

With the impeachment trial over, a weary nation yearned for Washington to move on to other business. Vowing to serve "until the last hour of the last day of my term," Clinton spent what remained of his presidency seeking to secure a legacy for himself as a moderate reformer. He designated major swaths of undeveloped land as protected wilderness and won public support for health-care improvements in the form of a "patients' bill of rights." He took advantage of big federal budget surpluses to win congressional approval for hiring



The Legacy of Impeachment Time magazine's cartoonist asked how future generations would judge the Clinton impeachment episode—and how it might be treated in history textbooks.

100,000 more teachers and 50,000 more police officers. Budget surpluses brought out the enduring differences between Republicans and Democrats. The former urged big tax cuts, the latter emphasized new ways to shore up Medicare and Social Security—a conflict in aims that prefigured the major issue in the 2000 presidential campaign.

Beyond the obvious stain of impeachment, Clinton's legacy was a mixed one for his country and his party. He came to office in 1992 determined to make economic growth his first priority, and in this domain he surely succeeded. Benefiting from a global expansion he had done little to foster, he nonetheless made sound appointments to top economic posts and kept a steady eye on the federal budget. The country achieved nearly full employment by decade's end, poverty rates inched down, and median income reached new highs.

Yet by governing successfully as a “New Democrat” and avowed centrist, Clinton did more to consolidate than reverse the Reagan-Bush revolution against the New Deal liberalism that had for half a century provided the compass for the Democratic party and the nation. As a brilliant communicator, Clinton kept alive a vision of social justice and racial harmony. But as an executive, he discouraged people from expecting government to remedy all the nation's ills. By setting such a low standard for his personal conduct, he replenished the sad reservoir of public cynicism about politics that Vietnam and Watergate had created a generation before. In the last days of his presidency, Clinton negotiated a deal with the special prosecutor to win immunity from possible further legal action over the Lewinsky scandal by agreeing to a fine and a five-year suspension of his law license. Controversy trailed Clinton out the White House door when the departing president issued several executive pardons that gave at least the appearance of rewarding political backers and donors.



The Bush-Gore Presidential Battle

Clinton's loyal vice president, Albert Gore, easily won the Democratic party's presidential nomination in 2000. A quarter-century in national government, as congressman, senator, and Clinton's number two, had made Gore a seasoned and savvy policy expert. Yet many Americans found his stiff personal manner to be off-putting, especially when contrasted with the winsome charm of his boss. Gore also faced the tricky challenge of somehow associating himself with Clinton-era prosperity while detaching himself from Clinton-era scandal. Trying to distance himself from Clinton's foibles, he chose as his

running mate Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman, an outspoken critic of Clinton during the Lewinsky affair and the first Jew nominated to a national ticket by a major party. Meanwhile, consumer advocate Ralph Nader's Green party threatened to siphon off the ballots of environmentalists who might otherwise have voted for Gore, a long-time champion of vigorous pro-environmental policies.

The Republican nominee, George W. Bush, had catapulted to party prominence on the strength of his status as the eldest son of former president George H. W. Bush and his popularity as a two-term governor of Texas. Though untested on the national stage, he inspired the loyalty of able lieutenants and organized a formidable campaign with a promise “to restore dignity to the White House”—a thinly veiled attack on Clinton's personal failings. Bush chose Richard Cheney, former secretary of defense in the elder Bush's administration and a key planner in the Persian Gulf War of 1991, as his vice-presidential running mate, lending the ticket a much-needed aura of experience. Styling himself a “compassionate conservative,” “George W.” (also “W,” or sometimes “dubya”) promised to end the strident partisan warfare that had paralyzed Washington in the Clinton years.

Rosy estimates that the federal budget would produce a surplus of some \$2 trillion over the coming decade set the stage for the presidential contest. Bush called for returning two-thirds of the surplus “to the people” in the form of a huge tax cut. True to the Republican creed of smaller government, Bush championed private-sector initiatives, such as school vouchers, a reliance on “faith-based” institutions to serve the poor, and reforms to the Social Security system that would permit individual workers to invest part of their payroll taxes in private retirement accounts. Gore countered with a more modest tax cut targeted at the middle and lower classes and proposed using most of the surplus to reduce or even eliminate the national debt, shore up Social Security, and expand Medicare. In this post–Cold War era, foreign policy did not figure prominently in either candidate's campaign, though Bush struck a moderate note when he urged that America should be a “humble nation.”



The Controversial Election of 2000

Pollsters and candidates alike predicted a close election, but they could not foresee that the result would be an epochal cliffhanger. Not since the Hayes-Tilden contest of 1876 had the usual electoral mechanisms ground



Counting Chads With Bush and Gore neck-and-neck in Florida's presidential vote count, election officials in Broward County examined by eye paper ballots disqualified by machine because the punched chads had not fully separated from the ballots. They hoped close scrutiny would reveal the voters' intentions.

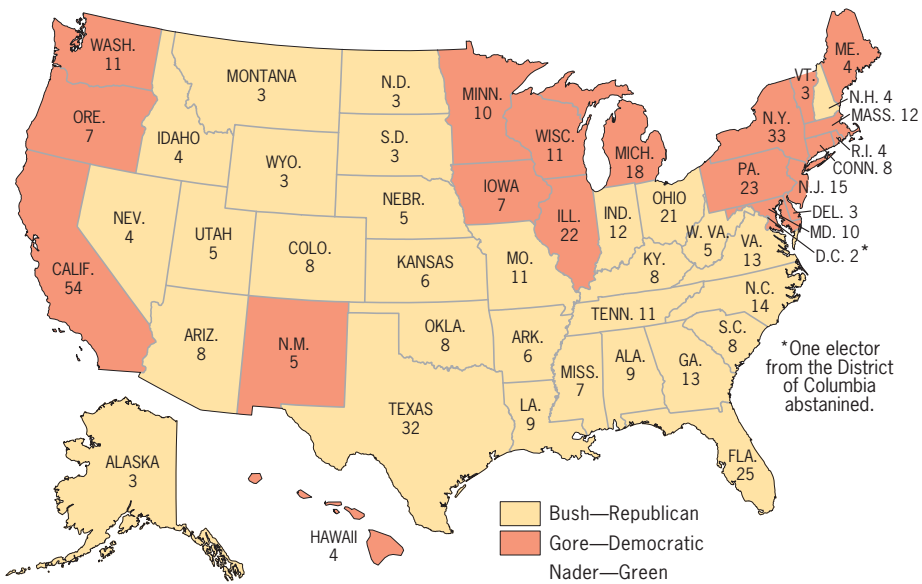
their gears so badly before yielding a definite conclusion. In the pivotal state of Florida (where the Republican candidate's brother Jeb Bush served as governor), the vote was so close that state law compelled a recount. When that second tally confirmed Bush's paper-thin margin of victory, Democrats called for further hand recounts in several counties where confusing ballots and faulty voting machines seemed to have denied Gore a legitimate majority. Crying foul, Republicans turned to the courts to block any more recounting. A bizarre judicial tussle ensued as battalions of Democratic lawyers challenged the legality of Florida's voting procedures and legions of Republican lawyers fought to stymie them.

When the Florida Supreme Court ordered a hand count of nearly sixty thousand ballots that the machines had failed to read, Republicans struck back on two fronts. The Republican-dominated Florida legislature moved to name a set of pro-Bush electors, regardless of the vote tabulating and retabulating then under way. The Bush campaign also took its case to the U.S. Supreme Court. There, with the eyes of an increasingly restive nation riveted on the proceedings, the nine justices broke into a bare-knuckle judicial brawl. Five tumultuous weeks after election day, the presidential campaign of 2000 finally ended when the high court's five most conservative members ruled in Bush's favor. They reasoned that since neither Florida's legislature nor its courts had established a uniform standard for evaluating disputed ballots, the hand counts amounted to an unconstitutional breach of the Fourteenth

Amendment's equal protection clause. In a rare departure from high bench decorum, the liberal minority excoriated the majority. Justice John Stevens wrote scathingly that the Court's decision jeopardized "the nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law." Defenders of the decision argued that the Court had taken a bullet to prevent further turmoil, since all possible alternatives—further recounting, action by the Florida courts or legislature, or throwing the election into the House of Representatives—would lead inevitably to a Bush victory.

The Supreme Court ruling gave Bush the White House but also cast a dark shadow of illegitimacy over his presidency. Bush's final official margin of victory in Florida was only 537 votes of 6 million cast, and his national tally in the popular vote, 50,456,002 votes, fell short of Gore's 50,999,897. In the Electoral College, Bush garnered only five more votes than Gore, 271 to 266. Bush also faced a Congress more evenly divided than any in history. The Senate was split fifty-fifty between Democrats and Republicans, with Vice President Cheney holding the tie-breaking vote. The GOP's grip on the House dwindled to a mere ten-vote majority.

The fiasco of the 2000 election severely tested American democracy, but in the end the Republic earned a passing grade. The nation's two-century-old electoral machinery might have shown its age, but it managed to wheeze and clank its way to a peaceful resolution of one of the most ferociously contested presidential races ever. It could even be said that America's much-maligned political system managed to display a



Presidential Election of 2000 (with electoral vote by state)
 Although Democrat Albert Gore won the popular election for president by half a million votes, George W. Bush’s contested 537-vote advantage in Florida gave him a slight lead in the Electoral College. The 2.7 million popular votes won by Green party candidate and consumer activist Ralph Nader almost surely deprived Gore of victory, casting Nader in the role of spoiler. Bush’s failure to win the popular vote inspired critics to protest at his inauguration with placards reading “Hail to the Thief.”

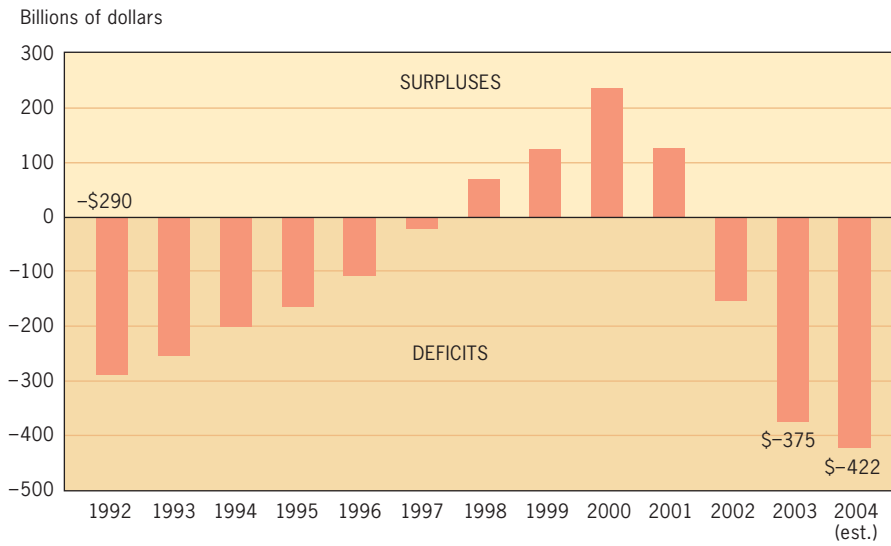
certain awkward dignity. Despite the fuss about unreadable ballots and all the partisan maneuvering, no credible charges of serious chicanery or outright corruption wafted up out of the election’s cauldron of controversy. No really threatening riotous rabble filled the nation’s streets. Both camps sought victory by calling out the lawyers, not the generals. No insoluble constitutional crisis emerged. And however unsettling the U.S. Supreme Court’s intervention might have been, surely it was better to have the buck stop with the judges, not with a junta. The foresight of the Founders in crafting a system of elections and courts stood reaffirmed for the new century, although the imbroglio unquestionably demonstrated the need for modernized and nationally uniform balloting procedures. Some critics even called for the abolition of the Electoral College—an unlikely development, given the advantage it conferred on small states numerous enough to block any proposed constitutional amendment. (See Art. V of the Constitution.)

Bush Begins

As the son of the forty-first President, George W. Bush (“43”) became the first presidential offspring since John Quincy Adams to reach the White House. Raised largely in Texas, the younger Bush publicly distanced himself from his family’s privileged New England heritage and affected the chummy manner of a self-made good ol’ boy—though he held degrees from Yale and Harvard. (His

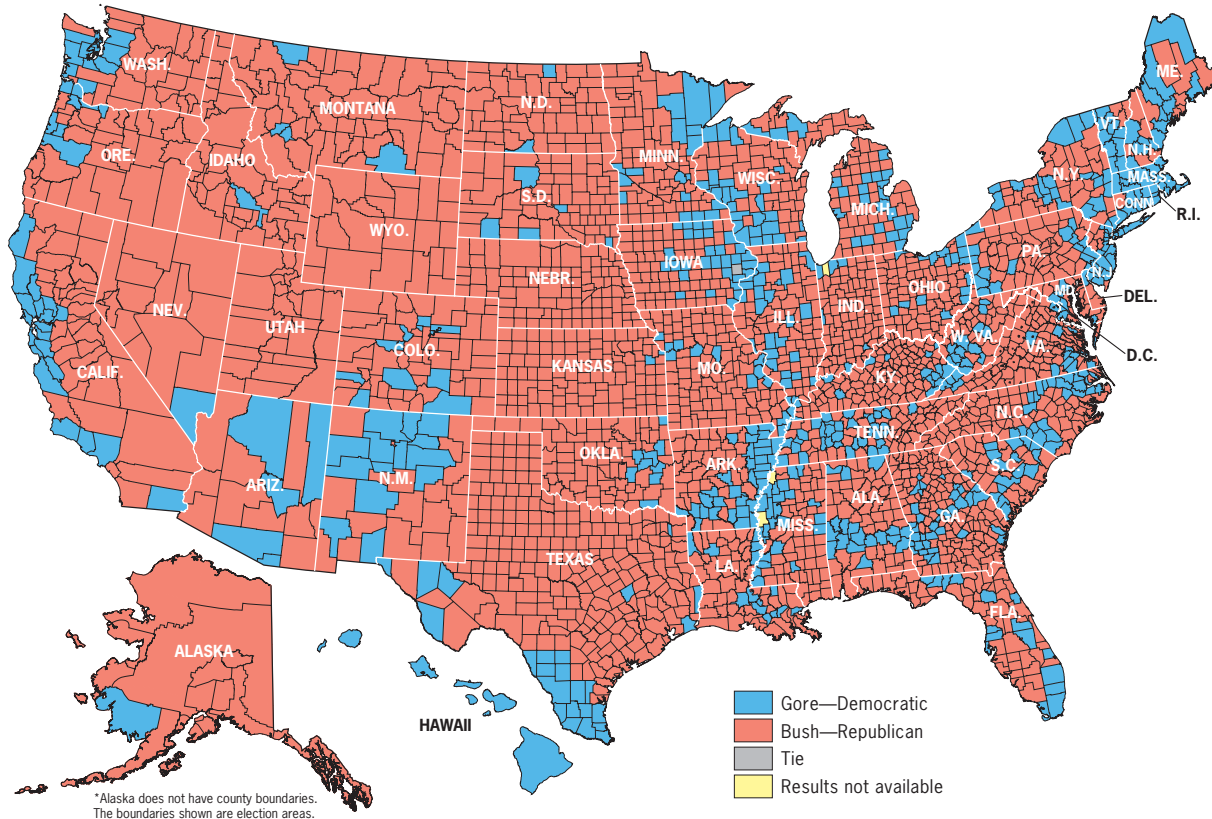
adversaries sniped that he had been born on third base and claimed to have hit a triple.) He promised to bring to Washington the conciliatory skills he had honed as the Republican governor of Texas, where he had worked well with the Democratic majority in the state’s legislature.

But as president, Bush soon proved to be more of a divider than a uniter, less a “compassionate conservative” than a crusading ideologue. Religious traditionalists cheered but liberals jeered when he withdrew American support from international health programs that sanctioned abortion, advocated federally financed faith-based social welfare initiatives, and sharply limited government-sponsored research on embryonic stem cells, which many scientists believed held the key to conquering diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. He pleased corporate chieftains but angered environmentalists by challenging scientific findings on groundwater contamination and global warming, repudiating the Kyoto Treaty limiting greenhouse gas emissions (negotiated by the Clinton administration but never ratified by the Senate), advocating new oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on Alaska’s ecologically fragile north coast, and allowing Vice President Cheney to hammer out his administration’s energy policy in behind-closed-doors meetings with representatives of several giant oil companies. Even many fiscal conservatives thought him reckless when he pressed ahead with a whopping \$1.3 trillion tax cut. Together with a softening economy, the tax cut turned the federal budget surpluses of the late 1990s into yawning deficits, reaching more than \$400 billion in 2004.



Deficits into Surpluses and Back Again In 1998 the U.S. budget deficit became a surplus for the first time in decades. But by 2002 the government was back in deficit, due to President Bush's tax cuts, a weak economy, and mushrooming defense spending on the Iraq War. (Sources: Office of Management and Budget, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Congressional Budget Office.)

America in Red and Blue This map showing the vote by county in the poisonously contested 2000 presidential election vividly illustrates the geography of modern America's political divisions. Democratic candidate Albert Gore won a popular majority by carrying just 676 mostly urban counties, heavily populated by union members, minorities, and prosperous, educated white-collar workers. Republican George W. Bush won the election by taking 2,477 mostly rural counties, where feelings about "social issues" such as abortion and gun control ran high and shaped solid conservative constituencies. (Source: Adapted from VNS Graphic by Stanford Kay-Newsweek.)



These polarizing policies both reflected and deepened the cultural chasm that increasingly divided “red” from “blue” America (see the map on p. 1001). The new president’s initiatives proved so divisive that a member of his own party, Vermont senator James Jeffords, severed his connection with the Republicans in May 2001, thereby briefly returning control of the Senate to the Democrats—though they became the Senate minority party once again following the 2002 elections.



Terrorism Comes to America

On September 11, 2001, the long era of America’s impregnable national security violently ended. On a balmy late-summer morning, suicidal terrorists slammed two hijacked airliners, loaded with passengers and jet fuel,

The Toll of Terror Grief overcame this exhausted fire fighter during the search for survivors in the wreckage of New York’s World Trade Center.



The Morning After A solemn President Bush meets with his Cabinet on September 12, 2001, the day after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

into the twin towers of New York City’s World Trade Center. They flew a third plane into the military nerve center of the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C., killing 189 people. Heroic passengers forced another hijacked aircraft to crash in rural Pennsylvania, killing all 44 aboard but depriving the terrorists of a fourth weapon of mass destruction. As the two giant New York skyscrapers thunderously collapsed, some three thousand innocent victims perished, including people of many races and faiths from more than sixty countries, as well as hundreds of New York’s police- and fire-department rescue workers. A stunned nation blossomed with flags, as grieving and outraged Americans struggled to express their sorrow and solidarity in the face of catastrophic terrorism.

President Bush responded with a sober and stirring address to Congress nine days later. His solemn demeanor and the gravity of the situation helped to dissipate the cloud of illegitimacy that had shadowed his presidency since the disputed election of 2000. While emphasizing his respect for the Islamic religion and Muslim people, he identified the principal enemy as Osama bin Laden, head of a shadowy terrorist network known as Al Qaeda (“the base” in Arabic). A wealthy

extremist exiled from his native Saudi Arabia, bin Laden was associated with earlier attacks on American embassies in East Africa and on a U.S. Navy vessel in Yemen. He had taken refuge in landlocked Afghanistan, ruled by Islamic fundamentalists called the Taliban. (Ironically, the United States had indirectly helped bring the Taliban to power when it supported religious rebels resisting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.) Bin Laden was known to harbor venomous resentment toward the United States for its economic embargo against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, its growing military presence in the Middle East (especially on the sacred soil of the Arabian Peninsula), and its support for Israel's hostility toward Palestinian nationalism. Bin Laden also fed on worldwide resentment of America's enormous economic, military, and cultural power. Ironically, America's most conspicuous strengths had made it a conspicuous target.

When the Taliban refused to hand over bin Laden, Bush ordered a massive military campaign against Afghanistan. Within three months American and Afghan rebel forces had overthrown the Taliban but failed to find bin Laden, and Americans continued to live in fear of future attacks. Confronted with this unconventional, diffuse menace, antiterrorism experts called for new tactics of "asymmetrical warfare," employing not just traditional military muscle but also innovative intelligence gathering, economic reprisals, infiltration of suspected organizations, and even assassinations.

The terrorists' blows diabolically coincided with the onset of a recession. The already-gathering economic downdraft worsened as edgy Americans shunned air travel and the tourist industry withered. Then, while the rubble in New York was still smoldering, a handful of Americans died after receiving letters contaminated with the deadly respiratory disease anthrax. The perpetrators of the anthrax attacks remained unknown, but the gnawing fear spread that biological warfare might be the next threat facing the American people.

In this anxious atmosphere, Congress in October 2001 rammed through the USA Patriot Act.* The Act permitted extensive telephone and e-mail surveillance and authorized the detention and deportation of immigrants suspected of terrorism. Just over a year later, Congress created a new cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security to protect the nation's borders and



Liberty or Death Critics of the USA Patriot Act feared the extinction of cherished civil liberties, including the right to protest against the government's policies.

ferret out potential attackers. The Justice Department meanwhile rounded up hundreds of immigrants and held them without habeas corpus (formal charges in an open court). The Bush administration further called for trying suspected terrorists before military tribunals, where the usual rules of evidence and procedure did not apply. As hundreds of Taliban fighters captured in Afghanistan languished in legal limbo on the American military base at Guantanamo, Cuba, public-opinion polls showed Americans sharply divided on whether the terrorist threat fully warranted such drastic encroachments on America's venerable tradition of protecting civil liberties.

*Officially, "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism"

Catastrophic terrorism posed an unprecedented challenge to the United States. The events of that murderous September morning reanimated American patriotism, but they also brought a long chapter in American history to a dramatic climax. All but unique among modern peoples, Americans for nearly two centuries had been spared from foreign attack on their homeland. That unusual degree of virtually cost-free national security had undergirded the values of openness and individual freedom that defined the distinctive character of American society. Now American security and American liberty alike were dangerously imperiled.



Bush Takes the Offensive Against Iraq

On only its second day in office, the Bush administration warned that it would not tolerate Iraq's continued defiance of United Nations weapons inspections, mandated after Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had played hide-and-seek with the inspectors for years. In 1998 he expelled both the U.N. Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), inducing President Clinton, with congressional approval, to declare that Saddam's removal ("regime change") was an official goal of U.S. policy. But no sustained military action against Iraq had followed. Now, in the context of the new terrorist threat, the Bush administration focused on Iraq with a vengeance.

In January 2002, just weeks after the September 11 attacks, Bush claimed that Iraq, along with Iran and North Korea, constituted an "axis of evil" that gravely menaced American security. Iran and North Korea were both known to be pursuing nuclear weapons programs, and Iran had long supported terrorist operations in the Middle East. But the Iraqi tyrant, Saddam Hussein, defeated but not destroyed by Bush's father in 1991, became the principal object of the new president's wrath. The elder Bush had carefully assembled a broad international coalition to fight the 1991 Persian Gulf War. He had also spoken so often of "prudence" that late-night television comedians had mocked him for it. In contrast, his son was brashly determined to break with long-standing American traditions and wage a preemptive war against Iraq—and to go it alone if necessary. The younger Bush thus cast off his appeal for America to be a "humble nation" and stood revealed as a plunger, a daring risk-taker willing to embrace

bold, dramatic policies, foreign as well as fiscal. In that spirit Bush began laying plans for a war against Iraq, while somewhat halfheartedly pursuing diplomatic initiatives to avoid war.

Itching for a fight, and egged on by hawkish Vice President Cheney and other "neoconservative" advisers, Bush accused the Iraqi regime of all manner of wrongdoing: oppressing its own people; frustrating the weapons inspectors; developing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and supporting terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda. Perhaps most controversially, he also suggested that a liberated, democratized Iraq might provide a beacon of hope to the Islamic world and thereby begin to improve the political equation in the volatile Middle East. To skeptical observers, including America's usually reliable European allies, the very multiplicity of Bush's reasons for war cast doubt on his case, and his ambition to

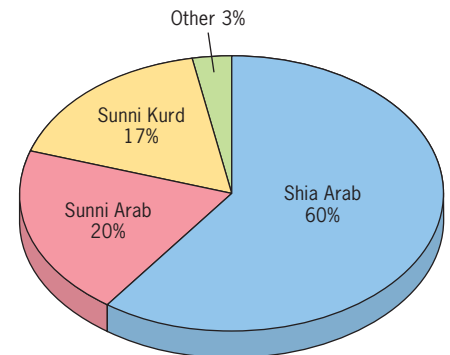
In his 2002 state of the union address, President Bush declared:

"Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."



Ethnic and religious groups by percent of total population (c. 25,000,000)



Iraq in Transition Carved out of the old Ottoman Empire after World War I, Iraq was long a combustible compound of rivalrous ethnic and religious groups. Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime imposed a brutal peace on the country for twenty-four years following his ascent to power in 1979, but after the American invasion in 2003, old feuds resumed, exacerbated by stinging resentment against the occupying forces.

create a democracy in long-suffering Iraq seemed hopelessly utopian. Secretary of State Colin Powell urged caution, warning about the long-term consequences for the United States of invading and occupying an unstable, religiously and culturally divided nation of 25 million people. "You break it, you own it," he told the president.

Heavy majorities in both houses of Congress nevertheless passed a resolution in October 2002 authorizing the president to employ armed force to defend against Iraqi threats to America's national security and to enforce United Nations resolutions regarding Iraq. A month later the U.N. Security Council voted unanimously to give Iraq "a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations." There followed a months-long cat-and-mouse game. U.N. weapons inspectors returned to Iraq. Saddam once again harassed and blocked them. No weapons of mass destruction were found. The inspectors asked for more time. The United Nations declined to authorize the use of force to compel compliance.

In this tense and confusing atmosphere, Bush, with Britain his only major ally, launched the long-

anticipated invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003. Saddam Hussein's vaunted military machine collapsed almost immediately. In less than a month, Baghdad had fallen and Saddam had been driven from power and hounded into hiding. (He was found and arrested some nine months later.) From the deck of a U.S. aircraft carrier off the California coast, speaking beneath a banner declaring "Mission Accomplished," Bush triumphantly announced on May 1, 2003, that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."

Owning Iraq

Combat may have ended, but conflict did not. Contrary to rosy predictions that the Iraqi people would welcome the Americans as liberators and that democracy would sweetly blossom, Iraq became a seething cauldron of apparently endless violence. Iraqi factions jockeyed murderously for political position in the post-Saddam era.



The Human Cost

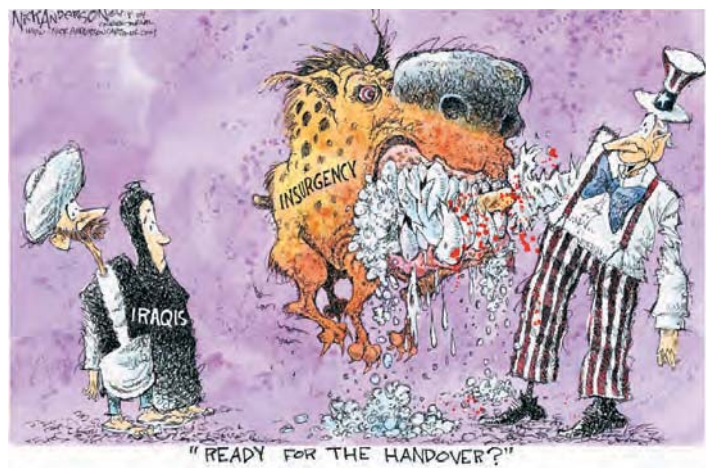
The government attempted to censor these photos of the flag-bedecked coffins of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq—nearly 1,200 by 2004.

Iraqi insurgents, aided by militants drawn from other Islamic nations, repeatedly attacked American troops, killing more U.S. soldiers during the occupation (nearly 1,200 by 2004) than during the invasion itself (139). Meanwhile, the invasion and subsequent unrest claimed the lives of as many as 15,000 Iraqi civilians. Revelations in April 2004 about American abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Baghdad’s notorious Abu Ghraib prison further inflamed anti-American sentiment in Iraq and beyond. Once a model democracy and an inspiration to the world, the United States was now reviled in many quarters as just another arrogant imperialist power.

President Bush, who during the 2000 presidential campaign had denounced “nation-building” as a proper mission for America’s military, nevertheless remained committed to the reconstruction of Iraq. On June 28, 2004, two days ahead of schedule, the Americans handed over political power (but only limited sovereignty) to an interim Iraqi government. Elections were scheduled for January 2005. Yet controversy continued to swirl about Bush’s declared rationale for war. After nearly two years of occupation, weapons of mass destruction remained undiscovered in Iraq. Saddam’s nuclear program, though not extinguished, was shown to have been primitive and unlikely to produce results in the near future. Links between Saddam and Al Qaeda proved impossible to substantiate. There was little evidence that Saddam’s downfall might topple other autocratic regimes in the region. Meanwhile, more than 100,000 American troops remained

in the country. Antiwar critics wondered anew whether the war was necessary and what long-term burdens in the Middle East America had, perhaps unwittingly, now assumed. The vexed question of America’s role in Iraq—past, present, and future—came to dominate the 2004 presidential election.

“Ready for the Handover?” The unanticipated ferocity of the insurgent movement in Iraq after the defeat of Saddam Hussein’s armed forces confounded expectations for a swift and peaceful end to the American incursion.



In his 1998 book, A World Transformed, former president George H. W. Bush explained his rationale for not driving Saddam Hussein from power during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. His words made sobering reading in the context of his son's subsequent invasion of Iraq:

"Trying to eliminate Saddam . . . would have incurred incalculable human and political costs. . . . The coalition would instantly have collapsed, the Arabs deserting it in anger and other allies pulling out as well. Under the circumstances, there was no viable 'exit strategy' we could see, violating another of our principles. Furthermore, we had been self-consciously trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally exceeding the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international response to aggression that we hoped to establish. Had we gone the invasion route, the United States could conceivably still be an occupying power in a bitterly hostile land. It would have been a dramatically different—and perhaps barren—outcome."



A Country in Conflict

Americans had rarely been as divided as they were in the first years of the twenty-first century. Disgruntled Democrats still fumed with resentment over the "stolen" 2000 election. Civil libertarians fulminated over the restrictions on citizen rights imposed by the USA Patriot Act and its zealous administrator, Attorney General John Ashcroft. Antiwar skeptics felt duped and misled into the potential quagmire of Iraq. Revelations about flagrant corporate fraud at energy giant Enron, telecommunications titan WorldCom, and other prominent companies fed rampant popular disillusion with the

business community. Pro-life and pro-choice champions still could not find any common ground on the troubled issue of abortion. Acrimonious controversies over the right of gays and lesbians to marry flared up in San Francisco, Massachusetts, and Portland, Oregon in 2004.

In 2003 California voters expressed their disillusion with politics as usual when for the first time ever they used a nearly one-hundred-year-old recall procedure to toss out a governor reelected just months earlier. In his place they elected Republican movie action hero Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Affirmative action also continued to agitate the American people. Most African Americans and other minorities hailed it as a just and necessary antidote to centuries of oppression. Many other Americans countercharged that affirmative action amounted to an unjustifiable violation of the Constitution's protection of equality before the law. The Supreme Court appeared to split the difference between these positions in the

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor justified her decision in favor of affirmative action in the Grutter case as follows:

"By virtue of our Nation's struggle with racial inequality, [minority] students are both likely to have experiences of particular importance to the Law School's mission, and less likely to be admitted in meaningful numbers on criteria that ignore those experiences."

Justice Clarence Thomas dissented:

"[E]very time the government places citizens on racial registers and makes race relevant to the provision of burdens or benefits, it demeans us all. . . . When blacks take positions in the highest places of government, industry, or academia, it is an open question today whether their skin color played a part in their advancement . . . asking the question itself unfairly marks those blacks who would succeed without discrimination."

twin cases of *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003. In the first case, the Court declared unconstitutional a numerical formula for admitting minority undergraduate students to the University of Michigan. In the second, it allowed to stand a more flexible, individually based minority admissions procedure for the Michigan law school, even while registering its unease with its own opinion by declaring, “We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary.”



Reelecting George W. Bush

President Bush meanwhile positioned himself to run for reelection in 2004. He trumpeted his tax cuts as a way to return money to citizens’ pockets and throttle the growth of run-away big government. Pursuant to his campaign promise to end “the soft bigotry of low expectations,” he championed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, which mandated sanctions against schools that failed to meet federal performance standards. Trying to reclaim the “compassionate conservative” label, he persuaded Congress in 2003 to pass an immensely costly prescription drug benefit for senior citizens, which further widened the deficit gap created by his tax cuts. He cultivated his conservative electoral base by resisting full-scale embryonic stem-cell research and calling for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. But most of all he cast himself as a war president and a stalwart, decisive commander-in-chief who was sternly facing down the terrorist threat.

After a bruising round of primary elections, the Democrats chose as their standard-bearer the lanky and long-jawed Massachusetts Senator John F. Kerry. A proper New England patrician with courtly manners and an aloof bearing, Kerry was Lincolnesque in his looks and liberal in his politics. He counted heavily on his record as a decorated Vietnam veteran to counter charges that he would lack vigor in the war against terror. But Kerry’s prominent role in the anti-Vietnam War campaign in the 1960s prompted some veterans’ groups to attack him viciously (and irresponsibly), blurring his image as a two-fisted battler against America’s enemies.

An unusually thoughtful politician prone to lengthy and complex ruminations on policy matters, Kerry was also challenged on the campaign trail to defend the many seemingly contradictory positions he had taken during his eighteen-year Senate career. He stumbled

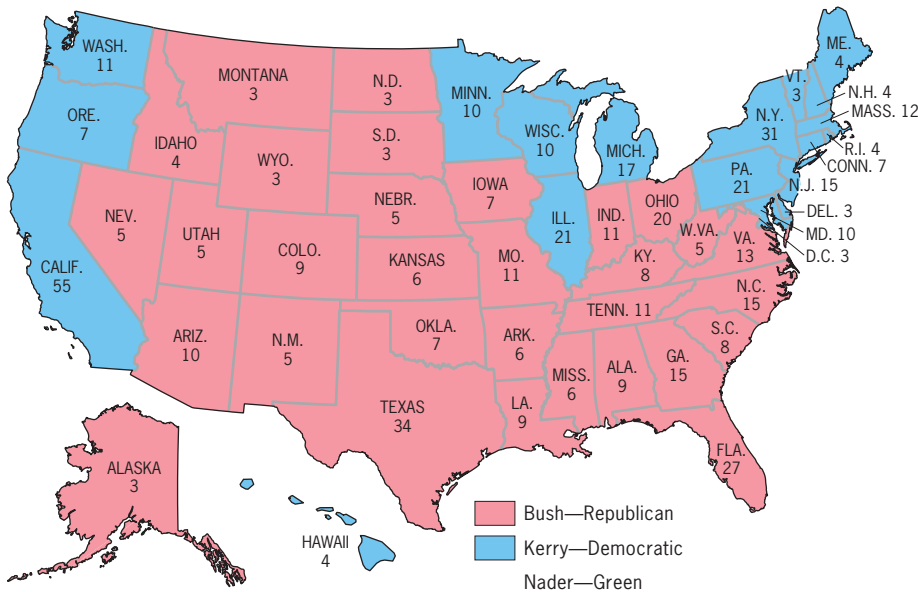


The Victors, 2004 A triumphant George W. Bush, flanked by his wife, Laura, and Vice President Dick Cheney, celebrates his reelection in 2004. Bush shattered precedent by becoming the only presidential son to win reelection to the presidency. (The only other son of a president to reach the White House, John Quincy Adams, lost his bid for reelection to Andrew Jackson in 1828.)

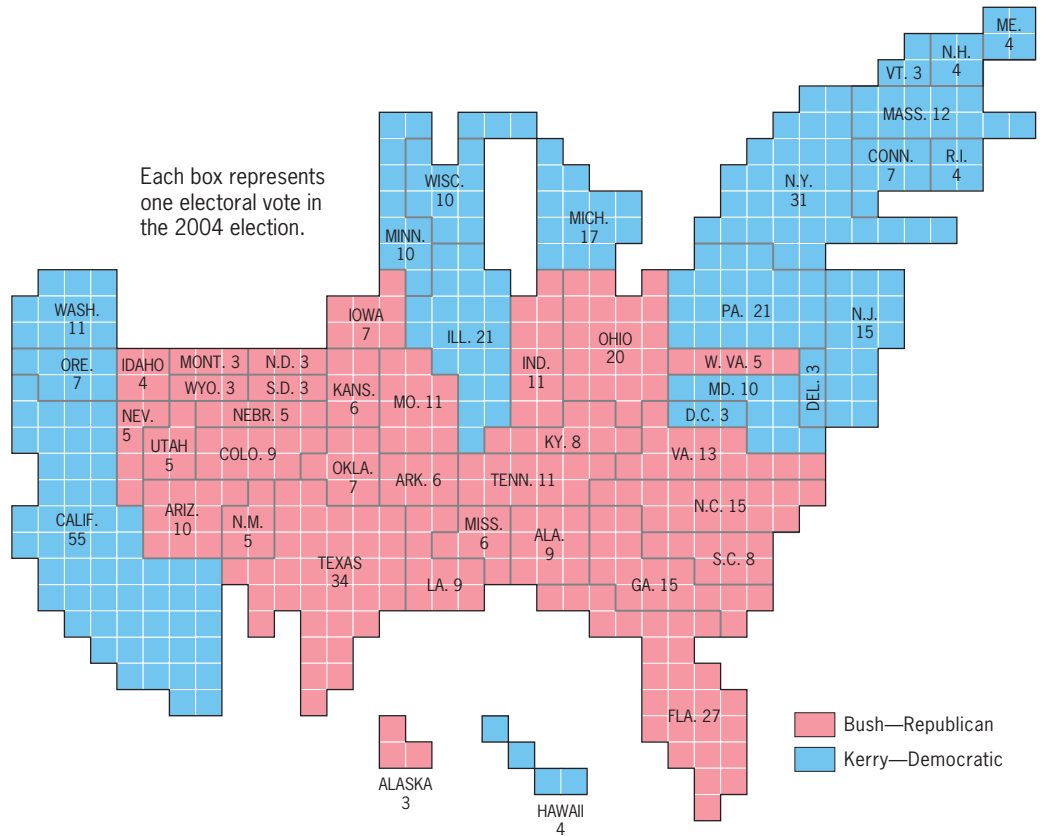
badly when he said that he had actually voted *for* a major military spending bill before he voted *against* it. Such a reversal is normal procedure as bills make their way through the tortuous legislative process, but amid the sound-bite hubbub of a fast-paced presidential campaign, Kerry’s statement seemed to ratify Republican accusations that he was a waffling flip-flopper. Bush, in contrast, hammered home the simple message that he was an unflinching, God-fearing, conservative defender of traditional moral values and an implacable foe of America’s enemies.

The continued turbulence in Iraq and substantial job losses during Bush’s first term fueled hopes for Democratic success at the polls. But on election day, Bush nailed down a decisive victory. His three-pronged strategy of emphasizing taxes, terror, and moral values paid off handsomely. He posted the first popular vote majority in more than a decade, 60,639,281 to Kerry’s 57,355,978, with a commanding advantage in the Electoral College, 286 to 252.

Bitterly disappointed Democrats licked their wounds as they contemplated the dimensions of Bush’s victory, which included substantial gains for his party in both the Senate and the House, and pointed to a long



Presidential Election of 2004
 The traditionally drawn map (top) fails adequately to show the closeness of the nation's political divide in 2004, which is better represented when the graphic size of states is weighted to reflect population, as in the bottom map. (Source for bottom map: Ben Werschkul/NYTimes.com. Election results from *The New York Times*, November 4, 2004. Copyright © 2004 The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.)



period of probable Republican dominance. Bush was the first Republican to win a majority of the historically Democratic Catholic vote and he polled 43 percent of the Latino vote, on which Democrats had counted heavily. He ran up heavy majorities among evangelical Christians, concentrated especially in the southern “Bible Belt.” Most ominously for Democrats, Bush gained a substantial majority among suburban voters, the most numerous and fastest growing part of the electorate.

As President Bush began his second term, he could claim that the 2004 election had given him a conclusive

mandate to advance the conservative cause, including dramatic changes to the Social Security system, further tax reforms, and the appointment of right-leaning judges to the federal courts—not to mention the further pursuit of his ambitious agenda to re-make much of the world, by force of arms if necessary, in the image of America’s democracy. As George W. Bush took the Inaugural Oath in January 2005, he seemed determined not merely to be a good steward of the nation’s affairs, but to effect transformational changes in the Republic’s domestic and foreign policies—for better or worse.

Chronology

1992 Clinton defeats Bush and Perot for presidency

1993 NAFTA signed

1994 Republicans win majorities in both houses of Congress

1996 Welfare Reform Bill becomes law
Clinton defeats Dole for presidency

1998 Clinton-Lewinsky scandal
U.S. and Britain launch military strikes against Iraq
House of Representatives impeaches Clinton

1999 Senate acquits Clinton on impeachment charges
Kosovo crisis; NATO warfare with Serbia
Protest in Seattle against World Trade Organization

2000 “Million Mom March” against guns in Washington, D.C.
U.S. normalizes trade relations with China
George W. Bush wins presidency in Electoral College, although Albert Gore takes popular vote

2001 Terrorists attack New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11
U.S. invades Afghanistan

2001 Congress passes USA Patriot Act
Energy trader Enron collapses amid accounting scandals

2002 Congress passes “No Child Left Behind” Act
Bush labels Iraq, Iran, and North Korea an “axis of evil”
Telecommunications giant WorldCom declares bankruptcy
Congress authorizes use of force against Iraq
U.N. Security Council demands that Iraq comply with weapons inspections
Republicans regain Senate

2003 North Korea withdraws from Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
U.S. invades Iraq
Bush signs drug prescription bill for seniors
Saddam Hussein is captured in Iraq
Supreme Court narrowly approves affirmative action
Arnold Schwarzenegger becomes California governor

2004 Gay marriage controversy erupts
Iraqi interim government is installed
George W. Bush defeats John Kerry for presidency