



**USA**

# HISTORY

**IN BRIEF**

George Washington addressing the  
Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, 1787.





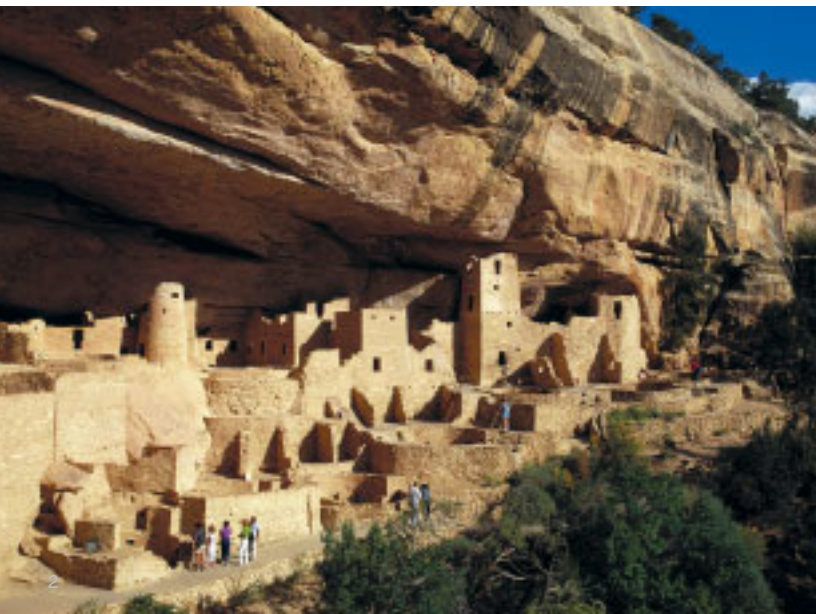
# INTRODUCTION

**T**he history of the United States has been an experiment in democracy for more than 200 years. Issues that were addressed in the early years continue to be addressed and resolved today: big government versus small government, individual rights versus group rights, unfettered capitalism versus regulated commerce and labor, engagement with the world versus isolationism. The expectations for American democracy have always been high, and the reality has sometimes been disappointing. Yet the nation has grown and prospered, through a continual process of adaptation and compromise.

## Early America

**A**t the height of the most recent Ice Age, about 35,000 years ago, much of the world's water was locked up in vast continental ice sheets. A land bridge as much as 1,500 kilometers wide connected Asia and North America. By 12,000 years ago, humans were living throughout much of the Western Hemisphere.

The first Americans crossed the land bridge from Asia and were believed to have stayed in what is now Alaska for



thousands of years. They then moved south into the land that was to become the United States. They settled along the Pacific Ocean in the Northwest, in the mountains and deserts of the Southwest, and along the Mississippi River in the Middle West.

These early groups are known as Hohokam, Adenans, Hopewellians, and Anasazi. They built villages and grew crops. Some built mounds of earth in the shapes of pyramids, birds, or serpents. Their life was closely tied to the land, and their society was clan-oriented and communal. Elements of the natural world played an essential part in their spiritual beliefs. Their



Left, Mesa Verde settlement in Colorado, 13th century. Above, aerial view of the Great Serpent Mound in Adams County, Ohio. Carbon tests of the effigy revealed that the creators of this 1,330-foot monument were members of the Native-American Fort Ancient Culture (A.D. 1000-1550).

culture was primarily oral, although some developed a type of hieroglyphics to preserve certain texts. Evidence shows that there was a good deal of trade among the groups but also that some of their relations were hostile.

For reasons not yet completely understood, these early groups disappeared over time and were replaced by other groups of Native Americans, including Hopi and Zuni, who flourished. By the time Europeans reached what is now the United States, about two million native people, maybe more, lived here.

The first Europeans to arrive in North America — at least the first for whom there is solid evidence — were Norse. They traveled west from Greenland, where Erik the Red had founded a settlement around the year 985. In 1001, his son Leif is thought to have explored the northeast coast of what is now Canada. Ruins of Norse houses dating from that time have been discovered at L'Anse-aux-Meadows in northern Newfoundland.

It would be almost 500 more years before other Europeans reached North America and another 100 years after that before permanent settlements were established. The first explorers were searching for a sea passage to Asia. Others — chiefly British, Dutch, French, and Spanish — came later to claim the lands and riches of what they called the “New World.”

The first and most famous of these explorers was Christopher Columbus of Genoa. His trips were financed by Queen Isabella of Spain. Columbus landed on islands in the Caribbean Sea in 1492,



but he never saw the mainland of the future United States. John Cabot of Venice came five years later on a mission for the king of England. His journey was quickly forgotten, but it provided the basis for British claims to North America.

The 1500s were the age of Spanish exploration in the Americas. Juan Ponce de León landed in what is now Florida in 1513. Hernando De Soto reached Florida in 1539 and continued as far as the Mississippi River. In 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado set out north from Mexico, which Spain had



Two monuments to the central role Spain played in the exploration of what is now the United States. Left, the Castillo de San Marcos, built 1672-1695 to guard St. Augustine, Florida, the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States. Left bottom, fountain and mission remains of the San Juan Capistrano Mission, California, one of nine missions founded by Spanish Franciscan missionaries led by Fray Junípero Serra in the 1770s. Serra led the Spanish colonization of what is today the state of California.



conquered in 1522, in search of the mythical Seven Cities of Cibola. He never found them, but his travels took him as far as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, as well as into the Great Plains.

While the Spanish were pushing up from the south, the northern portion of the present-day United States was slowly being revealed through the journeys of other Europeans. These included Giovanni da Verrazano, Jacques Cartier, and Amerigo Vespucci, for whom the continent — America — would be named.

The first permanent European settlement in what was to become the United States was established by the Spanish in the middle 1500s at St. Augustine in Florida. However, it would not play a part in the formation of the new nation. That story took place in settlements farther north along the Atlantic coast — in Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, and the 10 other areas colonized by a growing tide of immigrants from Europe.

## Colonial Period

**M**ost settlers who came to the British colonies in the 1600s were English. Others came from The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France, and later from Scotland and Northern Ireland. Some left their homelands to escape war, political oppression, religious persecution, or a prison sentence. Some left as servants who expected to work their way to freedom. Black Africans were sold into slavery and arrived in shackles.



By 1690, the population was 250,000. Less than 100 years later, it had climbed to 2.5 million.

The settlers had many different reasons for coming to America, and eventually 13 distinct colonies developed here. Differences among the three regional groupings of colonies were even more marked.

The first settlements were built along the Atlantic coast and on the rivers that flowed to the ocean. In the Northeast, settlers found hills covered with trees and soil filled with stones left behind when the Ice Age glaciers melted. Water power was easy to harness, so “New England” — including Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island — developed an economy based on wood products, fishing, shipbuilding, and trade. The middle colonies — including New York and Pennsylvania — had a milder climate and more varied terrain. Both industry and agriculture developed there, and society was more varied and cosmopolitan. In New York, for example, one could find Bohemians, Danes, Dutch, English, French, Germans, Irish, Italians, Norwegians, Poles, Portuguese, Scots, and Swedes. The Southern colonies — Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas — had a long growing season and fertile soil, and the economy was primarily agricultural. There were both small farmers and wealthy aristocratic landowners who owned large plantations worked by African slaves.



Detail from a painting by American artist Benjamin West (1738-1820), which depicts William Penn's treaty with the Native Americans living where he founded the colony of Pennsylvania as a haven for Quakers and others seeking religious freedom. Penn's fair treatment of the Delaware Indians led to long-term, friendly relations, unlike the conflicts between European settlers and Indian tribes in other colonies.

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States.



Pilgrims signing the Mayflower Compact aboard ship, 1620.



Benjamin Franklin: scientist, inventor, writer, newspaper publisher, city father of Philadelphia, diplomat, and signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.



U.S. postage stamp commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition under President Thomas Jefferson. Their expedition mapped western land all the way to Oregon for the young United States.

Relations between settlers and Native Americans, who were called Indians, were an uneasy mix of cooperation and conflict. Certain areas saw trade and some social interaction, but in general, as the new settlements expanded, the Indians were forced to move, often after being defeated in battle.

Settlement of the colonies was directly sponsored not by the British government, but by private groups. All except Georgia emerged as companies of shareholders or as proprietorships chartered by the king. Some were governed rigidly by company leaders, but in time, all developed a system of participatory government based on British legal precedent and tradition.

Years of political turmoil in Britain culminated with the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 that deposed King James II and led to limits on the monarchy and greater freedoms for the people. The American colonies benefited from these changes. Colonial assemblies claimed the right to act as local parliaments. They passed measures that limited the power of royal governors and expanded their own power.

Over the decades that followed, recurring disputes between the governors and assemblies awakened colonists to the increasing divergence between American and British interests. The principles and precedents that emerged from these disputes became the unwritten constitution of the colonies.

At first, the focus was on self-government within a British commonwealth. Only later came the call for independence.

## Road to Independence

**T**he principles of liberalism and democracy — the political foundation of the United States — sprang naturally from the process of building a new society on virgin land.

Just as naturally, the new nation would see itself as different and exceptional. Europe would view it with apprehension, or hope.

Britain's 13 North American colonies matured during the 1700s. They grew in population, economic strength, and cultural attainment. They were experienced in self-government. Yet it was not until 170 years after the founding of the first permanent settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, that the new United States of America emerged as a nation.

War between Britain and France in the 1750s was fought partly in North America. Britain was victorious and soon initiated policies designed to control and fund its vast empire. These measures imposed greater restraints on the American colonists' way of life.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 restricted the opening of new lands for settlement. The Sugar Act of 1764 placed taxes on luxury goods, including coffee, silk, and wine, and made it illegal to import rum. The Currency Act of 1764 prohibited the printing of paper money in the colonies. The Quartering Act of 1765 forced colonists to provide food and housing for royal troops. And the Stamp Act of 1765 required the purchase of royal

stamps for all legal documents, newspapers, licenses, and leases.

Colonists objected to all these measures, but the Stamp Act sparked the greatest organized resistance. The main issue, in the eyes of a growing number of colonists, was that they were being taxed by a distant legislature in which they could not participate. In October 1765, 27 delegates from nine colonies met in New York to coordinate efforts to get the Stamp Act repealed. They passed resolutions asserting the individual colonies' right to impose their own taxes.

Self-government produced local political leaders, and these were the men who worked together to defeat what they considered to be oppressive acts of Parliament. After they succeeded, their coordinated campaign against Britain ended. During the next several years, however, a small number of radicals tried to keep the controversy alive. Their goal was not accommodation, but independence.

Samuel Adams of Massachusetts was the most effective. He wrote newspaper articles and made speeches appealing to the colonists' democratic instincts. He helped organize committees throughout the colonies that became the basis of a revolutionary movement. By 1773, the movement had attracted colonial traders who were angry with British attempts to regulate the tea trade. In December, a group of men sneaked on to three British ships in Boston harbor and dumped their cargo of tea overboard.



To punish Massachusetts for the vandalism, the British Parliament closed the port of Boston and restricted local authority. The new measures, dubbed the Intolerable Acts, backfired. Rather than isolate one colony, they rallied the others. All the colonies except Georgia sent representatives to Philadelphia in September 1774 to discuss their “present unhappy state.” It was the first Continental Congress.

Colonists felt a growing sense of frustration and anger over British encroachment on their rights. Yet by no means was there unanimity of thought on what should be done. Loyalists wanted to remain subjects of the king. Moderates favored compromise to produce a more acceptable relationship with the British government. And revolutionaries wanted complete independence. They began stockpiling weapons and mobilizing forces — waiting for the day when they would have to fight for it.

## Revolution

**T**he American Revolution — its war for independence from Britain — began as a small skirmish between British troops and armed colonists on April 19, 1775.

The British had set out from Boston, Massachusetts, to seize weapons and ammunition that revolutionary colonists had collected in nearby villages. At Lexington, they met a group of Minutemen, who got that name because they were said to



The protest against British taxes known as the "Boston Tea Party," 1773.





Artist's depiction of the first shots of the American Revolution, fired at Lexington, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775. Local militia confronted British troops marching to seize colonial armaments in the nearby town of Concord.







Drawing of revolutionary firebrand Patrick Henry (standing to the left) uttering perhaps the most famous words of the American Revolution — “Give me liberty or give me death!” — in a debate before the Virginia Assembly in 1775.



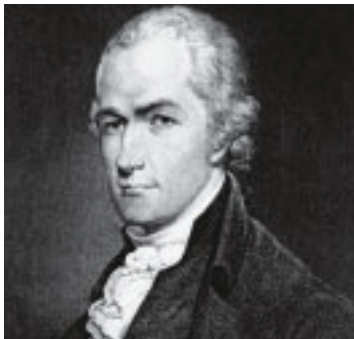
James Madison, fourth president of the United States, is often regarded as the “Father of the Constitution.” His essays in the debate over ratification of the Constitution were collected with those of Alexander Hamilton and John Jay as *The Federalist Papers*.



be ready to fight in a minute. The Minutemen intended only a silent protest, and their leader told them not to shoot unless fired on first. The British ordered the Minutemen to disperse, and they complied. As they were withdrawing, someone fired a shot. The British troops attacked the Minutemen with guns and bayonets.

Fighting broke out at other places along the road as the British soldiers in their bright red uniforms made their way back to Boston. More than 250 “redcoats” were killed or wounded. The Americans lost 93 men.

Deadly clashes continued around Boston as colonial representatives hurried to Philadelphia to discuss the situation. A majority voted to go to war against Britain. They agreed to



Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury in the administration of President George Washington. Hamilton advocated a strong federal government and the encouragement of industry.



John Marshall, chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1801 to 1835, in a portrait by Alonzo Chappel.

combine colonial militias into a continental army, and they appointed George Washington of Virginia as commander-in-chief. At the same time, however, this Second Continental Congress adopted a peace resolution urging King George III to prevent further hostilities. The king rejected it and on August 23 declared that the American colonies were in rebellion.

Calls for independence intensified in the coming months. Radical political theorist Thomas Paine helped crystallize the argument for separation. In a pamphlet called *Common Sense*, which sold 100,000 copies, he attacked the idea of a hereditary monarchy. Paine presented two alternatives for America: continued submission under a tyrannical king and outworn system of government, or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic.

The Second Continental Congress appointed a committee, headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, to prepare a document outlining the colonies' grievances against the king and explaining their decision to break away. This Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. The 4th of July has since been celebrated as America's Independence Day.

The Declaration of Independence not only announced the birth of a new nation. It also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the world. It drew upon French and British political ideas, especially those of John Locke in his *Second Treatise on Government*,

reaffirming the belief that political rights are basic human rights, and are thus universal.

Declaring independence did not make Americans free. British forces routed continental troops in New York, from Long Island to New York City. They defeated the Americans at Brandywine, Pennsylvania, and occupied Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee. American forces were victorious at Saratoga, New York, and at Trenton and Princeton in New Jersey. Yet George Washington continually struggled to get the men and materials he desperately needed.

Decisive help came in 1778, when France recognized the United States and signed a bilateral defense treaty. Support from the French government, however, was based on geopolitical, not ideological, reasons. France wanted to weaken the power of Britain, its long-time adversary.

The fighting that began at Lexington, Massachusetts, continued for eight years across a large portion of the continent. Battles were fought from Montreal, Canada, in the north to Savannah, Georgia, in the south. A huge British army surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781, yet the war dragged on with inconclusive results for another two years. A peace treaty was finally signed in Paris on April 15, 1783.

The Revolution had a significance far beyond North America. It attracted the attention of Europe's political theorists and strengthened the concept of natural rights throughout

the Western world. It attracted notables such as Thaddeus Kosciuszko, Friedrich von Steuben, and the Marquis de Lafayette, who joined the revolution and hoped to transfer its liberal ideas to their own countries.

The Treaty of Paris acknowledged the independence, freedom, and sovereignty of the 13 former American colonies, now states. The task of knitting them together into a new nation lay ahead.

## **Formation of a National Government**

**T**he 13 American colonies became the 13 United States of America in 1783, following their war for independence from Britain. Before the war ended, they ratified a framework for their common efforts. These Articles of Confederation provided for a union, but an extremely loose and fragile one. George Washington called it a “rope of sand.”

There was no common currency; individual states still produced their own. There was no national military force; many states still had their own armies and navies. There was little centralized control over foreign policy; states negotiated directly with other countries. And there was no national system for imposing and collecting taxes.

Disputes between Maryland and Virginia over navigation rights on the Potomac River, which formed their common

border, led to a conference of five states in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1786. Alexander Hamilton, a delegate from New York, said that such commercial issues were part of larger economic and political questions. What was needed, he said, was a rethinking of the Confederation. He and the other delegates proposed holding a convention to do just that. Support from Washington, unquestionably the most trusted man in America, won over those who thought the idea was too bold.

The gathering in Philadelphia in May 1787 was remarkable. The 55 delegates elected to the convention had experience



The historic room in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, where delegates drafted the Constitution of the United States in the summer of 1787. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land.

in colonial and state government. They were knowledgeable in history, law, and political theory. Most were young, but the group included the elderly Benjamin Franklin, who was nearing the end of an extraordinary career of public service and scientific achievement. Two notable Americans were not there: Thomas Jefferson was in Paris as American ambassador to France, and John Adams was in London as ambassador to Great Britain.

The Continental Congress had authorized the convention to amend the Articles of Confederation. Instead, the delegates threw aside the Articles — judging them inadequate for the needs of the new nation — and devised a new form of government based on the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The gathering had become a constitutional convention.

Reaching consensus on some of the details of a new constitution would prove extremely difficult. Many delegates argued for a strong national government that limited states' rights. Others argued equally persuasively for a weak national government that preserved state authority. Some delegates feared that Americans were not wise enough to govern themselves and so opposed any sort of popular elections. Others thought the national government should have as broad a popular base as possible. Representatives from small states insisted on equal representation in a national legislature. Those from big states thought they deserved to have more influence. Representatives from states where slavery was illegal hoped to





The Liberty Bell, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an enduring symbol of American freedom. First rung on July 8, 1776, to celebrate the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, it cracked in 1836, during the funeral of John Marshall, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.



A mother and daughter viewing documents in the Exhibition Hall of the National Archives. The U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights are on display in this Washington, D.C., building.



Original of the U.S. Constitution, signed by the delegates in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787.

outlaw it. Those from slave states rejected any attempts to do so. Some delegates wanted to limit the number of states in the Union. Others supported statehood for the newly settled lands to the West.

Every question raised new divisions, and each was resolved by compromise.

The draft Constitution was not a long document. Yet it provided the framework for the most complex government yet devised. The national government would have full power to issue currency, levy taxes, grant patents, conduct foreign policy, maintain an army, establish post offices, and wage war. And it would have three equal branches — a congress, a president, and a court system — with balanced powers and checks against each other's actions.

Economic interests influenced the course of debate on the document, but so did state, sectional, and ideological interests. Also important was the idealism of the men who wrote it. They believed they had designed a government that would promote individual liberty and public virtue.

On September 17, 1787, after four months of deliberation, a majority of delegates signed the new Constitution. They agreed it would become the law of the land when nine of the 13 states had ratified it.

The ratification process lasted about a year. Opponents voiced fears that a strong central government could become

tyrannical and oppressive. Proponents responded that the system of checks and balances would prevent this from happening. The debate brought into existence two factions: the Federalists, who favored a strong central government and who supported the Constitution, and the Anti-Federalists, who favored a loose association of states and who opposed the Constitution.

Even after the Constitution was ratified, many Americans felt it lacked an essential element. They said it did not enumerate the rights of individuals. When the first Congress met in New York City in September 1789, lawmakers agreed to add these provisions. It took another two years before these 10 amendments — collectively known as the Bill of Rights — became part of the Constitution.

The first of the 10 amendments guarantees freedom of speech, press, and religion; the right to protest, assemble peacefully, and demand changes. The fourth protects against unreasonable searches and arrest. The fifth provides for due process of law in all criminal cases. The sixth guarantees the right to a fair and speedy trial. And the eighth protects against cruel and unusual punishment.

Since the Bill of Rights was adopted more than 200 years ago, only 17 more amendments have been added to the Constitution.

## Early Years, Westward Expansion, and Regional Differences

**G**eorge Washington was sworn in as the first president of the United States on April 30, 1789. He had been in charge of organizing an effective military force during the Revolution. Now he was in charge of building a functioning government.

He worked with Congress to create departments of State, Treasury, Justice, and War. The heads of those departments would serve as presidential advisors, his cabinet. A Supreme Court composed of one chief justice and five associate justices was established, together with three circuit courts and 13 district courts. Policies were developed for administering the western territories and bringing them into the Union as new states.

Washington served two four-year terms and then left office, setting a precedent that eventually became law. The next two presidents, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, represented two schools of thought on the role of government. This divergence led to the formation of the first political parties in the Western world. The Federalists, led by Adams and Alexander Hamilton, Washington's secretary of the Treasury, generally represented trade and manufacturing interests. They feared anarchy and believed in a strong central government that could set national economic policies and maintain order. They had the most

support in the North. Republicans, led by Jefferson, generally represented agricultural interests. They opposed a strong central government and believed in states' rights and the self-sufficiency of farmers. They had the most support in the South.

For about 20 years, the young nation was able to thrive in relative peace. Its policy was to be friendly and impartial to all other nations. However, it was not immune from political developments in Europe, particularly in Britain and France, which were at war. The British navy seized American ships headed to France, and the French navy seized American ships headed to Britain. Various diplomatic negotiations averted hostilities during the 1790s and early 1800s, but it seemed only a matter of time before the United States would have to defend its interests.

War with Britain came in 1812. Fighting took place mostly in the Northeastern states and along the east coast. One British expeditionary force reached the new capital of Washington, in the District of Columbia. It set fire to the executive mansion — causing President James Madison to flee — and left the city in flames. But the U.S. army and navy won enough decisive battles to claim victory. After two and a half years of fighting, and with a treasury depleted by a separate war with France, Britain signed a peace treaty with the United States. The U.S. victory ended once and for all any British hopes of reestablishing influence south of the Canadian border.

By the time the War of 1812 ended, many of the

serious difficulties faced by the new American republic had disappeared. National union under the Constitution brought a balance between liberty and order. A low national debt and a continent awaiting exploration presented the prospect of peace, prosperity, and social progress. The most significant event in foreign policy was a pronouncement by President James Monroe expressing U.S. solidarity with the newly independent nations of Central and South America. The Monroe Doctrine warned against any further attempts by Europe to colonize Latin America. Many of the new nations, in turn, expressed their political affinity with the United States by basing their constitutions on the North American model.

The United States doubled in size with the purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 and Florida from Spain in 1819. From 1816 to 1821, six new states were created. Between



Henry Clay of Kentucky, although never president, was one of the most influential American politicians of the first half of the 19th century. Clay became indispensable for his role in preserving the Union with the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850. Both pieces of legislation resolved, for a time, disputes over slavery in the territories.

1812 and 1852, the population tripled. The young nation's size and diversity defied easy generalization. It also invited contradiction.

The United States was a country of both civilized cities built on commerce and industry, and primitive frontiers where the rule of law was often ignored. It was a society that loved freedom but permitted slavery. The Constitution held all these different parts together. The strains, however, were growing.

## Sectional Conflict

**T**he United States in 1850 was a huge nation stretched between two oceans. Wide differences in geography, natural resources, and development were obvious from region to region.

New England and the Middle Atlantic states were the main centers of finance, commerce, and manufacturing. Principal products included textiles and clothing, lumber, and machinery. Maritime trade flourished. The Southern states were chiefly agricultural, producing tobacco, sugar, and cotton with slave labor. The Middle Western states were agricultural, too, but their grain and meat products came from the hands of free men and women.

In 1819, Missouri had applied for statehood. Northerners objected because there were 10,000 slaves there. Congressman Henry Clay of Kentucky proposed a compromise: Missouri would enter the Union and continue to permit slavery, while



Maine would enter as a free state.

Regional positions on the issue hardened in the decades following the Missouri Compromise. In the North, the movement to abolish slavery was vocal and grew increasingly powerful. In the South, the belief in white supremacy and in maintaining the economic status quo was equally vocal and powerful. Although thousands of slaves escaped north through a network of secret routes known as the Underground Railroad, slaves still comprised a third of the population in the slave states at the time of the 1860 census.

Most Northerners were unwilling to challenge the existence of slavery in the South, yet many opposed its expansion into the western territories. Southerners felt just as strongly that the territories themselves had the right to decide their status. A young politician from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln, felt that the issue was a national, not local one. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he said. "I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved ... but I do expect it will cease to be divided."

In 1860, the Republican Party nominated Lincoln as its candidate for president on an anti-slavery platform. In a four-man race, he won only 39 percent of the popular vote but a clear majority of votes in the Electoral College. The Electoral College is the group of citizens who directly elect the U.S. president, following the popular vote.

The storm that had been gathering for decades was about to explode with brutal force. Southern states had threatened to leave the Union if Lincoln were elected; the secessions started even before he was sworn in. It would be up to the new president to try to hold the Union together.

## Civil War and Post-War Reconstruction

**N**orth and South went to war in April 1861. The Southern states had claimed the right to secede and had formed their own Confederacy. Their forces fired the first shots. The Northern states, under the leadership of President Lincoln, were determined to stop the rebellion and preserve the Union.

The North had more than twice as many states and twice as many people. It had abundant facilities for producing war supplies, as well as a superior railway network. The South had more experienced military leaders and had the advantage of fighting mostly on its own territory.

For four years, ground battles involving tens of thousands of soldiers and horses were fought in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Georgia. Naval battles were fought off the Atlantic coast and on the Mississippi River. In that area, Union forces won an almost uninterrupted series of victories. In Virginia, by contrast, they met defeat after defeat in



President Abraham Lincoln (center), at a Union Army encampment in October 1862, following the battle of Antietam.



Slave family picking cotton near Savannah, Georgia, in the early 1860s.



Confederate dead along a stone wall during the Chancellorsville campaign, May 1863. Victorious at Chancellorsville, Southern forces advanced north into Pennsylvania, but were defeated at the three-day battle of Gettysburg, the turning point of the Civil War and the largest battle ever fought in North America. More Americans died in the Civil War (1861-65) than in any other conflict in U.S. history.

their attempts to capture Richmond, the Confederate capital.

The single bloodiest day of the war was on September 17, 1862, when the two armies met at Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, Maryland. Confederate troops led by General Robert E. Lee failed to force back the Union troops led by General George McClellan, and Lee escaped with his army intact. McClellan was fired. Although the battle was inconclusive in military terms, its consequences were enormous. Britain and France had been planning to recognize the Confederacy. They delayed their decisions, and the South never received the aid it desperately needed.

Several months later, President Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It freed all slaves living in Confederate states and authorized the recruitment of African Americans into the Union army. Now the North was no longer fighting just to preserve the Union. It was fighting to end slavery.

Union forces gained momentum in 1863 with victories at Vicksburg in Mississippi and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania, and then with the scorched-earth policy of General William T. Sherman as he marched across Georgia and into South Carolina in 1864. By April 1865, huge Union armies under the command of General Ulysses S. Grant had surrounded Robert E. Lee in Virginia. Lee surrendered, and the American Civil War was over.

The terms of surrender were generous. "The rebels are our countrymen again," Grant reminded his troops. In Washington, President Lincoln was ready to begin the process of

reconciliation. He never got the chance. Less than a week after the South surrendered, he was assassinated by a Southerner embittered by the defeat. The task would fall to Lincoln's vice president, Andrew Johnson, a Southerner who favored quick and easy "Reconstruction."

Johnson issued pardons that restored the political rights of many Southerners. By the end of 1865, almost all former Confederate states had held conventions to repeal the acts of secession and to abolish slavery, but all except Tennessee refused to ratify a constitutional amendment giving full citizenship to African Americans. As a result, Republicans in Congress decided to implement their own version of Reconstruction. They enacted punitive measures against former rebels and prevented former Confederate leaders from holding office. They divided the South into five military districts administered by Union generals. They denied voting rights to anyone who refused to take a loyalty oath to the Union. And they strongly supported the rights of African Americans. President Johnson tried to block many of these policies and was impeached. The vote fell short, and he remained in office, but Congress would continue to wield enormous power for the next 30 years.

The divisions and hatreds that had led to the Civil War did not disappear after the fighting stopped. As Southern whites regained political power, Southern blacks suffered. They had gained their freedom but were prevented from enjoying it by

local laws denying them access to many public facilities. They had gained the right to vote but were intimidated at the polls. The South had become segregated and would remain so for 100 years. The postwar Reconstruction process had begun with high ideals but collapsed into a sinkhole of corruption and racism. Its failure deferred the struggle for equality for African Americans until the 20th century, when it would become a national, not just a Southern, issue.

## Growth and Transformation

**T**he United States came of age in the decades following the Civil War. The frontier gradually vanished; a rural republic became an urban nation. Great factories, steel mills, and transcontinental railroads were built. Cities grew quickly. And millions of people arrived from other countries to begin new lives in a land of opportunity.

Inventors harnessed the power of science. Alexander Graham Bell developed the telephone. Thomas Edison produced the light bulb and, with George Eastman, the moving picture. Before 1860, the government issued 36,000 patents. In the next 30 years, it issued 440,000.

It was an era of corporate consolidation, especially in the steel, rail, oil, and telecommunications industries. Monopolies denied competition in the marketplace, which led

to calls for government regulation. A law was passed in 1890 to prevent monopolies from restraining trade, but it was not vigorously enforced at first.

Even with the great gains in industry, farming remained America's basic occupation. Yet it, too, witnessed enormous changes. Farmland doubled and scientists developed improved seeds. Machines — including mechanical planters, reapers, and threshers — took over much of the work that had previously been done by hand. American farmers produced enough grain, cotton, beef, pork, and wool to supply the growing domestic market and still have large surpluses to export.

The western region of the United States continued to attract settlers. Miners staked claims in the ore-rich mountains,



Sitting Bull, Sioux chief who led the last great battle of the Plains Indians against the U.S. Army, defeating General George Custer at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.



Thomas Edison examines film used in the motion picture projector that he invented with George Eastman.



cattle ranchers on the vast grasslands, sheep farmers in the river valleys, and farmers on the great plains. Cowboys on horses took care of the animals and guided them to distant railroads for shipment east. This is the image of America that many people still have, even though the era of the “Wild West” cowboy lasted only about 30 years.

From the time that Europeans landed on the east coast of America, their migration westward meant confrontation with native peoples. For many years, government policy had been to move Native Americans beyond the reach of the white frontier to lands reserved for their use. Time and again, however, the government ignored its agreements and opened these areas to white settlement. In the late 1800s, Sioux tribes in the northern plains and Apaches in the southwest fought back hard to



Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island in New York City, principal gateway to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From 1890 to 1921, almost 19 million people entered the United States as immigrants.

Mulberry Street in New York City, also known as "Little Italy," in the early years of the 20th century. Newly arrived immigrant families often settled in densely populated urban enclaves.





preserve their way of life. They were skilled fighters but were eventually overwhelmed by government forces. Official policy after these conflicts was well-intentioned but sometimes proved disastrous. In 1934, Congress passed a measure that attempted to protect tribal customs and communal life on the reservations.

The last decades of the 19th century saw a race by European powers to colonize Africa and compete for trade in Asia. Many Americans believed the United States had a right and duty to expand its influence in other parts of the world. Many others, however, rejected any actions that hinted at imperialism.

A brief war with Spain in 1898 left the United States with control over several Spanish overseas possessions: Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Officially, the United States encouraged them to move toward self-government, but, in fact, it maintained administrative control. Idealism in foreign policy existed alongside the practical desire to protect the economic interests of a once-isolated nation that had become a world power.

## Discontent and Reform

**B**y 1900, America's political foundations had endured growing pains, civil war, prosperity, and economic depression. The ideal of religious freedom had been sustained. Free public education had largely been realized, and a free press had been maintained. At the same time, however,

political power seemed concentrated in the hands of corrupt officials and their friends in business. In response, a reform movement called “Progressivism” arose. Its goals included greater democracy and social justice, honest government, and more effective regulation of business.

Writers and social critics protested practices that were unfair, unhealthy, and dangerous. Upton Sinclair, Ida M. Tarbell, Theodore Dreiser, Lincoln Steffens, and others produced a “literature of exposure” that put pressure on lawmakers to correct these abuses through legislation. The reformers believed that expanding the scope of government would ensure the progress of U.S. society and the welfare of its citizens.

President Theodore Roosevelt embodied the spirit of Progressivism and believed that reforms needed to be addressed nationally. He worked with Congress to regulate monopolies and take legal action against companies that violated the law. He also was tireless in his efforts to conserve the United States’ natural resources, manage public lands, and protect areas for recreational use.

Reforms continued during the presidencies of William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson. The Federal Reserve banking system was established to set interest rates and control the money supply. The Federal Trade Commission was established to deal with unfair methods of competition by businesses. New laws were enacted to help improve working conditions

for sailors and railroad laborers. A “county extension” system was developed to help farmers get information and credit. And taxes on imported goods were lowered or eliminated to help reduce the cost of living for all Americans.

The Progressive era was also the era when great numbers of people from all over the world came to the United States. Almost 19 million people arrived between 1890 and 1921. Earlier immigrants had been chiefly northern and western Europeans and some Chinese. The new arrivals came from Italy, Russia, Poland, Greece, the Balkans, Canada, Mexico, and Japan.

The United States has always been a “melting pot” of nationalities, and for 300 years few restrictions were placed



Children working at the Indiana Glass Works in 1908. Enacting child labor laws was one of the principal goals of the Progressive movement in this era.

on immigration. Starting in the 1920s, however, quotas were established in response to Americans' fears that their jobs and culture were being threatened by the newcomers. While large surges of immigration have historically created social strains, most Americans — whose own ancestors arrived as immigrants — believe that the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor represents the spirit of a welcoming land to those “yearning to breathe free.” This belief has preserved the United States as a nation of nations.

## **World War I, 1920s Prosperity, the Great Depression**

**W**ar in Europe in 1914 — with Germany and Austria-Hungary fighting Britain, France, Italy, and Russia — affected U.S. interests almost from the start. The British and the German navies both interfered with American shipping, but German submarine attacks were deadly. Almost 130 Americans died when a submarine sank the British ocean liner *Lusitania* in 1915. President Woodrow Wilson demanded an end to the attacks, and they stopped for a while, but by 1917 they had resumed. The United States declared war.

The efforts of more than 1,750,000 U.S. troops played a decisive role in the defeat of the German and Austro-Hungarian alliance. An armistice, technically a truce but actually a surrender, was concluded on November 11, 1918.



President Wilson negotiated an end to the conflict based on his 14-point plan for achieving lasting peace. It included an end to secret international agreements, free trade between nations, a reduction in national armaments, self-rule for subjugated European nationalities, and formation of an association — a League of Nations — to help guarantee political independence and territorial integrity for large and small countries alike.

The final peace treaty, however, contained virtually none of these points, as the victors insisted on harsh punishment. Wilson's idea of a League of Nations remained in the Treaty of Versailles, but even he was unable to gain enough support for the concept, and the United States rejected it. America reverted to its instinctive isolationism.



American infantry forces in 1918, firing a 37 mm. gun, advance against German positions in World War I.



Flappers posing for the camera at a 1920s-era party.

The immediate postwar period was one of labor unrest and racial tensions. Farmers were struggling because of the abrupt end of wartime demand. Bolshevik violence fueled a "Red Scare" that led to decades of militant hostility toward the revolutionary Communist movement. Despite these problems, for a few years in the 1920s the United States enjoyed a period of real and broadly distributed prosperity. Families purchased their first automobile, radio, and refrigerator, and they began going to the movies regularly. And suffragists, after decades of political activism, succeeded in getting approval of a constitutional amendment in 1920 that gave women the right to vote.

The good times did not last. The value of many stocks, which had become artificially inflated, fell dramatically in October 1929. Over the next three years, the business recession in America became part of a worldwide economic depression. Businesses and factories shut down, banks failed, farm income dropped. By November 1932, 20 percent of Americans were unemployed.

The presidential campaign that year was chiefly a debate over the causes of the Great Depression and ways to reverse it. Incumbent Herbert Hoover had started the process of rebuilding the economy, but his efforts had little impact, and he lost the election to Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt was infectiously optimistic and was ready to use federal authority to achieve bold remedies. Under his leadership, the United States would enter another era of economic and political change.

## The New Deal and World War II

In the early 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt proposed a “New Deal” — a plan designed to lift Americans out of the Great Depression as quickly as possible. He noted that democracy had disappeared in other countries at that time — not because the people opposed democracy but because they had grown tired of unemployment and insecurity.

Under his leadership, a federal corporation was established to insure deposits in savings banks. Regulations were imposed on the sale of stocks. Laws were passed to guarantee the right of workers to be represented by unions. Farmers received subsidies for certain crops and assistance in preventing soil erosion. The Civilian Conservation Corps employed young men



Left, Depression-era soup line, 1930s. Right, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs perhaps the most far-reaching legislation of the New Deal: the Social Security Act of 1935. Today, Social Security, one of the largest government programs in the United States, provides retirement and disability income to millions of Americans.

to plant trees, clean up waterways, and improve facilities in national parks. The Public Works Administration hired skilled laborers for large-scale projects, such as building dams and bridges. The Tennessee Valley Authority provided flood control and electric power for that impoverished area. And the Federal Emergency Relief Administration distributed aid, often in the form of direct payments.

A second round of programs employed workers to build roads, airports, and schools; hired artists, actors, musicians, and writers; and gave part-time employment to young people. It also established the Social Security system to help the poor, disabled, and elderly.

Americans were generally uneasy with the idea of big government, yet they wanted the government to take greater responsibility for the welfare of ordinary people. And while the New Deal provided tangible help for millions of Americans, it never succeeded in restoring prosperity. Better times would come, but not until after another world war had swept the United States into its path.

The United States tried to remain neutral while totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan expanded their control over neighboring countries. Debate intensified after Germany invaded France and began bombing Britain. Despite strong isolationist sentiment, Congress voted to conscript soldiers and strengthen the military.



World War II in the Pacific was characterized by large-scale naval and air battles. Here, a Japanese plane plunges down in flames during an attack on a U.S. carrier fleet in the Mariana Islands, June 1944.



General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander in Europe, talks with paratroopers shortly before the Normandy invasion, June 6, 1944.



Assembly line of P-38 *Lightning* fighter planes during World War II. With its massive output of war materiel, the United States became, in the words of President Roosevelt, "the arsenal of democracy."

Most people were focused on what was happening in Europe, when Japan threatened to seize sources of raw materials used by Western industries. In response, the United States imposed an embargo on the one commodity Japan needed above all others — oil — and demanded that it withdraw from territories it had conquered. Japan refused, and on December 7, 1941, it carried out a devastating attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The United States declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy, by then allies of Japan, declared war on the United States.

American industry and agriculture were harnessed for the war effort. Production of military equipment was staggering: 300,000 aircraft, 5,000 cargo ships, 60,000 landing craft, and 86,000 tanks in less than four years. Much of the work was done by women, who went to work in factories while men went to fight.

The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, allied to counter the Nazi threat, decided that their primary military effort was to be concentrated in Europe. They were determined to break the German-Italian grip on the Mediterranean and prevent the fall of Moscow. Then they would liberate Rome and Paris, and finally Berlin.

From Germany's occupation of Poland in 1939 to its surrender in 1945, the war in Europe claimed the lives of millions of people — soldiers and civilians alike. Millions more were exterminated

in the Holocaust, Nazi Germany's systematic policy of genocide against the Jews and other groups.

The war in Asia was largely a series of naval battles and amphibious assaults to break the Japanese grip on islands in the Pacific Ocean. Fighting there continued after the fighting in Europe had stopped. The final battles were among the war's bloodiest. Most Americans, including President Harry Truman, believed that an invasion of Japan would be even worse. Truman was willing to use the newly developed atomic bomb to bring the war to an end. When Japan refused to surrender, he ordered bombs dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The plan worked — Japan surrendered — and World War II was finally over in August 1945. Only later would people realize the full implications of the awesome, destructive power of nuclear weapons.

## **The Cold War, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam**

**T**he United States played a major role in global affairs in the years immediately after World War II, especially through its influence in the newly formed United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The most important political and diplomatic issue of the early postwar period was the Cold War. It grew out of longstanding



disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union over which type of government and economic system produced the most liberty, equality, and prosperity.

Faced with a postwar world of civil wars and disintegrating empires, the United States hoped to provide the stability to make peaceful reconstruction possible. It advocated democracy and open trade, and committed \$17,000 million under the “Marshall



President Harry S. Truman holds a newspaper that wrongly announced his defeat by Republican candidate Thomas Dewey in the 1948 election.

U.S. infantry fire against North Korean forces invading South Korea in 1951, in a conflict that lasted three painful years.



Plan” to rebuild western Europe. The Soviet Union wanted to secure its borders at all costs. It used military force to help bring Communist regimes to power in Central and Eastern Europe.

The United States vowed to contain Soviet expansionism. It demanded and obtained a full Soviet withdrawal from Iran. It supported Turkey against Soviet attempts to control shipping lanes. It provided economic and military aid to Greece to fight a strong Communist insurgency. And it led the effort to airlift millions of tons of supplies to Berlin when the Soviet Union blockaded that divided city.

With most American aid moving across the Atlantic, little could be done to prevent the Communist forces of Mao Zedong from taking control of China in 1949. When North Korea — supported by China and the Soviet Union — invaded South Korea the next year, the United States secured U.N. support for military intervention. The North Koreans were eventually pushed back, and a truce was signed, but tensions would remain high and U.S. troops would stay for decades.

In the mid-1960s, the United States sent troops to defend South Vietnam against a Communist insurgency based in North Vietnam. American involvement escalated greatly but was not enough to prevent the South from collapsing in 1975. The war cost hundreds of thousands of lives. It also caused bitter divisions at home, making Americans wary of further foreign entanglements.

## Cultural Change: 1950-1980

**M**ost Americans felt confident with their role in the world in the 1950s. They accepted the need for a strong stance against global Communism and supported efforts to share the benefits of democracy as widely as possible. At home, they were experiencing phenomenal economic gains and a shift to a service economy. A boom in births fueled the growth of suburban areas around cities. Yet not all Americans participated in this good life, and gradually, challenges to the status quo began to mount.

African Americans launched a movement to guarantee fair treatment everywhere. They won a major victory in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities for black children were not equal to those for white children. The decision started the process of desegregating the nation's public schools. In the 1960s — led by the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and with the support of President Lyndon Johnson — African Americans won passage of civil rights and voting rights legislation. Some black leaders, such as Malcolm X, argued against interracial cooperation, and some militant calls for reform led to violence. However, many African Americans made quiet, steady progress into the ranks of the middle class, leading to a profound demographic change in American society.

During the 1960s-70s, many American women expressed

frustration that they did not have the same opportunities as men. Led by writer Betty Friedan and journalist Gloria Steinem, they organized a movement that helped change laws and traditions to give women the chance to compete equally with men in business and education. However, their efforts to adopt a constitutional amendment guaranteeing equal rights for women fell short when only 35 of the necessary 38 states ratified it.

A new generation of Native-American leaders organized to defend the rights the government had promised in various treaties with tribal groups. They used the court system to regain control of tribal lands and water rights. They used the legislative process to get the assistance they needed to house and educate their people. The first Native American to be elected to the Senate was Ben Nighthorse Campbell in 1992.

Hispanic Americans, especially those whose families came from Mexico, Central America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, became more politically active, too. They were elected to local, state, and national offices, and they organized to fight discrimination. César Chávez, for example, led a nationwide consumer boycott of California grapes that forced growers to negotiate with his United Farm Workers union for higher wages and improved working conditions.

Many students became politically active to protest the war in Vietnam, which they believed was immoral. They organized large protests that eventually put pressure on President



Jackie Robinson, sliding home in a 1948 baseball game. Robinson broke the color barrier against black professional baseball players when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers and became one of the stars of the game.



America's first star of rock and roll, Elvis Presley, performing on television's "Ed Sullivan Show," September 9, 1956.



Martin Luther King Jr. escorts children to a previously all-white public school in Grenada, Mississippi, in 1966.

Johnson to begin peace negotiations. Young people also began to reject their parents' cultural values. The most visible signs of the so-called counterculture were long hair, rock-and-roll music, and the use of illegal drugs.

Americans concerned about the environment organized efforts to reduce air and water pollution. The year 1970 saw the first "Earth Day" celebration and the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental legislation reflected the need to reduce pollutants without imposing burdensome costs on industries.

The great social changes of the 1950s-1980s grew out of an open, fluid, and diverse society. Demands for change were sometimes peaceful, sometimes deadly. Compromises



President Lyndon B. Johnson engineered the most ambitious domestic legislative agenda through Congress since Roosevelt's New Deal.



The crest of the counterculture wave in the United States: the three-day 1969 outdoor rock concert and gathering known as Woodstock.

were necessary. Surely, if sometimes slowly, the United States changed to better reflect its multicultural foundation.

## End of the 20th Century

**T**he United States has always experienced periods of political polarization, as Americans debated ways to deal with international events, demographic change, and the effects of technological innovation. The last decades of the 20th century were no exception.

The liberal activism of the 1960s-70s was eclipsed by a new conservatism in the 1980s. Conservatives advocated limited government, a strong national defense, a firm stance against Communism, tax cuts to spur economic growth, tough anti-crime measures, more religious expression in public life, and a stricter code for social behavior. Former actor and Republican Governor of California Ronald Reagan, who represented stability to many Americans, won two terms as president. His supporters credit his policies with hastening the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Americans moved to a more centrist position in 1992 and elected as president Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, who had organized his campaign around the themes of youth and change. Some of Clinton's proposals were quite liberal, such as his plan for a government-managed health care system,

which Congress never voted on. Another proposal — ending government payments to welfare recipients and helping them get jobs — was co-opted from conservatives and eventually proved quite successful.

Normal differences in politics turned especially bitter after the presidential election of 2000. The popular vote and the Electoral College vote were nearly evenly divided between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush. Thousands of ballots cast in the state of Florida were contested. After a series of court challenges over laws and procedures governing recounts, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a narrow decision that effectively gave the election to Bush.

Bush expected to focus on domestic issues such as education, the economy, and Social Security. But his presidency changed irrevocably on September 11, 2001. On that day, foreign terrorists hijacked four passenger airplanes and crashed them into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, the Defense Department's Pentagon headquarters near Washington, D.C., and a rural area of Pennsylvania. Bush declared war on global terrorism. Americans were generally united in the early phases, but many grew increasingly uncomfortable as the operation expanded.

The long-term effects of events and trends occurring at the beginning of the 21st century have yet to be fully understood.







Left, firefighters beneath the destroyed vertical struts of the World Trade Center's twin towers after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. Above, projected image of how the New York City skyline might look with the addition of Freedom Tower, which will be built at the World Trade Center site.

## AFTERWORD

**F**rom its origins as a group of obscure colonies hugging the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, the United States has undergone a remarkable transformation. One political analyst has called it “the first universal nation.” Its population of 300 million people represents almost every nationality and ethnic group on Earth. It is a nation where the pace and extent of change — economic, technological, cultural, demographic, and social — is unceasing. Events in the United States are often the first sign of the modernization and change that inevitably bring other nations and societies into an increasingly interdependent, interconnected world.

Yet the United States also maintains a sense of continuity. It possesses core values that can be traced to its founding as a nation in the late 1700s. These include a faith in individual freedom and democratic government, and a commitment to economic opportunity and progress for all. They are the legacy of a rich and turbulent history. The continuing task of the United States is to ensure that its values of freedom, democracy, and opportunity are protected and will flourish through the 21st century.



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