# United States, history of the

Many peoples have contributed to the development of the United States of America, a vast nation that arose from a scattering of British colonial outposts in the New World. The first humans to inhabit the North American continent were migrants from northeast Asia who established settlements in North America as early as 8000 BC and possibly much earlier (see NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY). By about AD 1500 the native peoples of the areas north of the Rio Grande had developed a variety of different cultures (see INDIANS, AMERICAN). The vast region stretching eastward from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean was relatively sparsely populated by tribes whose economies were generally based on hunting and gathering, fishing, and farming.

VIKINGS explored the North American mainland in the 10th and 11th centuries and settled there briefly (see VINLAND). Of more lasting importance, however, was the first voyage (1492-93) of Christopher COLUMBUS, which inaugurated an age of great European EXPLORATION of the Western Hemisphere. Various European states (including Spain, France, England, the Netherlands, and Portugal) and their trading companies sent out expeditions to explore the New World during the century and a half that followed.

The Spanish claimed vast areas, including Florida, Mexico, and the region west of the Mississippi River, although they concentrated their settlement south of the Rio Grande. The French explored much of the area that became Canada and established several settlements there. Of most significance, however, for the subsequent development of the United States, was the English colonization of the region along the Atlantic coast.

#  BRITISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA

At the end of the period of turmoil associated with the Protestant Reformation in England, the English people became free to turn their attention to some other matters and to seek new opportunities outside their tiny island. Internal stability under Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603) and an expanding economy combined with a bold intellectual ferment to produce a soaring self-confidence. Ireland experienced the first impact: by the beginning of the 17th century it had been wholly subjugated by the English. Scottish and English Protestants were dispatched to "colonize" where the savage Irish, as they were called, had been expelled, especially in the northern provinces. Then, entrepreneurs began to look to North America, claimed by England on the basis of the voyages of discovery of John CABOT (1497-99).

#  The Chesapeake Colonies

The English had failed in their attempts in the 1580s to found a colony at ROANOKE on the Virginia coast. In 1606, however, the LONDON COMPANY, established to exploit North American resources, sent settlers to what in 1607 became JAMESTOWN, the first permanent English colony in the New World. The colonists suffered extreme hardships, and by 1622, of the more than 10,000 who had immigrated, only 2,000 remained alive. In 1624 control of the failing company passed to the crown, making Virginia a royal colony. Soon the tobacco trade was flourishing, the death rate had fallen, and with a legislature (the House of Burgesses, established in 1619) and an abundance of land, the colony entered a period of prosperity. Individual farms, available at low cost, were worked primarily by white indentured servants (laborers who were bound to work for a number of years to pay for their passage before receiving full freedom). The Chesapeake Bay area became a land of opportunity for poor English people.

In 1632, Maryland was granted to the CALVERT family as a personal possession, to serve as a refuge for Roman Catholics. Protestants, as well, flooded into the colony, and in 1649 the Toleration Act was issued, guaranteeing freedom of worship in Maryland to all Trinitarian Christians.

#  The New England Colonies

In 1620, Puritan Separatists, later called PILGRIMS, sailed on the MAYFLOWER to New England, establishing PLYMOUTH COLONY, the first permanent settlement there. They were followed in 1629 by other Puritans (see PURITANISM), under the auspices of the MASSACHUSETTS BAY COMPANY, who settled the area around Boston. During the Great Puritan Migration that followed (1629-42), about 16,000 settlers arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Puritans set out to build a "city on a hill" intended to provide a model of godly living for the world. Strict Calvinists, strongly communal, and living in closely bound villages, they envisioned a God angered at human transgressions, who chose, purely according to his inscrutable will, a mere "righteous fragment" for salvation. Dissidents of a Baptist orientation founded Rhode Island (chartered 1644). In 1639, Puritans on what was then the frontier established the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, the first written constitution in North America; the colony was chartered in 1662. The settlements in New Hampshire that sprang up in the 1620s were finally proclaimed a separate royal colony in 1679. Plymouth later became (1691) part of the royal colony of Massachusetts.

 **The Restoration Colonies**

A long era (1642-60) of turmoil in England, which included the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell's republican Commonwealth, and the Protectorate, ended with the restoration of the Stuarts in the person of Charles II. An amazing period ensued, during which colonies were founded and other acquisitions were made. In 1663, Carolina was chartered; settlement began in 1670, and from the start the colony flourished. The territory later came under royal control as South Carolina (1721) and North Carolina (1729).

In 1664 an English fleet arrived to claim by right of prior discovery the land along the Hudson and Delaware rivers that had been settled and occupied by the Dutch since 1624. Most of NEW NETHERLAND now became New York colony and its principal settlement, New Amsterdam, became the city of New York. New York colony, already multiethnic and strongly commercial in spirit, came under control of the crown in 1685. New Jersey, sparsely settled by the Dutch, Swedes, and others, was also part of this English claim. Its proprietors divided it into East and West Jersey in 1676, but the colony was reunited as a royal province in 1702.

In 1681, Pennsylvania, and in 1682, what eventually became (1776) Delaware, were granted to William PENN, who founded a great Quaker settlement in and around Philadelphia. Quaker theology differed widely from that of the New England Puritans. Believing in a loving God who speaks directly to each penitent soul and offers salvation freely, Quakers found elaborate church organizations and ordained clerics unnecessary.

#  Indian Wars

In 1675 disease-ridden and poverty-stricken Indians in New England set off against the whites. Almost every Massachusetts town experienced the horror of Indian warfare; thousands on both sides were slaughtered before King Philip, the Wampanoag chief, was killed in 1676 and the war ended. Virginians, appalled at this event, in 1676 began attacking the Occaneechees despite the disapproval of the royal governor, Sir William BERKELEY. Then, under Nathaniel Bacon, dissatisfied and angry colonists expelled Berkeley from Jamestown and proclaimed Bacon's Laws, which gave the right to vote to all freedmen. Royal troops soon arrived to put down the uprising, known as.

Along the Mohawk River in New York, the Five Nations of the IROQUOIS LEAGUE maintained their powerful confederacy with its sophisticated governing structure and strong religious faith. Allies of the English against the French along the Saint Lawrence River, they dominated a vast region westward to Lake Superior with their powerful and well-organized armies. The FRENCH AND INDIAN WARS, a series of great wars between the two European powers and their Indian allies, ended in 1763 when French rule was eradicated from North America and Canada was placed under the British crown.

 18th-Century Social and Economic Developments

In the 1700s the British colonies grew rapidly in population and wealth. A formerly crude society acquired a polished and numerous elite. Trade and cities flourished. The 250,000 settlers who had lived in the mainland colonies to the south of Canada in 1700 became 2,250,000 by 1775 and would grow to 5,300,000 by 1800. Settlement expanded widely from the coastal beachheads of the 17th century into back-country regions with profoundly divergent ways of life.

Several non-English ethnic groups migrated to the British colonies in large numbers during the 18th century. By 1775, Germans, who settled primarily in the Middle Colonies but also in the back-country South, numbered about 250,000. They were members of the Lutheran and German Reformed (Calvinist) churches or of pietist sects (Moravians, Mennonites, Amish, and the like); the pietists, in particular, tended to live separately, avoiding English-speaking peoples. From the 1730s waves of Scots-Irish immigrants, numbering perhaps 250,000 by the time of the Revolution, swelled the ranks of the non- English group. Forming dense settlements in Pennsylvania, as well as in New York's Hudson Valley and in the back-country South, they brought with them the Presbyterian church, which was to become widely prominent in American life. Many of these immigrants were indentured servants; a small percentage were criminals, transported from the jails of England, where they had been imprisoned for debt or for more serious crimes. The colony of Georgia was granted in 1732 to reformers, led by James OGLETHORPE, who envisioned it as an asylum for English debtors, as well as a buffer against Spanish Florida. Georgia, too, was colonized by many non-English people.

#  The Growth of Slavery

Slaves from Africa were used in small numbers in the colonies from about 1619 (see BLACK AMERICANS; SLAVERY). After British merchants joined the Dutch in the slave trade later in the 17th century, prices tumbled and increasing numbers of black people were transported into the southern colonies to be used for plantation labor. Slaves were also used in the northern colonies, but in far fewer numbers. The survival rates as well as birthrates tended to be high for slaves brought to the North American mainland colonies--in contrast to those transported to the West Indies or to South America.

The expansion of slavery was the most fateful event of the pre- Revolutionary years. Virginia had only about 16,000 slaves in 1700; by 1770 it held more than 187,000, or almost half the population of the colony. In low country South Carolina, with its rice and indigo plantations, only 25,000 out of a total population of 100,000 were white in 1775. Fearful whites mounted slave patrols and exacted savage penalties upon transgression in order to maintain black passivity.

Meanwhile, on the basis of abundant slave labor, the world of great plantations emerged, creating sharp distinctions in wealth among whites. Southern society was dominated by the aristocracy; however, whites of all classes were united in their fear of blacks. Miscegenation was common, especially where slaves were most numerous, and mulattos were regarded as black, not white. An almost total absence of government in this sparsely settled, rural southern environment resulted in complete license on the part of owners in the treatment of their slaves. Paradoxically, the ideal of liberty--of freedom from all restraints--was powerful in the southern white mind.

#  Religious Trends

As transatlantic trade increased, communication between the colonies and England became closer, and English customs and institutions exerted a stronger influence on the Americans. The aristocracy aped London fashions, and colonials participated in British cultural movements. The Church of England, the established church in the southern colonies and in the four counties in and around New York City, grew in status and influence. At the same time, in both Britain and America, an increasingly rationalistic and scientific outlook, born in the science of Sir Isaac NEWTON and the philosophy of John LOCKE, made religious observance more logical and of this world. Deism and so-called natural religion scoffed at Christianity and the Bible as a collection of ancient superstitions.

Then from England came an upsurge of evangelical Protestantism, led by John Wesley (the eventual founder of the Methodist church; see WESLEY family) and George WHITEFIELD. It sought to combat the new rationalism and foster a revival of enthusiasm in Christian faith and worship. Beginning in 1738, with Whitefield's arrival in the colonies, a movement known as the GREAT AWAKENING swept the colonials, gaining strength from an earlier outbreak of revivalism in Massachusetts (1734-35) led by Jonathan EDWARDS. Intensely democratic in spirit, the Great Awakening was the first intercolonial cultural movement. It vastly reenergized a Puritanism that, since the mid-1600s, had lost its vigor. All churches were electrified by its power-- either in support or in opposition. The movement also revived the earlier Puritan notion that America was to be a "city on a hill," a special place of God's work, to stand in sharp contrast to what was regarded as corrupt and irreligious England.

#  THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

By the middle of the 18th century the wave of American expansion was beginning to top the Appalachian rise and move into the valley of the Ohio. Colonial land companies looked covetously to that frontier. The French, foreseeing a serious threat to their fur trade with the Indians, acted decisively. In 1749 they sent an expedition to reinforce their claim to the Ohio Valley and subsequently established a string of forts there. The British and the colonists were forced to respond to the move or suffer the loss of the vast interior, long claimed by both British and French. The French and Indian War (1754-63) that resulted became a worldwide conflict, called the SEVEN YEARS' WAR in Europe. At its end, the British had taken over most of France's colonial empire as well as Spanish Florida and had become dominant in North America except for Spain's possessions west of the Mississippi River.

#  Rising Tensions

A delirious pride over the victory swept the colonies and equaled that of the British at home. Outbursts of patriotic celebration and cries of loyalty to the crown infused the Americans. The tremendous cost of the war itself and the huge responsibility accompanying the new possessions, however, left Britain with an immense war debt and heavy administrative costs. At the same time the elimination of French rule in North America lifted the burden of fear of that power from the colonists, inducing them to be more independent-minded. The war effort itself had contributed to a new sense of pride and confidence in their own military prowess. In addition, the rapid growth rate of the mid-18th century had compelled colonial governments to become far more active than that of old, established England. Because most male colonists possessed property and the right to vote, the result was the emergence of a turbulent world of democratic politics.

London authorities attempted to meet the costs of imperial administration by levying a tax on the colonials; the STAMP ACT of 1765 required a tax on all public documents, newspapers, notes and bonds, and almost every other printed paper. A raging controversy that brought business practically to a standstill erupted in the colonies. A Stamp Act Congress, a gathering of representatives from nine colonies, met in New York in October 1765 to issue a solemn protest. It held that the colonials possessed the same rights and liberties as did the British at home, among which was the principle that "no taxes be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally or by their representatives." In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act; it passed the Declaratory Act, asserting its complete sovereignty over the colonies.

Thereafter the transatlantic controversy was rarely quiet. The colonists regarded the standing army of about 6,000 troops maintained by London in the colonies after 1763 with great suspicion--such a peacetime force had never been present before. British authorities defended the force as necessary to preserve peace on the frontier, especially after PONTIAC'S REBELLION (1763-65), which had been launched by the brilliant Indian leader Pontiac to expel the British from the interior and restore French rule. In another attempt to quell Indian unrest, London established the Proclamation Line of 1763. Set along the crest of the Appalachians, the line represented a limit imposed on colonial movement west until a more effective Indian program could be developed. The colonists were much angered by the prohibition. Historical memories of the use of standing armies by European kings to override liberty caused widespread suspicion among the colonists that the soldiers stationed on the Line of 1763 were to be employed not against the Indians, but against the colonials themselves should they prove difficult to govern.

Indeed, for many years colonists had been reading the radical British press, which argued the existence of a Tory plot in England to crush liberty throughout the empire. Surviving from the English Civil War of the previous century was a profound distrust of monarchy among a small fringe of radical members of Britain's Whig party, primarily Scots and Irish and English Dissenters--that is, Protestants who were not members of the Church of England. As members of the minority out-groups in British life, they had suffered many political and economic disadvantages. Radical Whigs insisted that a corrupt network of Church of England bishops, great landlords, and financiers had combined with the royal government to exploit the community at large, and that--frightened of criticism--this Tory conspiracy sought to destroy liberty and freedom.

In the cultural politics of the British Empire, American colonists were also an out-group; they bitterly resented the disdain and derision shown them by the metropolitan English. Furthermore, most free colonists were either Dissenters (the Congregationalists in New England and the Presbyterians and Baptists in New York and the South); or non-English peoples with ancient reasons for hating the English (the Scots-Irish); or outsiders in a British-dominated society (Germans and Dutch); or slaveowners sharply conscious of the distaste with which they were regarded by the British at home.

A divisive controversy racked the colonies in the mid-18th century concerning the privileges of the Church of England. Many believed in the existence of an Anglican plot against religious liberty. In New England it was widely asserted that the colonial tie to immoral, affluent, Anglican-dominated Britain was endangering the soul of America. Many southerners also disapproved of the ostentatious plantation living that grew out of the tobacco trade--as well as the widespread bankruptcies resulting from dropping tobacco prices--and urged separation from Britain.

The current ideology among many colonists was that of republicanism. The radicalism of the 18th century, it called for grounding government in the people, giving them the vote, holding frequent elections, abolishing established churches, and separating the powers of government to guard against tyranny. Republicans also advocated that most offices be elective and that government be kept simple, limited, and respectful of the rights of citizens.

#  Deterioration of Imperial Ties

In this prickly atmosphere London's heavy-handedness caused angry reactions on the part of Americans. The Quartering Act of 1765 ordered colonial assemblies to house the standing army; to override the resulting protests in America, London suspended the New York assembly until it capitulated. In 1767 the TOWNSHEND ACTS levied tariffs on many articles imported into the colonies. These imports were designed to raise funds to pay wages to the army as well as to the royal governors and judges, who had formerly been dependent on colonial assemblies for their salaries. Nonimportation associations immediately sprang up in the colonies to boycott British goods. When mob attacks prevented commissioners from enforcing the revenue laws, part of the army was placed (1768) in Boston to protect the commissioners. This action confirmed the colonists' suspicion that the troops were maintained in the colonies to deprive them of their liberty. In March 1770 a group of soldiers fired into a crowd that was harassing them, killing five persons; news of the BOSTON MASSACRE spread through the colonies.

The chastened ministry in London now repealed all the Townshend duties except for that on tea. Nonetheless, the economic centralization long reflected in the NAVIGATION ACTS--which compelled much of the colonial trade to pass through Britain on its way to the European continent--served to remind colonials of the heavy price exacted from them for membership in the empire. The Sugar Act of 1764, latest in a long line of such restrictive measures, produced by its taxes a huge revenue for the crown. By 1776 it drained from the colonies about 600,000 pounds sterling, an enormous sum. The colonial balance of trade with England was always unfavorable for the Americans, who found it difficult to retain enough cash to purchase necessary goods.

In 1772 the crown, having earlier declared its right to dismiss colonial judges at its pleasure, stated its intention to pay directly the salaries of governors and judges in Massachusetts. Samuel ADAMS, for many years a passionate republican, immediately created the intercolonial Committee of Correspondence. Revolutionary sentiment mounted. In December 1773 swarms of colonials disguised as Mohawks boarded recently arrived tea ships in Boston harbor, flinging their cargo into the water. The furious royal government responded to this BOSTON TEA PARTY by the so-called INTOLERABLE ACTS of 1774, practically eliminating self-government in Massachusetts and closing Boston's port.

Virginia moved to support Massachusetts by convening the First CONTINENTAL CONGRESS in Philadelphia in the fall of 1774. It drew up declarations of rights and grievances and called for nonimportation of British goods. Colonial militia began drilling in the Massachusetts countryside. New Englanders were convinced that they were soon to have their churches placed under the jurisdiction of Anglican bishops. They believed, as well, that the landowning British aristocracy was determined, through the levying of ruinous taxes, to reduce the freeholding yeomanry of New England to the status of tenants. The word "slavery" was constantly on their lips.

#  The War for Independence

In April 1775, Gen. Thomas GAGE in Boston was instructed to take the offensive against the Massachusetts troublemakers, now declared traitors to the crown. Charged with bringing an end to the training of militia and gathering up all arms and ammunition in colonial hands, on April 19, Gage sent a body of 800 soldiers to Concord to commandeer arms. On that day, the Battles of LEXINGTON AND CONCORD took place, royal troops fled back to Boston, and American campfires began burning around the city. The war of the AMERICAN REVOLUTION had begun.

It soon became a world war, with England's European enemies gladly joining in opposing England in order to gain revenge for past humiliations. British forces were engaged in battle from the Caribbean and the American colonies to the coasts of India. Furthermore, the United Colonies, as the Continental Congress called the rebelling 13 colonies, were widely scattered in a huge wilderness and were occupied by a people most of whom were in arms. The dispersion of the American population meant that the small (by modern standards) cities of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia could be taken and held for long periods without affecting the outcome.

LOYALISTS numbered about 60,000, living predominantly along the coast where people of English ethnic background and anglicized culture were most numerous, but they were widely separated and weak. Pennsylvania's Quakers had looked to the crown as their protector against the Scots-Irish and other militant groups in Pennsylvania. The Quakers were appalled at the rebellion, aggressively led in the Middle Colonies by the Presbyterian Scots-Irish, and refused to lend it support. London deluded itself, however, with the belief that the Loyalists represented a majority that would soon resume control and end the conflict.

Within a brief period after the Battle of Concord, practically all royal authority disappeared from the 13 colonies. Rebel governments were established in each colony, and the Continental Congress in Philadelphia provided a rudimentary national government. The task now before the British was to fight their way back onto the continent, reestablish royal governments in each colony, and defeat the colonial army. By March 1776 the British evacuated Boston, moving to take and hold New York City. Within days of the British arrival in New York, however, the Congress in Philadelphia issued (July 4) the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. In December 1776, Gen. George WASHINGTON reversed the early trend of American defeats by a stunning victory at Trenton, N.J. (see TRENTON, BATTLE OF). Thereafter, as the fighting wore on and the cause survived, Washington became in America and abroad a symbol of strength and great bravery.

In February 1778 the French joined the conflict by signing an alliance with the Continental Congress. With the aid of the French fleet the British army in the north was reduced to a bridgehead at New York City. Shifting its efforts to the south, the royal army campaigned through Georgia and the Carolinas between 1778 and 1780, marching to the James Peninsula, in Virginia, in 1781. Here, in the YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN, by the combined efforts of Washington's troops and the French army and navy, Lord CORNWALLIS was forced to surrender on Oct. 19, 1781. The fighting, effectively, was over. In September 1783 the Treaty of Paris secured American independence on generous terms. The new nation was given an immense domain that ran westward to the Mississippi River (except for Britain's Canadian colonies and East and West Florida, which reverted to Spanish rule).

#  A NEW NATION

The first federal constitution of the new American republic was the ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION. With ratification of that document in 1781, the nation had adopted its formal name, the United States of America.

#  Government under the Articles of Confederation

Under the Articles the only national institution was the Confederation Congress, with limited powers not unlike those of the United Nations. The states retained their sovereignty, with each state government selecting representatives to sit in the Congress. No national executive or judiciary had been established. Each state delegation received an equal vote on all issues. Congress was charged with carrying on the foreign relations of the United States, but because it had no taxing powers (it could only request funds from the states), it had no strength to back up its diplomacy. In addition, it had no jurisdiction over interstate commerce; each state could erect tariffs against its neighbors.

The Confederation Congress, however, achieved one great victory: it succeeded in bringing all 13 of the states to agree on a plan for organizing and governing the western territories (the "public lands") beyond the Appalachians. Each state ceded its western claims to the Congress, which in three ordinances dealing with the Northwest (1784, 1785, and 1787) provided that new states established in the western regions would be equal in status to the older ones. After a territorial stage of quasi self-government, they would pass to full statehood. The land in the NORTHWEST TERRITORY (the Old Northwest, that is, the area north of the Ohio River) would be surveyed in square parcels, 6 mi (9.7 km) on a side, divided into 36 sections, and sold to settlers at low cost; one plot would be reserved for the support of public schools. Furthermore, slavery was declared illegal in the Northwest Territory. (The Southwest Territory, below the Ohio, was organized by the later federal Congress in 1790 as slave country.)

The Confederation Congress, however, did not survive. Because of its lack of taxing power, its currency was of little value; widespread social turbulence in the separate states led many Americans to despair of the new nation. The republic--regarded as a highly precarious form of government in a world of monarchies--was founded with the conviction that the people would exercise the virtue and self-denial required under self- government. Soon, however, that assumption seemed widely discredited. SHAYS'S REBELLION in Massachusetts (1786-87) was an attempt to aid debtors by forcibly closing the court system; mobs terrorized legislators and judges to achieve this end. The new state legislatures, which had assumed all powers when royal governors were expelled, confiscated property, overturned judicial decisions, issued floods of unsecured paper money, and enacted torrents of legislation, some of it ex post facto (effective retroactively).

The established social and political elite (as distinct from the rough new antiauthoritarian politicians who had begun to invade the state legislatures, talking aggressively of "democracy" and "liberty") urgently asserted the need for a strong national government. The influence that the London authorities had formerly provided as a balance to local government was absent. Minorities that had been protected by the crown, such as the Baptists in Massachusetts and the Quakers in Pennsylvania, were now defenseless. The wealthy classes maintained that they were at the mercy of the masses. The new United States was so weak that it was regarded contemptuously all over the world and its diplomats ignored.

#  The Constitutional Convention of 1787

A chain of meetings, beginning with one between Virginia and Maryland in 1786 to solve mutual commercial problems and including the larger ANNAPOLIS CONVENTION later that year, led to the CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION in Philadelphia in 1787. Deciding to start afresh and fashion a new national government independent of, and superior to, the states, the delegates made a crucial decision: the nation's source of sovereignty was to lie in the people directly, not in the existing states. Using the British Parliament as a model, they provided for a CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES that would have two houses to check and balance one another. One house would be elected directly by the people of each state, with representation proportionate to population; the other would provide equal representation for each state (two senators each), to be chosen by the state legislatures.

The powers of the national government were to be those previously exercised by London: regulation of interstate and foreign commerce, foreign affairs and defense, and Indian affairs; control of the national domain; and promotion of "the general welfare." Most important, the Congress was empowered to levy "taxes, duties, imposts, and excises." The states were prohibited from carrying on foreign relations, coining money, passing ex post facto laws, impairing the obligations of contracts, and establishing tariffs. Furthermore, if social turbulence within a state became serious, the federal government, following invitation by the legislature or the executive of that state, could bring in troops to insure "a republican form of government."

A PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES with powers much like those of the British king, except that the office would be elective, was created. Chosen by a special body (an ELECTORAL COLLEGE), the president would be an independent and powerful national leader, effectively in command of the government. Recalling the assaults on judicial power that had been rampant in the states, the Constitutional Convention also created a fully independent SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, members of which could be removed only if they committed a crime. Then, most important, the document that was drawn up at Philadelphia stated that the Constitution, as well as laws and treaties made under the authority of the U.S. government, "shall be the supreme Law of the Land."

The proposed constitution was to be ratified by specially elected ratifying conventions in each state and to become operative after nine states had ratified it. In the national debate that arose over ratification, ANTI-FEDERALISTS opposed the concentration of power in the national government under the document; a key question was the absence of a BILL OF RIGHTS. Many Americans thought that a bill of rights was necessary to preserve individual liberties, and to accommodate this view proponents of the Constitution promised to add such a bill to the document after ratification. With the clear understanding that amendments would be added, ratification by nine states was completed (1788) and the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES became operative. The Bill of Rights was then drafted by the first Congress and became the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

# Diverging Visions of the American Republic

In the first elections for the new federal Congress (1789), those favoring the new system won a huge majority. George Washington was unanimously elected to be chief executive, the only president so honored. He was inaugurated in the temporary capital, New York City, on Apr. 30, 1789. The American experiment in republican self-government now began again. The unanimity expressed in Washington's election would prove short- lived.

Under the leadership of Secretary of the Treasury Alexander HAMILTON, Congress pledged (1790) the revenues of the federal government to pay off all the outstanding debt of the old Articles of Confederation government as well as the state debts. Much of the domestic debt was in currency that had badly depreciated in value, but Congress agreed to fund it at its higher face value; at one stroke, the financial credit of the new government was assured. Southerners, however, mistrusted the plan, claiming that it served only to enrich northern speculators because the southern states had largely paid off their debts. Many southerners feared, too, that the new nation would be dominated by New Englanders, whose criticism of southern slavery and living styles offended them. Before assenting to the funding proposal, the southerners had obtained agreement that the national capital (after 10 years in Philadelphia) would be placed in the South, on the Potomac River.

In 1791, Hamilton persuaded Congress to charter the BANK OF THE UNITED STATES, modeled after the Bank of England. Primarily private (some of its trustees would be federally appointed), it would receive and hold the government's revenues, issue currency and regulate that of state-chartered banks, and be free to invest as it saw fit the federal tax moneys in its vaults. Because it would control the largest pool of capital in the country, it could shape the growth of the national economy. Hamilton also proposed (with limited success) that protective tariffs be established to exclude foreign goods and thus stimulate the development of U.S. factories. In short, he laid out the economic philosophy of what became the FEDERALIST PARTY: that the government should actively encourage economic growth by providing aid to capitalists. Flourishing cities and a vigorous industrial order: this was the American future he envisioned. His strongly nationalist position gained the support of the elites in New York City and Philadelphia as well as broad-based support among the Yankees of New England.

On the other hand, southerners, a rural and widely dispersed people, feared the cities and the power of remote bankers. With Thomas JEFFERSON they worked to counteract the Federalists' anglicized vision of the United States. Southerners rejected the concept of an active government, preferring one committed to laissez-faire (that is, allowing people to act without government interference) in all areas--economic and cultural. Jefferson declared that close ties between government and capitalists would inevitably lead to corruption and exploitation. In his view, behind-the-scene schemers would use graft to secure special advantages (tariffs, bounties, and the like) that would allow them to profiteer at the community's expense.

The Middle Atlantic states at first supported the nationalistic Federalists, who won a second term for Washington in 1792 and elected John ADAMS to the presidency in 1796. However, many of the Scots-Irish, Germans, and Dutch in these states disliked Yankees and distrusted financiers and business proprietors. The growing working class in Philadelphia and New York City turned against the Federalists' elitism. By 1800 the ethnic minorities of the Middle Atlantic states helped swing that region behind Jefferson, a Virginian, and his Democratic-Republican party, giving the presidency to Jefferson. Thereafter, until 1860, with few intermissions, the South and the Middle Atlantic states together dominated the federal government. Although the U.S. Constitution had made no mention of POLITICAL PARTIES, it had taken only a decade for the development of a party system that roughly reflected two diverging visions for the new republic. Political parties would remain an integral part of the American system of government.

During the 1790s, however, foreign affairs became dominant, and dreams of republican simplicity and quietude were dashed. A long series of wars between Britain and Revolutionary France began in that decade, and the Americans were inevitably pulled into the fray. By JAY'S TREATY (1794) the United States reluctantly agreed to British wartime confiscation of U.S. ship cargoes, alleged to be contraband, in return for British evacuation of western forts on American soil and the opening of the British West Indies to U.S. vessels. Under John Adams, similar depredations by the French navy against American trading ships led to the Quasi-War (1798-1801) on the high seas. Federalist hysteria over alleged French-inspired subversion produced the ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS (1798), which sought to crush all criticism of the government.

#  The Democratic Republic

As president, Jefferson attempted to implement the Democratic- Republican vision of America; he cut back the central government's activities, reducing the size of the court system, letting excise taxes lapse, and contracting the military forces. Paradoxically, in what was perhaps Jefferson's greatest achievement as president, he vastly increased the scope of U.S. power: the securing of the LOUISIANA PURCHASE (1803) from France practically doubled American territory, placing the western boundary of the United States along the base of the Rocky Mountains.

In 1811, under Jefferson's successor, James MADISON, the 20- year charter of the Bank of the United States was allowed to lapse, further eroding the Federalists' nationalist program. Renewed warfare between Britain and France, during which American foreign trade was progressively throttled down almost to nothing, led eventually to the WAR OF 1812. The British insisted on the right freely to commandeer U.S. cargoes as contraband and to impress American sailors into their navy. To many Americans the republic seemed in grave peril.

With reluctance and against unanimous Federalist opposition, Congress made the decision to go to war against Britain. Except for some initial naval victories, the war went badly for the Americans. Western Indians, under the gifted TECUMSEH, fought on the British side. In 1814, however, an invading army from Canada was repelled. Then, just as a peace treaty was being concluded in Ghent (Belgium), Andrew JACKSON crushed another invading British army as it sought to take New Orleans. The war thus ended on a triumphant note, and the republic was confirmed. The Federalists, who in the HARTFORD CONVENTION (in Connecticut, 1814) had capped their opposition to the war with demands for major changes in the Constitution, now were regarded as disloyal, and their party dwindled down to a base in New England and in the 1820s dissolved. Robbed of their enemy, Jeffersonian Democratic-Republicans broke into factions, effectively disappearing as a national party.

#  AN AGE OF BOUNDLESSNESS: 1815-50

The volatile and expansive years from 1815 to 1850 were, in many ways, an age of boundlessness when limits that had previously curbed human aspirations seemed to disappear.

#  Economic and Cultural Ferment

After 1815 the American economy began to expand rapidly. The cotton boom in the South spread settlement swiftly across the Gulf Plains: the Deep South was born. Farmers also moved into the Lake Plains north of the Ohio River, their migration greatly accelerating after the completion of the ERIE CANAL in 1825. Practically all Indians east of the Mississippi were placed on small reservations or forced to move to the Great Plains beyond the Missouri River. Canals and railroads opened the interior to swift expansion, of both settlement and trade. In the Midwest many new cities, such as Chicago, appeared, as enormous empires of wheat and livestock farms came into being. From 1815 to 1850 a new western state entered the Union, on the average, every two and one-half years.

The westward movement of the FRONTIER was matched in the Northeast by rapid economic development. National productivity surged during the 1820s; prices spurted to a peak during the 1830s and dropped for a time during the 1840s; both prices and productivity soared upward again during the 1850s, reaching new heights. A business cycle had appeared, producing periods of boom and bust, and the factory system became well developed. After the GOLD RUSH that began in California in 1848-49, industrial development was further stimulated during the 1850s by the arrival of $500 million in gold and silver from the Sierra Nevada and other western regions. A willingness to take risks formerly thought wildly imprudent became a national virtue. Land values rose, and hundreds of new communities appeared in the western states.

Meanwhile, property tests for voting were disappearing, white manhood suffrage became the rule, and most offices were made elective. A communications revolution centering in the inexpensive newspaper and in a national fascination with mass education (except in the South) sent literacy rates soaring. The Second Great Awakening (1787-1825), a new religious revival that originated in New England, spread an evangelical excitement across the country. In its wake a ferment of social reform swept the northern states. The slave system of the South spread westward as rapidly as the free labor system of the North, and during the 1830s ABOLITIONISTS mounted a crusade to hammer at the evils of slavery.

#  Expansion of the American Domain

The years 1815-50 brought further expansion of the national domain. In the Anglo-American Convention of 1818, the 49th parallel was established as the border between Canada and the United States from the Lake of the Woods to the Rockies, and in the Adams-Onis Treaty of 1819, Spain ceded Florida and its claims in the Oregon Country to the United States. During the 1840s a sense of MANIFEST DESTINY seized the American mind (although many individuals, especially in New England, were more restrained in their thinking). Continent-wide expansion seemed inevitable. Texas, which had declared its independence from Mexico in 1835-36 (see TEXAS REVOLUTION), was annexed in 1845. Then a dispute with Mexico concerning the Rio Grande as the border of Texas led to the MEXICAN WAR (1846-48). While U.S. armies invaded the heartland of Mexico to gain victory, other forces sliced off the northern half of that country--the provinces of New Mexico and Alta California. In the Treaty of GUADALUPE HIDALGO (1848), $15 million was paid for the Mexican cession of those provinces, more than 3 million sq km (roughly 1 million sq m).

In 1846, Britain and the United States settled the OREGON QUESTION, concluding a treaty that divided the Oregon Country at the 49th parallel and bringing the Pacific Northwest into the American nation. In addition, by the GADSDEN PURCHASE of 1853 the United States acquired (for $10 million) the southern portions of the present states of New Mexico and Arizona. By 1860 the Union comprised 33 states, packed solid through the first rank beyond the Mississippi and reaching westward to include Texas, as well as California and Oregon on the Pacific Coast. Fed by a high birthrate and by the heavy immigration from Ireland and Germany that surged dramatically during the 1840s, the nation's population was leaping upward: from 9.6 million in 1820 to 23 million in 1850 and 31.5 million in 1860.

#  Domestic Politics: 1815-46

In a nationalist frame of mind at the end of the War of 1812, Congress chartered the Second Bank of the United States in 1816, erected the first protective tariff (see TARIFF ACTS), and supported internal improvements (roads and bridges) to open the interior. President James MONROE presided (1817-25) over the so-called Era of Good Feelings, followed by John Quincy ADAMS (1825-29).

Chief Justice John MARSHALL led the Supreme Court in a crucial series of decisions, beginning in 1819. He declared that within its powers the federal government could not be interfered with by the states (MCCULLOCH V. MARYLAND) and that regulation of interstate and international commerce was solely a federal preserve (GIBBONS V. OGDEN and BROWN V. MARYLAND). In 1820, in the MISSOURI COMPROMISE, Congress took charge of the question of slavery in the territories by declaring it illegal above 36 deg 30 min in the huge region acquired by the Louisiana Purchase. Witnessing the Latin American revolutions against Spanish rule, the American government in 1823 asserted its paramountcy in the Western Hemisphere by issuing the MONROE DOCTRINE. In diplomatic but clear language it stated that the United States would fight to exclude further European extensions of sovereignty into its hemisphere.

During the presidency of Andrew JACKSON (1829-37), a sharp bipolarization occurred again in the nation's politics. Of Scots-Irish descent, Jackson hated the English, and he was, in turn, as thoroughly disliked by New Englanders, who thought him violent and barbaric. He made enemies in the South, as well, when in 1832 South Carolina, asserting superior STATE RIGHTS, attempted to declare null and void within its borders the tariff of 1828 (see NULLIFICATION). In his Nullification Proclamation (1832), Jackson declared that the federal government was supreme according to the Constitution. He skillfully outmaneuvered the South Carolinians, forcing them to relent. In 1832 he vetoed the rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States on the grounds that it caused the booms and busts that so alarmed the country and that it served the wealthy while exploiting the farmers and working people. To oppose him, the old Federalist coalition was reborn in the form of the American WHIG PARTY. With a DEMOCRATIC PARTY emerging behind Jackson and embodying the old Jeffersonian Democratic- Republican coalition, two-party rivalries appeared in every state. By the 1840s modern mass political parties, organized down into every ward and precinct, had appeared.

Led by Henry CLAY and Daniel WEBSTER, the Whigs called for protective tariffs, a national bank, and internal improvements to stimulate the economy. Moralists in politics, they also demanded active intervention by state governments to maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath, put down alcoholic beverages, and "Americanize" the immigrants in the public schools. Yankees, who by now had migrated in great numbers into the Midwest, leaned strongly toward the Whigs. Many southerners admired Yankee ways and tended to vote for Whig candidates, too.

Democrats continued to condemn banks and tariffs as sources of corruption and exploitation, and in Jefferson's tradition insisted on cultural laissez-faire, the freedom of people to live as they desired. The minority out-groups--Irish Catholics and Germans--concurred, voting strongly Democratic in order to ward off the imposition of Yankee morals. During the presidency of Martin VAN BUREN (1837-41), Democrats succeeded in entirely separating banking and government in the INDEPENDENT TREASURY SYSTEM, by which the government stored and controlled its own funds. A brief Whig interlude under William Henry HARRISON (1841) and John TYLER (1841-45) was followed by the presidency of the Democrat James K. POLK (1845-49), who in the Walker Tariff (1846) brought the United States closer to a free-trade basis.

#  Growing Sectional Conflicts

President Polk's war with Mexico ripped open the slavery question again. Was it to be allowed in the new territories? The WILMOT PROVISO (1846), which would have excluded slavery, became a rallying point for both sides, being voted on again and again in Congress and successfully held off by southerners. Abolitionism, led by William Lloyd GARRISON and others and now strong in many northern circles, called for the immediate emancipation of slaves with no compensation to slaveowners. Most northern whites disliked blacks and did not support abolition; they did want to disallow slavery in the territories so they could be preserved for white settlement based on northern ideals: free labor, dignity of work, and economic progress.

In 1848 northerners impatient with both of the existing parties formed the FREE-SOIL PARTY. By polling 300,000 votes for their candidate, Martin Van Buren, they denied victory to the Democrats and put the Whig Zachary TAYLOR in the White House (1849-50; on his death Millard FILLMORE became president, 1850- 53). The COMPROMISE OF 1850 seemed to settle the slavery expansion issue by the principle of POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY, allowing the people who lived in the Mexican cession to decide for themselves. A strong FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW was also passed in 1850, giving new powers to slaveowners to reach into northern states to recapture escaped slaves.

 **THE CIVIL WAR ERA**

As the 1850s began, it seemed for a time that the issue of slavery and other sectional differences between North and South might eventually be reconciled. But with the westward thrust of the American nation, all attempts at compromise were thwarted, and diverging economic, political, and philosophical interests became more apparent. The resulting civil war transformed the American nation.

#  Political Fragmentation

In 1854 the KANSAS-NEBRASKA ACT threw open the huge unorganized lands of the Louisiana Purchase to popular sovereignty, repealing the Missouri Compromise line of 1820. The North exploded in rage. Thousands defected from the Whig party to establish a new and much more antisouthern body (and one wholly limited to the northern states), the REPUBLICAN PARTY. The Republicans were aided by an enormous anti-Catholic outburst under way at the same time, aimed at the large wave of Irish Catholic immigration. Anti-Catholicism was already draining away Whigs to a new organization, the American party, soon known as the KNOW-NOTHING PARTY. When in 1856 it proved unable to hold together its members, north and south, because of disagreements over slavery, the anti-Catholics joined the Republicans.

In Kansas civil war broke out between pro-slavery and anti- slavery advocates, as settlers attempted to formalize their position on the institution prior to the territory's admission as a state. The Democratic presidents Franklin PIERCE (1853-57) and James BUCHANAN (1857-61) appeared to favor the pro-slavery group in Kansas despite its use of fraud and violence. In 1857 the Supreme Court, southern dominated, intensified northern alarm in its decision in the case of DRED SCOTT V. SANDFORD. The Court ruled that Congress had no authority to exclude slavery from the territories and thus, that the Missouri Compromise line had been unconstitutional all along. Thousands of northerners now became convinced that a "slave conspiracy" had infiltrated the national government and that it intended to make slavery a nationwide institution.

In 1860 the political system became completely fragmented. The Democrats split into northern and southern wings, presenting two different candidates for the presidency; the small CONSTITUTIONAL UNION PARTY attempted to rally the former Whigs behind a third. The Republicans, however, were able to secure the election of Abraham LINCOLN to the White House.

Southerners had viewed the rise of the Yankee-dominated Republican party with great alarm. They were convinced that the party was secretly controlled by abolitionists (although most northerners detested the abolitionists) and that Yankees believed in using government to enforce their moralistic crusades. In 1859, John BROWN led a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Va., hoping to incite a slave insurrection. His action--and his subsequent deification by some northerners- -helped persuade southerners that emancipation of the slaves, if northerners obtained control of the country, was sooner or later inevitable.

# Secession

Southern leaders had threatened to leave the Union if Lincoln won the election of 1860. Many South Carolinians, in particular, were convinced that Republican-sponsored emancipation would lead to bloody massacres as blacks sought vengeance against whites. In order to prevent this horror South Carolina seceded in December 1860, soon after the victory of Lincoln, an undeniably sectional candidate; it was optimistic about the eventual outcome of its action. Before Lincoln's inauguration (March 1861) six more states followed (Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas). In February their representatives gathered in Montgomery, Ala., to form the CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA. On Apr. 12, 1861, when President Lincoln moved to reprovision the federal troops at FORT SUMTER, in Charleston Harbor, Confederate shore batteries launched a 34-hour battering of the installation, forcing its surrender. The U.S. CIVIL WAR had begun.

#  The War between the States

Lincoln moved swiftly. On April 15 he called the remaining states to provide 75,000 troops to put down the Confederacy; Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee reluctantly seceded. The capital of the Confederacy moved to Richmond. On July 21, 1861, the first major battle between Union and Confederate forces occurred--at Bull Run (see BULL RUN, BATTLES OF), south of Washington, D.C.--resulting in a dramatic southern victory. Thereafter, both sides settled down to a long conflict.

It became an immense struggle. With a total U.S. population of fewer than 32 million, the number of dead reached 620,000 (360,000 northerners out of an army of about 1.5 million and 260,000 southerners in an army of about 1 million). In contrast, during World War II, when the American population was 135 million and its military forces fought for 4 years throughout the world, the total dead reached 400,000. In 1861 about 22 million people lived in the North, as against some 9 million people in the South, of whom 3.5 million were black. Although the North possessed a vigorous system of industry and a well-developed railroad network, Europeans were highly skeptical of a northern victory because the Confederacy was practically as large as Western Europe and fought with a determined passion for its independence. The North had to invade and defeat the opposition in order to win; the South had only to defend its borders. The conflict was not so uneven as it seemed.

Lincoln launched an all-out effort: he declared a naval blockade of the Confederacy; worked hard to maintain the loyalty of the slaveholding border states (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri); invaded Tennessee to gain a base of power in the heart of the Confederacy; cut the South in two by taking the Mississippi River; and looked for a general who could win. This last task took him 2 years. Gen. George B. MCCLELLAN proved disappointingly conservative, and his successors were bumblers. After Gen. Ulysses S. GRANT won major victories in the western theater, Lincoln brought him to Washington in 1864 to face the brilliant Confederate commander, Robert E. LEE.

By mid-1863 the South was in desperate straits, lacking both food and supplies. A great northward thrust was turned back at Gettysburg, Pa., in July of that year (see GETTYSBURG, BATTLE OF). Thereafter, Grant mounted a relentless campaign that hammered down toward Richmond, at hideous cost in casualties. Union Gen. William T. SHERMAN, meanwhile, was slashing through Georgia to the sea, leaving a wide swath of total destruction, and then turning northward through the Carolinas. By April 1865, Grant had finally rounded Lee's flank, and on the 9th of that month, Lee surrendered at APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE. Confederate president Jefferson DAVIS intended to fight on, but it was hopeless. The Civil War was over.

#  A Nation Transformed: The North

The war had transformed both North and South. On Jan. 1, 1863, Lincoln had issued his EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, declaring slavery dead wherever rebellion existed (in the border states, it was terminated by later local action). In addition, the enormous war effort taught the North lessons in modern organization and the use of large corporations. In Washington the Republican majority enacted a classically Hamiltonian program: high protective tariffs, lavish aid to capitalists to build railroads and exploit natural resources, free homestead grants for settlers, and banking and currency legislation that created one national system of paper money. The MORRILL ACT of 1862 provided grants of land for the establishment of land- grant universities in each state to train the agriculturalists, engineers, and other professionals needed to run an industrialized economy.

The two-party system survived in the North despite the war. Democrats never sank below 40 percent of the vote because many northerners opposed the conflict, or at least Republican policies. In the DRAFT RIOTS of 1863, Irish Catholics and other New Yorkers fiercely protested the new conscription law, which seemed a special hardship to poor people. The rioters, as well as many other northerners, were hostile toward abolition; they feared that Republican policies would send hordes of freed slaves northward to compete for jobs. Democrats also opposed the powerful centralizing tendencies of the programs pushed by the Republicans, as well as their aid to capitalists.

#  Reconstruction

A week after Appomattox, Lincoln was assassinated. Now Andrew JOHNSON assumed office and moved quickly to establish a plan for RECONSTRUCTION. He asked southern whites only to repudiate debts owed by the Confederacy, declare secession null and void, and ratify the 13TH AMENDMENT (which declared slavery illegal). When Congress convened in December 1865, newly elected southerners were already on the scene waiting to be admitted to their seats. Many of them had been elected on the basis of BLACK CODES, established in the southern states in 1865-66 to restore a form of quasi-slavery. To the shocked and angered North, it seemed that the sufferings endured in the war had been in vain: politics as before the war--only now with a powerful southern Democratic bloc in Congress--would resume.

The Republican majority in Congress refused to admit southern legislators to their seats until a congressional committee reexamined the entire question of Reconstruction. Soon, Radical Republicans (those who wished to use the victory as an opportunity to remake the South in the Yankee image) were in open conflict with Johnson. He attempted to terminate the FREEDMEN'S BUREAU (an agency established in 1865 to aid refugees) and to veto legislation aimed at protecting the civil rights of former slaves (see CIVIL RIGHTS ACTS). In the congressional election of 1866 a huge majority of Republicans was elected, and the Radicals gained a precarious ascendancy. Senator Charles SUMNER of Massachusetts and Representative Thaddeus STEVENS (New England-born) of Pennsylvania were among the leaders of the Radical cause.

The 14TH AMENDMENT (enacted in 1866; ratified in 1868) made all persons born or naturalized in the country U.S. citizens and forbade any state to interfere with their fundamental civil rights. In March 1867 all state governments in the South were terminated and military occupation established. Federal commanders were charged with reconstructing southern governments through constitutional conventions, to which delegates were to be elected by universal male suffrage. After a new state government was in operation and had ratified the 14th Amendment, its representatives would be admitted to Congress. In February 1868 an impeachment effort sought unsuccessfully to remove President Johnson from office.

The Republican majority in Congress made no significant effort to create social equality for blacks, but only to give them the vote and to ensure them equal protection under the law (trial by jury, freedom of movement, the right to hold office and any employment, and the like). This political equality would give blacks an equal start, Republicans insisted, and they would then carry the burden of proving themselves equal in other ways. Yet Republicans well knew that antiblack attitudes persisted in the North as well as in the South. Until ratification (1870) of the 15TH AMENDMENT, which made it illegal to deny the vote on the grounds of race, most northern states refused blacks the vote.

#  A Nation Transformed: The South

Like the North, the South was transformed by the Civil War and its aftermath. Southerners had learned lessons in the effectiveness of a strong central government and realized the impossibility of continuing the old ways of the antebellum period. Former Whigs in the South, often called Conservatives, pushed eagerly to build industry and commerce in the Yankee style. Meanwhile, reconstructed southern state governments enacted many reforms, establishing free public schools for all, popular election of all officials, more equitable taxes, and more humane penal laws.

Republican Ulysses S. Grant was elected president in 1868 with electoral votes gained in occupied southern states. Democrats alleged that Radical Reconstruction was not genuinely concerned with aiding black people, but with using southern black votes to keep the Republicans in power in Congress and to retain their protective tariffs and other aids to industrialists. When evidence of corruption surfaced during the Grant administration, Democrats declared that it proved that the outcome of Republican friendliness to capitalists was graft and plunder.

By 1870 the antisouthern mood that had supported Radical Reconstruction had faded, as had the surge of concern for southern blacks. New domestic problems were pushing to the fore. A resurgence of white voting in the South, together with the use of violence to intimidate blacks and their white sympathizers, brought southern states back into Democratic hands. Northerners, awakened to economic questions by the great depression that began in 1873 and lasted for 5 years, tacitly agreed to return the race issue to the control of southern whites.

After the disputed election of 1876, amid evidence of electoral corruption, the Republican presidential candidate promised to withdraw the last federal occupation troops from the South. The election was decided by a congressional electoral commission, and Rutherford B. HAYES became president. As promised, he withdrew (1877) the troops; Reconstruction was over.

#  THE GILDED AGE

The era known as the GILDED AGE (1870s to 1890s) was a time of vigorous, exploitative individualism. Despite widespread suffering by industrial workers, southern sharecroppers, displaced American Indians, and other groups, a mood of optimism possessed the United States. The theories of the English biologist Charles Darwin--expounded in The Origin of Species (1859)--concerning the natural selection of organisms best suited to survive in their environment began to influence American opinion. Some intellectuals in the United States applied the idea of the survival of the fittest to human societies (SOCIAL DARWINISM) and arrived at the belief that government aid to the unfortunate was wrong.

 Industrialization and Large-Scale Exploitation of NaturalResources

During the Gilded Age ambitious and imaginative capitalists ranged the continent looking for new opportunities. Business lurched erratically from upswings to slumps, while the country's industrial base grew rapidly. Factories and mines labored heavily through these years to provide the raw materials and finished products needed for expansion of the railroad system. In 1865 (as construction of the first TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD was underway; completed 1869) approximately 56,000 km (35,000 mi) of track stretched across the United States; by 1910 the total reached about 386,000 km (240,000 mi) of interconnected uniform-gauge track. By 1890 the United States contained one-third of the world's railroad trackage.

After new gold and silver discoveries in the late 1850s, until about 1875, individual prospectors explored the western country and desert basins in search of mineral riches. Then mining corporations took over, using hired laborers and eastern- trained engineers. Indians were either brutally exterminated or placed on small reservations. Warfare with the Great Plains Indians broke out in 1864; these INDIAN WARS did not entirely subside until after the slaughtering of the buffalo herds, the basis of Indian life, which had occurred by the mid-1880s. Through the DAWES ACT of 1887, which forced most Indians to choose 160-acre (65-ha) allotments within their reservations, reformers hoped to break down tribal bonds and induce Indians to take up sedentary agriculture. Unallocated reservation lands were declared surplus and sold to whites.

Cattle ranching was the first large-scale enterprise to invade the Great Plains beginning in the late 1860s. By the 1880s, however, the open range began to give way to fenced pastureland and to agriculture, made possible by the newly invented barbed- wire fence and by "dry farming," a technique of preserving soil moisture by frequent plowing. Millions of farmers moved into the high plains west of the 100th meridian. So huge was their grain output that slumping world prices beginning in the mid- 1880s put them into severe financial straits. Meanwhile, the vast continental sweep between Kansas and California became filled with new states.

By the early 1900s the nation's economy, tied together by the railroads into a single market, was no longer composed primarily of thousands of small producers who sold to local markets. Rather, it was dominated by a small number of large firms that sold nationwide and to the world at large. With great size, however, came large and complex problems. In 1887, Congress created the INTERSTATE COMMERCE COMMISSION to curb cutthroat competition among the railroads and to ensure that railroad rates were "reasonable and just." In 1890, on the other hand, Congress attempted to restore competition through passage of the SHERMAN ANTI-TRUST ACT, which declared illegal trusts and other combinations that restrained trade. The U.S. Supreme Court favored laissez-faire and consistently blocked both federal and state efforts to regulate private business. The so-called robber barons and their immense fortunes were practically unscathed as they exploited the nation's natural resources and dominated its economic life.

 New Social Groupings: Immigrants, Urbanites, and UnionMembers

In 1890 the American people numbered 63 million, double the 1860 population. During these years the nation's cities underwent tremendous growth. Many new urbanites came from the American countryside, but many others came from abroad. From 1860 to 1890 more than 10 million immigrants arrived in the United States; from 1890 to 1920, 15 million more arrived (see IMMIGRATION). Most were concentrated in northern cities: by 1910, 75 percent of immigrants lived in urban areas, while less than 50 percent of native-born Americans did so. In the 1880s the so-called new immigration began: in addition to the Germans, Scandinavians, Irish, and others of the older immigrant groups, there came such peoples as Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Bohemians, Greeks, and Jews (from central and eastern Europe, especially Russia). Roman Catholics grew in number from 1.6 million in 1850 to 12 million in 1900, producing a renewed outburst of bitter anti-Catholic nativism in the 1880s. The large cities, with their saloons, theaters, dance halls, and immigrant slums, were feared by many native American Protestants, who lived primarily in small cities and the rural countryside.

The outbreak of labor protests from the 1870s on, often characterized by immigrant workers opposing native-born employers, intensified the hostility. In 1878 the KNIGHTS OF LABOR formed, opening its ranks to all working people, skilled or unskilled. The Knights called for sweeping social and economic reforms, and their numbers rose to 700,000 in 1886. Then, as the organization broke apart because of internal stresses, the American Federation of Labor, under Samuel GOMPERS, formed to take its place. Concentrating on skilled craftworkers and tight organization, it endured.

#  Domestic Politics

Gilded Age politics became a contest between evenly balanced Republicans and Democrats. Winning elections by small margins, they alternated in their control of Congress and the White House. Five men served as Republican presidents: Hayes; James A. GARFIELD (1881); Chester A. ARTHUR (1881-85), who succeeded Garfield on his assassination; Benjamin HARRISON (1889-93); and William MCKINLEY (1897-1901). Their party regarded industrial growth and capitalist leadership with approval, believing that they led to an ever-widening opening of opportunity for all.

Grover CLEVELAND rose from obscurity to become Democratic governor of New York in the early 1880s and then U.S. president (1885-89; 1893-97; although he won a popular-vote plurality in the election of 1888, he lost to Harrison in the electoral college). Reared a Jacksonian Democrat, he believed that society is always in danger of exploitation by the wealthy and powerful. A vigorous president, he labored to clean up government by making civil service effective; took back huge land grants given out fraudulently in the West; and battled to lower the protective tariff.

In the Great Plains and the South, grain and cotton farmers, suffering from falling crop prices, demanded currency inflation to raise prices. By 1892 a POPULIST PARTY had appeared, to call for free coinage of silver to achieve this goal. Cleveland resisted, stating that such a monetary policy would destroy confidence, prolong the great depression that began in 1893, and injure city consumers. In 1896 the Democrats, taken over by southern and western inflationists, ran William Jennings BRYAN on a FREE SILVER platform. Ethnic voters surged into the Republican ranks--for the depression was a disastrous one and the Republican party had always urged active government intervention to stimulate the economy. In addition, as city dwellers they feared inflation. William McKinley's election began a long period of one-party (Republican) domination in the northern states and in Washington.

#  THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

During the period known as the Progressive Era (1890s to about 1920) the U.S. government became increasingly activist in both domestic and foreign policy. Progressive, that is, reform- minded, political leaders sought to extend their vision of a just and rational order to all areas of society and some, indeed, to all reaches of the globe.

#  America Looks Outward

During the 1890s, U.S. foreign policy became aggressively activist. As American industrial productivity grew, many reformers urged the need for foreign markets. Others held that the United States had a mission to carry Anglo-Saxon culture to all of humankind, to spread law and order and American civilization. In 1895 the United States intervened bluntly in the VENEZUELA BOUNDARY DISPUTE between Venezuela and imperial Britain, warning that, under the Monroe Doctrine, American force might be used if Venezuela were not treated equitably. A Cuban revolution against Spain, begun in 1895, finally led to the SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR (1898), undertaken to free Cuba. From that war the United States emerged with a protectorate over Cuba and an island empire consisting of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam. The United States also annexed the Hawaiian Islands in 1898, completing a bridge to the markets of the Far East. In 1900 the American government announced the OPEN DOOR POLICY, pledging to support continued Chinese independence as well as equal access for all nations to China's markets.

William McKinley's assassination brought Theodore ROOSEVELT to the presidency in 1901. A proud patriot, he sought to make the United States a great power in the world. In 1903 he aided Panama in becoming independent of Colombia, then secured from Panama the right for the United States to build and control a canal through the isthmus. In 1904, in the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, he asserted the right of the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of Western Hemisphere nations to prevent "chronic wrongdoing." The following year his good offices helped end the Russo-Japanese War. Having much strengthened the navy, Roosevelt sent (1907) the Great White Fleet on a spectacular round-the-world cruise to display American power.

#  Progressivism at Home

Meanwhile, the Progressive Era was also underway in domestic politics. City governments were transformed, becoming relatively honest and efficient; social workers labored to improve slum housing, health, and education; and in many states reform movements democratized, purified, and humanized government. Under Roosevelt the national government strengthened or created regulatory agencies that exerted increasing influence over business enterprise: the Hepburn Act (1906) reinforced the Interstate Commerce Commission; the Forest Service, under Gifford PINCHOT from 1898 to 1910, guided lumbering companies in the conservation of--and more rational and efficient exploitation of--woodland resources; the Pure Food and Drug Act (1906; see PURE FOOD AND DRUG LAWS) attempted to protect consumers from fraudulent labeling and adulteration of products. Beginning in 1902, Roosevelt also used the Justice Department and lawsuits (or the threat of them) to mount a revived assault on monopoly under the Sherman Anti-Trust Law. William Howard TAFT, his successor as president (1909-13), drew back in his policies, continuing only the antitrust campaign. He approved passage of the 16TH AMENDMENT (the income tax amendment, 1913), however; in time it would transform the federal government by giving it access to enormous revenues.

Republicans were split in the election of 1912. The regular nomination went to Taft, and a short-lived PROGRESSIVE PARTY was formed to run Theodore Roosevelt. Democrat Woodrow WILSON (1913-21) was therefore able to win the presidency. Attacking corporate power, he won a drastic lowering of the tariff (1913) and establishment of a Tariff Commission (1916); creation of the FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM (1913) to supervise banking and currency; a broadened antimonopoly program under the CLAYTON ANTI-TRUST ACT (1914); control over the hours of labor on the railroads (Adamson Act, 1916); and creation of a body to ensure fair and open competition in business (Fair Trade Commission, 1914).

During the Progressive Era, southern governments imposed a wide range of JIM CROW LAWS on black people, using the rationale that such legalization of segregation resulted in a more orderly, systematic electoral system and society. Many of the steps that had been taken toward racial equality during the Reconstruction period were thus reversed. The federal government upheld the principle of racial segregation in the U.S. Supreme Court case PLESSY V. FERGUSON (1896), as long as blacks were provided with "separate but equal" facilities. In the face of the rigidly segregated society that confronted them, blacks themselves were divided concerning the appropriate course of action. Since 1895, Booker T. WASHINGTON had urged that blacks should not actively agitate for equality, but should acquire craft skills, work industriously, and convince whites of their abilities. W. E. B. DU BOIS insisted instead (in The Souls of Black Folk, 1903) that black people ceaselessly protest Jim Crow laws, demand education in the highest professions as well as in crafts, and work for complete social integration. In 1910 the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE (NAACP) was founded to advance these ideals.

#  Intervention and World War

President Taft continued to stress the economic aspects of Roosevelt's interventionist spirit. Under Taft's foreign policy (called dollar diplomacy) U.S. firms were encouraged to increase investments in countries bordering the Caribbean in the hope that the American economic presence would ensure political stability there. President Wilson went a step further, seeking not simply to maintain order, but to advance democracy and self-rule. In 1915 he sent troops into Haiti to put an end to the chaos of revolution--and to protect U.S. investments there--and in 1916 he did the same in the Dominican Republic; the two countries were made virtual protectorates of the United States. With Nicaragua he achieved the same end by diplomacy. In hope of tumbling the Mexican dictator Victoriano Huerta, Wilson at first denied him diplomatic recognition, then in April 1914 sent troops to occupy the Mexican port city of Veracruz and keep from Huerta its import revenues. The Mexicans were deeply offended, and in November 1914, Wilson withdrew American forces. The bloody civil war that racked Mexico until 1920 sent the first large migration of Mexicans, perhaps a million people, into the United States (see CHICANO).

After the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Wilson sought vainly to bring peace. In early 1917, however, Germany's unrestricted use of submarine attacks against neutral as well as Allied shipping inflamed American opinion for war (see LUSITANIA). Wilson decided that if the United States was to have any hope of influencing world affairs, it was imperative that it enter the war and fight to protect democracy against what he called German autocracy.

America's entry into the war (April 1917) was the climax of the Progressive Era: Wilson's aim was the extension of democracy and the creation of a just world order. In January 1918 he issued his FOURTEEN POINTS as a proposed basis for peace: freedom of the seas and removal of all barriers to trade; an end to secret diplomacy; general disarmament; self-government for the submerged nationalities in the German and Austro- Hungarian empires; and a league of nations. The addition of more than a million American troops to the Allied armies turned the balance against the Germans in 1918, and an armistice on November 11 ended the war. At the PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE, however, Wilson failed in much of his program, for the other Allies were not interested in a "peace without victory." The British would not agree to freedom of the seas; tariffs did not tumble; self-determination was often violated; key negotiations were kept secret; but in the end Wilson obtained his greatest objective, establishment of the League of Nations to provide collective security against future aggression. Many at home, however, preferred to return to America's traditional isolation from world affairs. When Wilson tried imperiously to force the Senate to accept the entire treaty, he failed. The United States never became a member of the League of Nations.

 THE UNITED STATES TURNS INWARD: THE 1920S AND 1930S

After its participation in the conflagration then known as the Great War, the American nation was ready to turn inward and concentrate on domestic affairs (a "return to normalcy," as 1920 presidential candidate Warren Harding called it). Private concerns preoccupied most Americans during the 1920s until the Great Depression of the next decade, when increasing numbers turned, in their collective misfortune, to government for solutions to economic problems that challenged the very basis of U.S. capitalistic society.

#  The 1920s: Decade of Optimism

By the 1920s innovative forces thrusting into American life were creating a new way of living. The automobile and the hard- surfaced road produced mobility and a blurring of the traditional rural-urban split. The radio and motion pictures inaugurated a national culture, one built on new, urban values. The 19TH AMENDMENT (1920) gave women the vote in national politics and symbolized their persistence in efforts to break out of old patterns of domesticity. The war had accelerated their entrance into business, industry, and the professions and their adoption of practices, such as drinking and smoking, traditionally considered masculine. So, too, young people turned to new leaders and values and sought unorthodox dress, recreations, and morals.

Traditional WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) America fought the new ways. The adoption of PROHIBITION in 1919 (with ratification of the 18TH AMENDMENT) had been a victory of Yankee moral values over those of immigrants, but now many of the great cities practically ignored the measure. The Russian Revolution of 1917 sent a Red Scare shivering through the country in 1919-20; suspicion centered on labor unions as alleged instruments of Moscow. The KU KLUX KLAN, stronger in the northern Republican countryside than in the South, attacked the so-called New Negro, who returned from the fighting in France with a new sense of personal dignity (the HARLEM RENAISSANCE expressed this spirit through the arts), and the millions of Roman Catholics and Jews who had been flooding into the country since the 1890s. The Immigration Law of 1924 established a quota system that discriminated against all groups except northern and western Europeans. In 1925 the spectacular SCOPES TRIAL in Dayton, Tenn., convicted a high school science teacher of presenting Darwinian theories of evolution, which fundamentalist Protestants bitterly opposed.

New ideas, however, continued to inundate the country, and optimism remained high. The U.S. population delighted in the "miracles" that new inventions had brought them--electric lights, airplanes, new communication systems. The solo flight to Paris of Charles LINDBERGH in 1927 seemed to capture the spirit of the age. The business community was praised for its values and productivity. Henry Ford (see FORD family) and his system of cheap mass production of automobiles for people of modest incomes was regarded as symbolic of the new era.

Three Republican presidents occupied the White House during the 1920s. Warren HARDING, a conservative, was swept into office by a landslide victory in 1920. He proved an inept president, and his administration was racked by scandals, including that of TEAPOT DOME. Calvin COOLIDGE, who succeeded to the office on Harding's death (1923), worshiped business as much as he detested government. Herbert HOOVER, an engineer, brought to the presidency (1929-33) a deep faith in the essential soundness of capitalism, which to him represented the fullest expression of individualism. In 1920 the U.S. census showed, for the first time, that a majority of Americans lived in cities of 2,500 people or more.

#  The 1930s: Decade of Depression

The stock market crash of October 1929 initiated a long economic decline that accelerated into a world catastrophe, the DEPRESSION OF THE 1930s. By 1933, 14 million Americans were unemployed, industrial production was down to one-third of its 1929 level, and national income had dropped by more than half. In the presence of deep national despair, Democratic challenger Franklin D. ROOSEVELT easily defeated Hoover in the 1932 presidential election. After his inauguration, the NEW DEAL exploded in a whirlwind of legislation.

A new era commenced in American history, one in which a social democratic order similar to that of Western European countries appeared. The federal government under Roosevelt (and the presidency itself) experienced a vast expansion in its authority, especially over the economy. Roosevelt had a strong sense of community; he distrusted unchecked individualism and sympathized with suffering people. He nourished, however, no brooding rancor against the U.S. system. He sought to save capitalism, not supplant it.

Recovery was Roosevelt's first task. In the First New Deal (1933-35) he attempted to muster a spirit of emergency and rally all interests behind a common effort in which something was provided for everyone. Excessive competition and production were blamed for the collapse. Therefore, business proprietors and farmers were allowed to cooperate in establishing prices that would provide them with a profitable return and induce an upward turn (under the NATIONAL RECOVERY ADMINISTRATION and the AGRICULTURAL ADJUSTMENT ADMINISTRATION). By 1935, however, 10 million were still unemployed, the economy seemed lodged at a new plateau, and the U.S. Supreme Court was ruling such agencies unconstitutional.

The Second New Deal (1935-38) was more antibusiness and proconsumer. Roosevelt turned to vastly increased relief spending (under the WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION) to pump up consumer buying power. In 1933 he had decided to take the nation off the gold standard, except in international trade. Setting the price at which the government would buy gold at $35 an ounce, he induced so massive a flow of gold into the country that its basic stock of precious metal increased by one-third by 1940 (expanding by much more the currency available in the economy). This monetary policy and the spending to aid the unemployed succeeded in moving the economy toward recovery before 1940, when the impact of war-induced buying from Europe accelerated such movement.

The impact of the New Deal was perhaps strongest and most lasting in its basic reform measures, which profoundly altered the American system. Farm prices were supported and farm plantings centrally planned; the money supply became a federal, not private, responsibility under a strengthened Federal Reserve Board; and stock exchanges were put under regulation of the SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION. The FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION insured bank deposits, and banking practices were closely supervised under the Banking Act of 1933; the NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT made relations between employers and employees a matter of public concern and control; and under the direction of agencies such as the TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY government facilities supplied electrical power to entire regions, providing a standard for private utilities. Private utility monopolies were broken apart and placed under public regulation; antitrust efforts were reenergized; and economic recessions, then and afterward, were monitored by the federal government, which was ready to increase public spending to provide employment and ward off the onset of another depression.

For the majority of the population, New Deal legislation defined minimum standards of living: the Fair Labor Standards Act set MINIMUM WAGE and maximum hour limitations and included a prohibition on child labor in interstate commerce; the Social Security Act (see SOCIAL SECURITY) made provisions for old-age and disability pensions, unemployment insurance, monthly payments to mothers living alone with dependent children, and direct assistance to the blind and crippled.

In addition, the New Deal helped make it possible for organized unions to gain higher wages; in 1938 the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was formed; members were organized by industry rather than by craft. The New Deal also provided a sense of confidence that in a time of disaster the federal government would take positive action.

Meanwhile, totalitarian movements abroad were inducing world crisis. Congress, mirroring public opinion, had grown disenchanted with the U.S. entry into World War I. This spirit of isolationism led to the passage (1935-37) of a series of neutrality acts. They required an arms embargo that would deny the sale of munitions to belligerents during a time of international war and prohibited loans to belligerents and the travel of Americans on ships owned by belligerents. Congress thus hoped to prevent involvements like those of 1914-17.

#  A WORLD POWER

The spirit of isolationism eroded steadily as Americans watched the aggressive moves of Adolf Hitler and his allies. President Roosevelt and the American people finally concluded that the United States could not survive as a nation, nor could Western civilization endure, if Hitler and fascism gained dominance over Europe. During the world war that followed, the American nation rose to the status of a major world power, a position that was not abandoned but confirmed in the cold-war years of the late 1940s and the 1950s.

#  Total War: 1941-45

In September 1940, Congress established the first peacetime draft in American history, and 6 months later it authorized Roosevelt to transfer munitions to Great Britain, now standing practically alone against Hitler, by a procedure called LEND- LEASE. On Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese reacted to stiffening American diplomacy against its expansion into Southeast Asia by attacking the U.S. fleet at PEARL HARBOR in the Hawaiian Islands. This thrust was aimed at immobilizing American power long enough to allow the establishment of a wide imperial Japanese perimeter including all of the western Pacific and China, henceforth to be defended against all comers. Japan, however, in one stroke had succeeded in scuttling American isolationist sentiment, forcing the United States into World War II, and unifying the American people as never before in total war.

The first American military decision was to concentrate on defeating Hitler while fighting a holding action in the Pacific. The next was to form an alliance with Great Britain so close that even military commands were jointly staffed. The year 1942 was devoted to halting, after many defeats, the outward spread of Japanese power and to keeping Hitler's forces from overwhelming America's British and Soviet allies. Large shipments of munitions went to both allies. In November an American force invaded North Africa; it joined the British in defeating the German armies in that region by May 1943.

In 2 months the Allies were fighting the Germans in Sicily and Italy; at the same time U.S. forces in the Pacific were pushing in toward the Japanese home islands by means of an island- hopping offensive. On the long Russian front, German armies were being defeated and pushed back toward their borders. In June 1944 a huge Allied force landed on the French coast, an invasion preceded by 2 years of intense day-and-night bombing of Germany by British and American aircraft. By August 1944, Paris was recaptured. Hitler's empire was crumbling; clouds of bombers were raining destruction on German cities; and on Apr. 30, 1945, with the Soviet troops just a few miles from Berlin, Hitler committed suicide. Peace in Europe followed shortly.

The Pacific war continued, the Japanese home islands being rendered practically defenseless by July 1945. American aerial attacks burned out city after city. In April, Harry S. TRUMAN had succeeded to the presidency on Roosevelt's death. Now, advised that the alternative would be an invasion in which multitudes would perish, including many thousands of young Americans, he authorized use of the recently tested atomic bomb. On Aug. 6, the city of Hiroshima was obliterated; on Aug. 9, the same fate came to Nagasaki. Within a week, a cease-fire (which later research suggests was reachable without atomic attack) was achieved.

The political shape of the postwar world was set at the YALTA CONFERENCE (February 1945) between Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill. Soviet occupation of Eastern European countries overrun by the Red Army was accepted, in return for a pledge to allow democratic governments to rise within them. Soviet and Allied occupation zones in Germany were established, with Berlin, deep in the Soviet zone, to be jointly administered. In return for Soviet assistance in the invasion of Japan (which was eventually not needed), it was agreed that certain possessions in the Far East and rights in Manchuria, lost to the Japanese long before, would be restored to the USSR. Soon it was clear that the kind of democratic government envisioned by the Americans was not going to be allowed in the East European countries under Soviet control. Nor, as the Soviets pointed out, was the United States ready to admit the Soviets to any role in the occupation and government of Japan, whose internal constitution and economy were rearranged to fit American desires under Gen. Douglas MACARTHUR.

#  Cold-War Years

The breach widened steadily. Charges and countercharges were directed back and forth, the Soviets and Americans interpreting each other's actions in the worst possible light. Americans became convinced that the Soviets were thrusting out in every direction, seeking to communize not only the Soviet-occupied countries, but also Turkey, Greece, and Western Europe. In February 1946, Stalin declared in Moscow that there could never be a lasting peace with capitalism. Shortly thereafter, Churchill warned of the "iron curtain" that had descended across the middle of Europe. The COLD WAR had begun.

In March 1947, Truman asked Congress for funds to shore up Turkey and Greece, both under Soviet pressure, and announced the Truman Doctrine: that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." Then the MARSHALL PLAN (named for George C. MARSHALL, U.S. chief of staff during the war and at this time secretary of state), approved by Congress in April 1948, sent $12 billion to the devastated countries of Europe to help them rebuild and fend off the despair on which communism was believed to feed.

True to its Democratic tradition, the Truman administration stressed multilateral diplomacy; that is, the building of an international order based on joint decision making. Nationalism, it was believed, must be tamed. The United Nations received strong American support. Meanwhile, the United States continued the drive toward a lowering of world tariffs (begun in the 1930s). During the war, all recipients of Lend-Lease had been required to commit themselves to lowered tariffs. These commitments were internationally formalized in 1947 in the GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE, when 23 nations participated in an extensive mutual lowering of trade barriers. In 1948, at American initiative, the ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES was established to provide a regional multilateral consultative body in the Western Hemisphere. Within Europe, the Marshall Plan required the formation of Europe-wide organizations, leading eventually to the Common Market.

Toward the USSR, the basic American policy was that known as containment: building "situations of strength" around its vast perimeter to prevent the outward spread of communism. Angered Americans blamed the USSR for world disorder and came to regard the peace of the entire world as a U.S. responsibility. After their immense war effort, many Americans believed that the United States could accomplish whatever it desired to do. Also, having defeated one form of tyranny, fascism, and now being engaged in resisting another, Stalinist communism, the American people assumed with few questions that, since their cause was just, whatever they did in its name was right. Critics of national policy were harshly condemned.

A series of East-West crises, most dramatically the Berlin Blockade of 1948-49, led to the creation (April 1949) of the NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION. The NATO alliance sought to link the United States militarily to Western Europe (including Greece and Turkey) by making an attack against one member an attack against all. As Europe recovered its prosperity, the focus of East-West confrontation shifted to Asia, where the British, French, and Dutch empires were collapsing and the Communist revolution in China was moving toward its victory (October 1949). In June 1950 the North Korean army invaded South Korea. The United Nations Security Council (which the Soviets were then boycotting) called on UN members jointly to repel this attack. Shortly afterward, a multinational force under Gen. Douglas MacArthur was battling to turn back North Korean forces in the KOREAN WAR. As the UN army swept northward to the Manchurian border, Chinese forces flooded southward to resist them, and a long, bloody seesaw war ensued. An armistice was not signed until July 1953, following 150,000 American casualties and millions of deaths among the Koreans and Chinese.

#  Domestic Developments during the Truman Years

In 1945, President Truman called on Congress to launch another program of domestic reform, but the nation was indifferent. It was riding a wave of affluence such as it had never dreamed of in the past. Tens of millions of people found themselves moving upward into a middle-class way of life. The cold war, and the pervasive fear of an atomic war, induced a trend toward national unity and a downplaying of social criticism. The Atomic Energy Act of 1946 nationalized nuclear power, putting it under civilian control, but no other bold departures were made. What fascinated Americans was the so-called baby boom--a huge increase in the birthrate (the population was at 150 million by 1950 and 179 million by 1960)--and the need to house new families and teach their children.

In the presence of rapidly rising inflation, labor unions called thousands of strikes, leading in 1948 to passage of the Taft-Hartley Act (see LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS ACT), which limited the powers of unions, declared certain of their tactics "unfair labor practices," and gave the president power to secure 80-day "cooling off periods" by court injunction. As union benefits increased nationwide, however, industrial warfare quieted. In 1948 the United Automobile Workers won automatic "cost of living" pay increases in their contracts and in 1955 the guaranteed annual wage. In 1955 merger negotiations were completed for the formation of the AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS (AFL-CIO); more than 85 percent of all union members were now in one organization.

Fears that Russian communism was taking over the entire world were pervasive during the Truman years. Soviet spy rings were discovered in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. In 1948-50 a sensational trial for perjury led to the conviction of a former State Department official, Alger HISS, on the grounds that while in the department he had been part of a Communist cell and had passed secrets to the Soviets. In 1950 a Soviet spy ring was uncovered in the Los Alamos atomic installation. These events, together with the explosion (1949) of a Soviet atomic bomb and the victory (1949) of the Communists in China, prompted a widespread conviction that subversive conspiracies within the American government were leading toward Soviet triumph.

In February 1950, Republican Sen. Joseph R. MCCARTHY of Wisconsin began a 4-year national crisis, during which he insisted repeatedly that he had direct evidence of such conspiracies in the federal government, even in the army. The entire country seemed swept up in a hysteria in which anyone left of center was attacked as a subversive. A program to root out alleged security risks in the national government led to a massive collapse in morale in its departments; it destroyed the State Department's corps of experts on Far Eastern and Soviet affairs. The Truman administration's practice of foreign policy was brought practically to a halt. In 1952, Dwight D. EISENHOWER, nationally revered supreme commander in Europe during World War II, was elected president (1953-61) on the Republican ticket, but soon McCarthy was attacking him as well for running a "weak, immoral, and cowardly" foreign policy. In 1954 a long and dramatic series of congressional hearings, the first to be nationally televised, destroyed McCarthy's credibility. He was censured by the Senate, and a measure of national stability returned.

#  The Eisenhower Years

Eisenhower declared himself uninterested in repealing the New Deal, but he was socially and economically conservative and his presidency saw the enactment of few reforms. His appointment of Earl WARREN as chief justice of the Supreme Court, however, led to a Court that suddenly seized so bold and active a role in national life that many called it revolutionary. During Warren's long tenure (1953-69), the Court swept away the legal basis for racial discrimination; ruled that every person must be represented equally in state legislatures and in the U.S. House of Representatives; changed criminal-justice procedures by ensuring crucial rights to the accused; broadened the artist's right to publish works shocking to the general public; and in major ways limited the government's ability to penalize individuals for their beliefs or associations.

No decision of the Warren Court was more historic than that in BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA, KANSAS (1954), which ruled unanimously that racial segregation in the public schools was unconstitutional. This great decision--followed by others that struck down segregation in all public facilities and in elections and marriage laws--sparked a revolution in race- relations law. The separate-but-equal principle was cast aside, and the Second Reconstruction could get underway. Now black Americans could charge that the statutory discrimination that tied them down and kept them in a secondary caste was illegal, a fact that added enormous moral weight to their cause. Resistance by southern whites to desegregated public education would make the advance of that cause frustratingly slow, however. By 1965 black children had been admitted to white schools in fewer than 25 percent of southern school districts. The fight for racial equality was not limited to the South, for by 1960 only 60 percent of black Americans remained there; 73 percent of them also lived in cities: they were no longer simply a scattered, powerless rural labor force in the South.

In 1957 the Soviet government launched its first orbiting satellite, Sputnik, and a national controversy erupted. Why are we so far behind in the crucial area of rocketry? Americans asked. Many critics replied that weaknesses in public education, especially in science and technology, were the root cause. In 1958, Congress enacted the first general education law since the Morrill Act of 1862--the NATIONAL DEFENSE EDUCATION ACT. It authorized $1 billion for education from primary level through university graduate training, inaugurating a national policy that became permanent thereafter and that resulted in the spending of huge sums and the transformation of American public education.

Eisenhower's foreign policy, under Secretary of State John Foster DULLES, was more nationalist and unilateral than Truman's. American-dominated alliances ringed the Soviet and Chinese perimeters. Little consultation with Western European allies preceded major American initiatives, and in consequence the United States and Western Europe began drifting apart. Persistent recessions in the American economy hobbled the national growth rate while the Soviet and Western European economies surged dramatically. An aggressive Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet premier, trumpeted that communism would bury capitalism and boasted of Moscow's powerful intercontinental missiles while encouraging so-called wars of liberation in Southeast Asia and elsewhere.

 THE UNITED STATES SINCE 1960: NEW CHALLENGES TO THEAMERICAN SYSTEM

During the 1960s and 1970s cold-war concerns gave way as attention focused on social and cultural rebellions at home. Involvement in a long and indecisive war in Asia and scandals that reached into the White House eroded the confidence of many Americans in their country's values and system of government. The United States survived such challenges, however, and emerged from the 1970s subdued but intact.

#  The Exuberant Kennedy Years

The Democratic senator John F. KENNEDY, asserting that he wanted to "get the country moving again,"won the presidency in a narrow victory over Vice-President Richard M. NIXON in 1960. The charismatic Kennedy stimulated a startling burst of national enthusiasm and aroused high hopes among the young and the disadvantaged. Within 3 years his Peace Corps (see ACTION) sent about 10,000 Americans (mostly young people) abroad to work in 46 countries. Kennedy's ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS proposed a 10-year plan to transform the economies of the Latin American nations (partially successful, it sunk out of sight during the Vietnam War). He also proposed massive tariff cuts between the increasingly protectionist European Common Market and the world at large. (The so-called Kennedy Round of tariff negotiations concluded in 1967 with the largest and widest tariff cuts in modern history.) In June 1961, Kennedy pulled together the disparate, disorganized space effort by giving it a common goal: placing an American on the moon. Responding enthusiastically, Congress poured out billions of dollars to finance the project. (After the APOLLO PROGRAM succeeded, on July 20, 1969, in landing astronauts on the moon, the space effort remained in motion, if at a reduced pace.)

Kennedy blundered into a major defeat within 3 months of entering the White House. He kept in motion a plan sponsored by the CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) and begun by the Eisenhower administration to land an invasion force in Cuba, which under Fidel Castro had become a Communist state and a Soviet state. The BAY OF PIGS INVASION failed, utterly and completely. The force was quickly smashed when it struggled onto the beaches of the Bay of Pigs in April 1961. During the succeeding 2 years, Kennedy labored to break the rigid cold-war relationship with the USSR. In October 1962, however, he discovered that the Soviets were rapidly building missile emplacements in Cuba. Surrounding the island with a naval blockade, he induced the Soviets to desist, and the sites were eventually dismantled. The relieved world discovered that, when pushed to the crisis point, the two major powers could stop short of nuclear war. This CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS effectively ended the cold war.

The atomic bomb now seemed defused, and Moscow seemed ready to negotiate on crucial issues (perhaps, it was suggested 15 years later, to give the Soviets time to build a far more powerful armaments system). A new and more relaxed relationship developed slowly into the U.S.-Soviet DETENTE that emerged in the late 1960s and persisted through the 1970s. A test-ban treaty, the Moscow Agreement (see ARMS CONTROL), signed in October 1963 symbolized the opening of the new relationship. Three of the world's nuclear powers (Great Britain, the United States, and the USSR--the fourth, France, did not sign) agreed to end the detonation of atomic explosions in the atmosphere.

In this new environment of security, American culture, long restrained by the sense of team spirit and conformity that the crises of depression, war, and cold war had induced, broke loose into multiplying swift changes. People now began talking excitedly of "doing their own thing." The media were filled with discussions of the rapidly changing styles of dress and behavior among the young; of the "new woman" (or the "liberated woman," as she became known); of new sexual practices and attitudes and new styles of living. The sense of community faded. Romanticism shaped the new mood, with its emphasis on instinct and impulse rather than reason, ecstatic release rather than restraint, individualism and self-gratification rather than group discipline.

#  Assassination and Cultural Rebellion

The excitement of Kennedy's presidency and his calls to youth to serve the nation had inspired the young, both black and white. His assassination in November 1963 shocked and dismayed Americans of all ages, and the psychological links he had fashioned between "the system" and young people began to dissolve. His successor, Lyndon B. JOHNSON, later shouldering the onus of an unpopular war, was unable to build a reservoir of trust among the young. As the large demographic group that had constituted the "baby boom" of the post-World War II years reached college age, it became the "wild generation" of student radicals and "hippies" who rebelled against political and cultural authority.

Styles of life changed swiftly. Effective oral contraceptives, Playboy magazine, and crucial Supreme Court decisions helped make the United States, long one of the world's most prudish nations in sexual matters, one of its most liberated. The drug culture mushroomed. Communal living groups of "dropouts" who rejected mass culture received widespread attention. People more than 30 years old reacted angrily against the flamboyant youth (always a small minority of the young generation) who flouted traditional standards, glorified self-indulgence, and scorned discipline.

In the second half of the 1960s this generation gap widened as many of the young (along with large numbers of older people) questioned U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Peaceful protests led to violent confrontations, and differences concerning styles of life blurred with disagreements about the degree of allegiance that individuals owed to the American system. In 1968 the assassinations of the Rev. Martin Luther KING, Jr., and President Kennedy's brother Robert F. KENNEDY seemed to confirm suspicions that dark currents of violence underlay many elements in American society.

#  Race Relations during the 1960s and 1970s

Race relations was one area with great potential for violence, although many black leaders stressed nonviolence. Since the mid -1950s, King and others had been leading disciplined mass protests of black Americans in the South against segregation, emphasizing appeals to the conscience of the white majority. The appeals of these leaders and judicial rulings on the illegality of segregationist practices were vital parts of the Second Reconstruction, which transformed the role and status of black Americans, energizing every other cultural movement as well. At the same time, southern white resistance to the ending of segregation, with its attendant violence, stimulated a northern-dominated Congress to enact (1957) the first civil rights law since 1875, creating the Commission on Civil Rights and prohibiting interference with the right to vote (blacks were still massively disenfranchised in many southern states). A second enactment (1960) provided federal referees to aid blacks in registering for and voting in federal elections. In 1962, President Kennedy dispatched troops to force the University of Mississippi (a state institution) to admit James Meredith, a black student. At the same time, he forbade racial or religious discrimination in federally financed housing.

Kennedy then asked Congress to enact a law to guarantee equal access to all public accommodations, forbid discrimination in any state program receiving federal aid, and outlaw discrimination in employment and voting. After Kennedy's death, President Johnson prodded Congress into enacting (August 1965) a voting-rights bill that eliminated all qualifying tests for registration that had as their objective limiting the right to vote to whites. Thereafter, massive voter registration drives in the South sent the proportion of registered blacks spurting upward from less than 30 to over 53 percent in 1966.

The civil rights phase of the black revolution had reached its legislative and judicial summit. Then, from 1964 to 1968, more than a hundred American cities were swept by RACE RIOTS, which included dynamitings, guerrilla warfare, and huge conflagrations, as the anger of the northern black community at its relatively low income, high unemployment, and social exclusion exploded. At this violent expression of hopelessness the northern white community drew back rapidly from its reformist stance on the race issue (the so-called white backlash). In 1968, swinging rightward in its politics, the nation chose as president Richard M. Nixon, who was not in favor of using federal power to aid the disadvantaged. Individual advancement, he believed, had to come by individual effort.

Nonetheless, fundamental changes continued in relations between white and black. Although the economic disparity in income did not disappear--indeed, it widened, as unemployment within black ghettos and among black youths remained at a high level in the 1970s--white-dominated American culture opened itself significantly toward black people. Entrance requirements for schools and colleges were changed; hundreds of communities sought to work out equitable arrangements to end de facto segregation in the schools (usually with limited success, and to the accompaniment of a white flight to different school districts); graduate programs searched for black applicants; and integration in jobs and in the professions expanded. Blacks moved into the mainstream of the party system, for the voting- rights enactments transformed national politics. The daily impact of television helped make blacks, seen in shows and commercial advertisements, seem an integral part of a pluralistic nation.

Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans were also becoming more prominent in American life. Reaching the level of 9 million by the 1960s, Spanish-surnamed Americans had become the second largest ethnic minority; they, too, were asserting their right to equitable treatment in politics, in culture, and in economic affairs.

#  Kennedy-Johnson Legislative Accomplishments

In his first 3 months of office, Kennedy sent 39 messages and letters to Congress asking for reform legislation--messages dealing with health care, education, housing and community development, civil rights, transportation, and many other areas. His narrow margin of victory in 1960, however, had not seemed a mandate for change, and an entrenched coalition of Republicans and conservative southern Democrats in Congress had prevented the achievement of many of Kennedy's legislative goals by the time of his death. Johnson, who in 1964 won an enormous victory over the Republican presidential candidate, Barry GOLDWATER, and carried on his coattails a large Democratic congressional majority, proceeded with consummate political skill to enact this broad program.

Johnson launched his WAR ON POVERTY, which focused on children and young people, providing them with better education and remedial training, and Congress created a domestic Peace Corps (VISTA). Huge sums went to the states for education. MEDICARE was enacted in 1965, providing millions of elderly Americans a kind of security from the costs of illness that they had never known before. Following Kennedy's Clean Air Act of 1963, the Water Quality Act of 1965 broadened the effort to combat pollution. New national parks were established, and a Wilderness Act to protect primeval regions was passed. The Economic Development Administration moved into depressed areas, such as Appalachia. Billions were appropriated for urban redevelopment and public housing.

#  At War in Vietnam

The VIETNAM WAR, however, destroyed the Johnson presidency. The United States had been the protector of South Vietnam since 1954, when the Geneva Conference had divided Vietnam into a communist North and a pro-Western South. By 1961 an internal revolution had brought the South Vietnamese regime to the point of toppling. President Kennedy, deciding that South Vietnam was salvageable and that he could not allow another communist victory, sent in 15,000 military advisors and large supplies of munitions. By 1964 it was clear that a collapse was again impending (the CIA warned that the reason was the regime's harshness and corruption), and Johnson decided to escalate American involvement. After his electoral victory that year, he began aerial bombardment of North Vietnam, which persisted almost continuously for 3 years to no apparent result other than the destruction of large parts of the North and heavy loss of life. Meanwhile, the world at large (and many Americans) condemned the U.S. military actions.

In April 1965, Johnson began sending American ground troops to Vietnam, the total reaching nearly 550,000 in early 1969. (In that year alone, with a full-scale naval, aerial, and ground war being waged in Vietnam, total expenditures there reached $100 billion.) Huge regions in the South were laid waste by American troops in search of hostile forces. Still victory eluded. Responding to mass public protests that went on year after year and put the United States in a state of near- insurrection--and in recognition of fruitless American casualties, which in 1967 passed 100,000--Johnson decided in March 1968 to halt the bombing of the North and to begin deescalation. At the same time he announced that he would not run for reelection. From being an immensely popular president, he had descended to a position as one of the most hated and reviled occupants of that office.

#  Foreign Policy under Nixon

When Richard M. Nixon became president in 1969, he profoundly changed U.S. foreign policy. The new theme was withdrawal from commitments around the globe. Nixon revived the kind of nationalist, unilateral foreign policy that, since Theodore Roosevelt, presidents of his political tradition had preferred. With Henry KISSINGER as an advisor and later as secretary of state, he began a kind of balance-of-power diplomacy. He preferred to keep the United States free of lasting commitments (even to former allies) so that it could move back and forth between the other four power centers--Europe, the USSR, China, and Japan--and maintain world equilibrium.

Nixon soon announced his "Vietnamization" policy, which meant a slow withdrawal of American forces and a heavy building up of the South Vietnam army. Nonetheless, in the 3 years 1969-71, 15,000 more Americans died fighting in Vietnam. In April 1970, Nixon launched a huge invasion of Cambodia in a vain attempt to clear out communist "sanctuaries."

Then, most dramatically, he deflected world attention by ending the long American quarantine of Communist China, visiting Peking in February 1972 for general discussions on all matters of mutual concern--a move that led to the establishment (1979) of diplomatic relations. At the same time, he continued the heavy bombing attacks on North Vietnam that he had reinstituted in late 1971. He brushed aside as "without binding force or effect"the congressional attempt to halt American fighting in Vietnam by repealing the TONKIN GULF RESOLUTION of 1964, which had authorized Johnson to begin military operations. Nixon asserted that as commander in chief he could do anything he deemed necessary to protect the lives of American troops still in Vietnam.

In May 1972, Nixon became the first American president to consult with Soviet leaders in Moscow, leaving with major agreements relating to trade, cooperation in space programs and other fields of technology, cultural exchanges, and many other areas. He became more popular as prosperity waxed and as negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris seemed to be bringing the Vietnam War to a halt. In 1972 the Democrats nominated for the presidency Sen. George MCGOVERN of South Dakota, a man who for years had advocated women's rights, black equality, and greater power for the young. With the nation's increasingly conservative cultural mood and the trend in Vietnam, Nixon won a massive landslide victory. In January 1973, Nixon announced a successful end to the Vietnamese negotiations: a cease-fire was established and an exchange of prisoners provided for.

#  Watergate

Few presidents could ever have been more confident of a successful second term than Richard Nixon at this point. But before the year 1973 was out, his administration had fallen into the gravest scandal in American history. By March 1974 the stunning events of the WATERGATE crisis and associated villainies had led to the resignation of more than a dozen high officials--including the vice-president (for the acceptance of graft)--and the indictment or conviction of many others. Their criminal acts included burglary, forgery, illegal wiretapping and electronic surveillance, perjury, obstruction of justice, bribery, and many other offenses.

These scandalous events had their roots in the long Democratic years beginning with Roosevelt, when the American presidency had risen in a kind of solitary majesty to become overwhelmingly the most powerful agency of government. All that was needed for grave events to occur was the appearance in the White House of individuals who would put this immense power to its full use. Lyndon Johnson was such a man, for he was driven by gargantuan dreams. One result was America's disastrous war in Vietnam. Richard Nixon, too, believed in the imperial authority of the presidency. He envisioned politics as an arena in which he represented true Americanism and his critics the forces of subversion.

At least from 1969, Nixon operated on the principle that, at his direction, federal officials could violate the law. On June 17, 1972, members of his Special Investigations Unit (created without congressional authorization) were arrested while burglarizing the national Democratic party offices in the Watergate office-and-apartment complex in Washington, D.C.

A frantic effort then began, urged on by the president, to cover up links between the Watergate burglars and the executive branch. This cover-up constituted an obstruction of justice, a felony. This fact, however, was kept hidden through many months of congressional hearings (begun in May 1973) into the burglaries. Televised, they were watched by multitudes. The American people learned of millions of dollars jammed into office safes and sluiced about from hand to hand to finance shady dealings, of elaborate procedures for covering tracks and destroying papers, and of tapes recording the president's conversations with his aides.

With Watergate eroding Nixon's prestige, Congress finally halted American fighting in Indochina by cutting off funds (after Aug. 15, 1973) to finance the bombing of Cambodia, which had continued after the Vietnam Peace Agreement. Thus, America's longest war was finally concluded. In November 1973, Congress passed, over the president's veto, the War Powers Act, sharply limiting the executive's freedom of action in initiating foreign wars. When Vice-President Spiro T. AGNEW resigned his office on Oct. 10, 1973, Nixon, with Senate ratification, appointed Gerald R. Ford to replace him.

On July 24, 1974, the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to deliver his Oval Office tapes to Congress. This order, in turn, led to the revelation that he had directly approved the cover-up. Informed by Republican congressional leaders of his certain conviction in forthcoming impeachment proceedings, Richard Nixon resigned the presidency on Aug. 9, 1974.

#  The Third Century Begins

As the nation approached its bicentennial anniversary under President Gerald R. FORD (1974-77), it was reassured that the Constitution had worked: a president guilty of grave offenses had been made peacefully to leave his office. The American people had become aware, however, in the Vietnam conflict, of the limits to their nation's strength and of questions as to the moral legitimacy of its purposes. They had also learned, in the Watergate scandal, of the danger of corruption of the republic's democratic values. The nation's cities were in grave difficulties; its nonwhite peoples still lagged far behind the whites in income and opportunity; unemployment seemed fixed at a level of more than 6 percent, which, for minorities and the young, translated into much higher figures, and inflation threatened to erode the buying power of everyone in the country.

Most of these problems continued to plague the American nation during the presidency (1977-81) of Jimmy CARTER, Democrat of Georgia, who defeated Ford in the 1976 election. Carter brought to the presidency an informality and sense of piety. He arranged negotiations for an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty (signed in 1979) and guided the Panama Canal treaty through narrow Senate approval (1978). Carter also had to deal with shortages of petroleum that threatened to bring the energy- hungry U.S. economy to a standstill, with soaring inflation and interest rates, with the taking (1979) of U.S. hostages by Iranian militants (see IRANIAN HOSTAGE CRISIS), and with an international crisis precipitated by Soviet intervention (1979) in Afghanistan. His popularity waned as problems remained unsolved, and in 1980 the voters turned overwhelmingly to the conservative Republican candidate, Ronald REAGAN.

Robert Kelley

#  The Reagan Era

The release of the U.S. hostages in Iran on the same day as Reagan's inauguration launched the new administration on a wave of euphoria. Aided by a torrent of goodwill following an attempt on his life in March 1981, Reagan persuaded the Congress to cut government spending for welfare, increase outlays for defense, reduce taxes, and deregulate private enterprise. His "supply side" economic policy (dubbed "Reaganomics" by the media) anticipated that lower taxes and a freer market would stimulate investment and that a prosperous, expanding economy would increase employment, reduce inflation, and provide enough government revenue to eliminate future budget deficits.

The "Reagan Revolution," combined with the tight money policies of the Federal Reserve System, initially dismayed those who hoped for a reversal of the economic stagnation of the 1970s. Although high interest rates helped cut inflation from more than 12 percent in 1980 to less than 7 percent in 1982, unemployment rose from 7 percent to 11 percent--the highest rate since 1940--and the annual federal deficit soared to $117 billion, almost twice as high as it had ever been. The United States experienced its worst recession since the 1930s. Beginning in 1983, however, the economy rebounded sharply. By the end of 1986, 11 million new jobs had been created, the consumer price index had dropped from 13.1 percent in 1979 to just 4.1 percent, and the Dow-Jones average had climbed to an all-time high.

The Reagan recovery did little for rural America or for the declining industrial regions of the Midwest. In the first half of the 1980s, 8.4 million people joined the ranks of the poor, an increase of 40 percent. Nearly 33 million Americans--one out of every seven--were reported as living below the poverty line. But the bulk of middle-class America, buoyed by low inflation and its own prosperity, gave the president high marks for his economic program. Conservatives were pleased with his appointments to the federal bench, his declarations of faith in traditional values, and his proud patriotism.

In practice, and often in response to congressional pressure, Reagan balanced his ardent anti-Communist rhetoric with generally restrained foreign-policy actions. He denounced the USSR as an "evil empire" but ended the embargo on grain sales to the Soviets imposed by President Carter after the invasion of Afghanistan. While presiding over the largest peacetime military buildup in U.S. history, he observed the still- unratified SALT II arms control treaty negotiated by his predecessor. He sent American troops to Lebanon as part of a peacekeeping force but withdrew them after 241 marines were killed in a bomb attack in October 1983.

Only in Central America and the Caribbean did the president's actions match his rhetoric. To quash a Communist revolt in El Salvador, Reagan committed military advisors and furnished financial aid to the Salvadoran government. Determined to oust Nicaragua's pro-Communist Sandinista government, he gave covert aid to antigovernment rebels--known as the contras--in defiance of a congressional ban on such aid. In 1983 he used military force to topple a pro-Cuban regime on the Caribbean island of Grenada.

Reagan and his running mate, George Bush, easily defeated their Democratic opponents, Walter MONDALE and Geraldine FERRARO, in 1984, but the Democrats maintained control of Congress and the president offered fewer domestic initiatives during his second term. Partisan wrangling over what parts of the budget to cut in order to reduce the staggering federal deficit led to passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act (1985), which mandated automatic, across-the-board spending cuts over a period of years. The Supreme Court declared the automatic cuts unconstitutional in 1986, however, and repeated failure by the president and Congress to agree on budget reductions kept the deficit at record levels. Disputes over the control of trade policy also worsened the imbalance of imports over exports, which rose to $161 billion in 1987.

Tax reductions and defense spending, however, kept the economy booming. Reagan boosted defense spending 35 percent above the 1980 level, and in 1986 he secured congressional approval for a major INCOME TAX reform law that further cut taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals and also reduced by 6 million the number of poorer taxpayers.

At the end of Reagan's tenure the GOP could boast that his administration had helped create 16.5 million new jobs, bring down the unemployment rate to a 17-year low, cut double-digit inflation down to about 4 percent, and raise the gross national product by one-third. Democrats, on the other hand, could criticize "Reaganomics" for promoting prosperity at the expense of the poor and the nation's future well-being. The number of people below the poverty line rose by 8 million, and their lot was made worse by cuts of nearly $50 billion in social-welfare programs. Reductions in subsidized housing from $30 billion in 1981 to $7 billion in 1988 made HOMELESSNESS part of the national lexicon, and the number of Americans without any health-care insurance rose to 37 million. By borrowing rather than taxing to rearm, Reagan mortgaged the financial future. The cost of servicing the national debt rose from 8.9 percent of all federal outlays in 1980 to 14.8 percent in 1989. Moreover, persistent trade and budget deficits made the country a debtor nation for the first time since 1914.

During its eight years in office, the administration had a significant impact on the composition of the federal judiciary. President Reagan appointed three conservatives to the Supreme Court and elevated conservative William Rehnquist to the position of chief justice. Overall, he filled about half of the 700 federal judgeships, most of them with conservative appointees.

A major scandal of Reagan's second term was the IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR, in which national security advisor John M. Poindexter, Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North, and other administration officials were involved in a secret scheme to sell arms to Iran, diverting some of the proceeds to the contra rebels in Nicaragua. Investigation of this affair by Congress in 1987 led to the prosecution of Poindexter and North, and damaged the administration's image.

Ironically, developments in foreign affairs during Ronald Reagan's second term led this most anti-Communist of presidents into a new, harmonious relationship with the Soviet Union and to sign the first superpower treaty that actually reduced nuclear armaments. Soviet leader Mikhail GORBACHEV, determined to relax tensions with the West, met with Reagan in 1985 and 1986; in 1987 they signed the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, and in 1988 a triumphant Reagan traveled to Moscow for a fourth summit and further arms-reduction talks.

#  The Bush Administration

The remarkable reduction in cold-war tensions, combined with the promise of continued prosperity with no increase in taxes, carried Republicans George BUSH and Dan QUAYLE to victory over Democratic candidates Michael DUKAKIS and Lloyd BENTSEN in 1988. Lacking his predecessor's strong personal following and facing a Democratic-controlled Congress, Bush sought to govern in a more moderate, middle-of-the-road way than Reagan. The rapid demise of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989-90 and upheaval in the USSR in 1991 provided him with an opportunity to lessen international tensions and to reclaim the primacy of the United States in world affairs. Bush intervened militarily in Panama in 1989 to overthrow its president, Manuel NORIEGA. In mid-1990, responding to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait, he ordered more than 400,000 American troops to the Persian Gulf region to defend Saudi Arabia. When Iraqi troops refused to withdraw from Kuwait in January 1991, demanded by Bush in an ultimatum, he authorized a massive bombing, and then ground assault, on Iraq and its forces in Kuwait, and won a swift victory. (See PERSIAN GULF WAR.)

Decisive in acting abroad, Bush failed to evolve a domestic program that adequately addressed a persistent recession starting in 1990. That year, despite the recession, he and congressional leaders agreed to a deficit-reduction package that raised federal taxes, thereby breaking his "no new taxes" 1988 election campaign pledge. He also failed on his promise to be both "the environment president" and "the education president," and angered many women by nominating Clarence THOMAS to the Supreme Court and continuing to support him despite allegations of sexual harassment. Concerned about the economy and demanding change, many conservative Republicans backed political columnist Patrick J. Buchanan's effort to contest Bush's renomination while moderates rallied to the independent candidacy of H. Ross PEROT. Also focusing on the nation's economic woes and promising change, William Jefferson "Bill" CLINTON, governor of Arkansas, beat several rivals in the Democratic primaries and chose as his running mate Tennessee senator Albert GORE--like Clinton, a baby-boomer, a white Southern Baptist, and a moderate. Capitalizing on a slumping economy and increasing unemployment, the Clinton-Gore ticket won 43 percent of the highest voter turnout (55 percent) since 1976 and 370 electoral votes. The Republicans Bush and Quayle tallied just 37 percent of the popular vote and 168 electoral votes, while Perot garnered 19 percent.

#  The Clinton Administration

Despite the movement into Washington of new people with fresh ideas, the Clinton administration got off to a slow, unsteady start. Crises in Bosnia, Haiti, Somalia, and Russia forced the president to focus on the volatile, multipolar world of the post-cold war era. At the same time, Clinton backed down from his promise to prohibit discrimination against gays in the military and reneged on his pledge, for lack of revenue, to cut middle-class taxes. Defeated by Congress on his proposals to stimulate the economy, Clinton then won by the narrowest of margins a highly compromised federal budget plan to reduce the deficit. The president had more success in persuading Congress to enact family-leave, "motor voter" registration (see VOTER REGISTRATION), and campaign finance reform bills, to approve the NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT, and to consent to his nomination of Ruth Bader GINSBURG to the Supreme Court. Clinton's future effectiveness and reputation rested largely on the fate of his plans to reform the health-care system and to provide effective solutions to the problems of economic insecurity and social disorder haunting middle-class Americans.

Harvard Sitkoff

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See also: AMERICAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE; AMERICAN LITERATURE; AMERICAN MUSIC; UNITED STATES.

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# Никифоров Владимир.

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