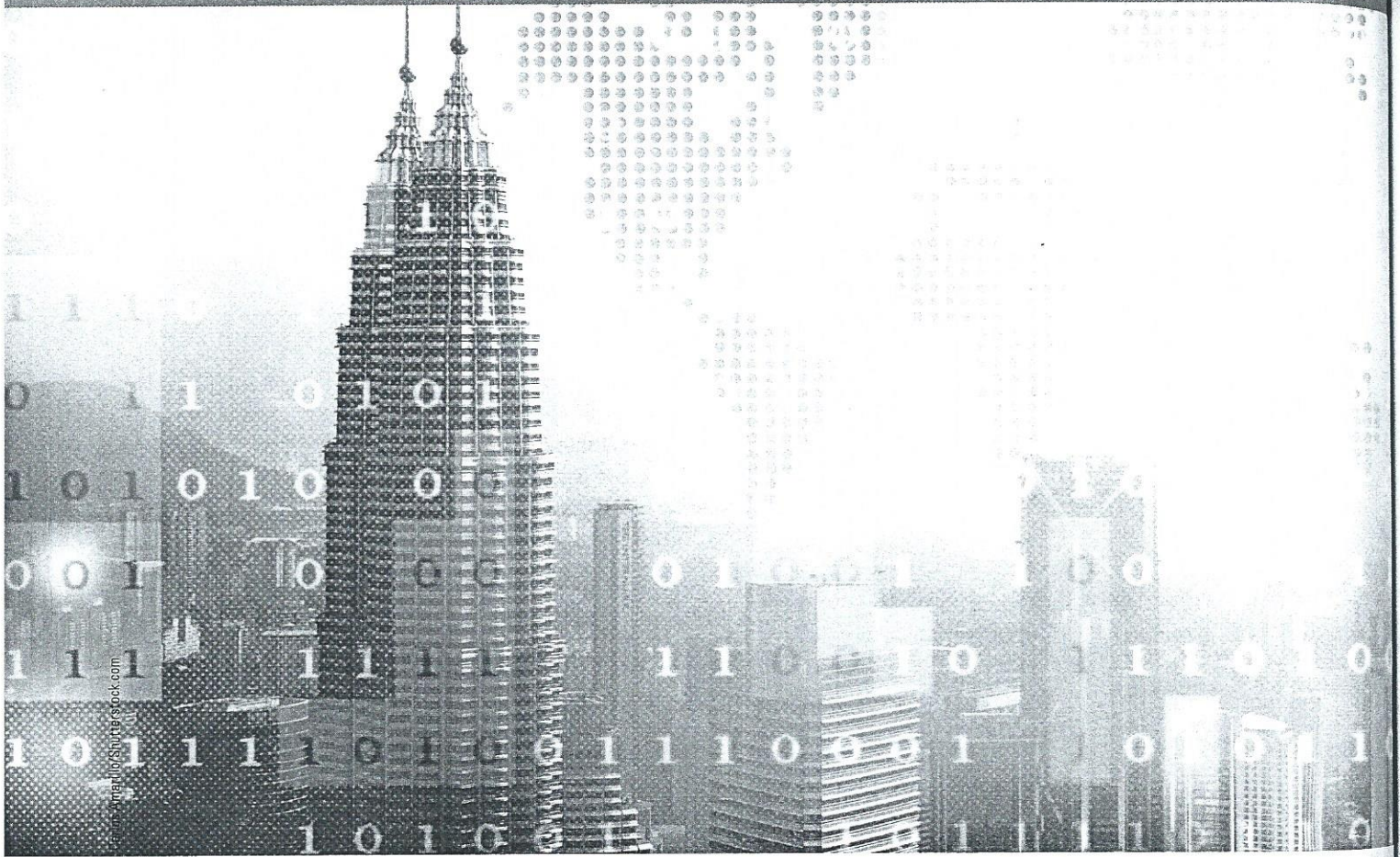


28 | America in the Information Age



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 28-1 Evaluate the presidency of Bill Clinton, discussing how he tried to cultivate a middle ground between affirming globalization and assuaging the needs of the disaffected.
- 28-2 Discuss the technological revolution that took place in the 1990s, and describe the social and economic changes that took place as a result of this revolution.
- 28-3 Discuss the new focus on multiculturalism during the latter part of the twentieth century.
- 28-4 Explain the kinds of homegrown terrorism that shocked many Americans in the 1990s.
- 28-5 Describe how the political, cultural, and economic polarization of the nation came to a head in the presidential election of 2000.

AFTER FINISHING
THIS CHAPTER
GO TO PAGE 556
FOR STUDY TOOLS

America since 1992 has been shaped by three forces: (1) the rise of new information technologies, such as personal computers and the Internet, which have powered increased and inexpensive communications throughout America and the world; (2) a commitment to reducing trade restrictions between nations, which, aided by the rise of new information technologies, has made national boundaries seem less significant, a phenomenon labeled “globalization”; and (3) the perpetuation of the political divide between the right and the left, as battles over affirmative action, multiculturalism, abortion, homosexuality, and gender roles have continued into the new century.

All these developments have had their share of critics from both the right and the left. Globalization has been criticized for limiting the capacity of American industry to recover since its decline in the 1970s and for exporting Western values to non-Western nations. Multiculturalism has been contested because of increased immigration from Latin America, especially Mexico, which has considerably changed the ethnic makeup of the United States. And the culture wars have provoked critics to complain that debates about cultural issues have gotten in the way of concern about important economic issues. And yet, these three changes, in various ways, helped transform the American economy throughout the 1990s, as it changed from an economy mostly premised on industrial and manufacturing output to one based on service and information technology.

In addition to reducing trade barriers, America’s international agenda during the 1990s focused on confronting and handling the end of the Cold War, as several states emerged to contest the extraordinary political and cultural influence of the United States, making the world a more complex, sometimes more dangerous, place. By the advent of the twenty-first century, global affairs had become central to Americans’ conception of themselves and their nation. Both internally and externally, then, Americans from the 1990s to today have tried to respond to the forces of global capital and the fact that the nation is a multicultural place. In the 1990s, the first American leader to try to locate a new political center was William Jefferson (Bill) Clinton.

28-1 THE NEW POLITICAL CENTER

The 1992 presidential election illustrated many of the themes that would dominate American politics during the 1990s. Notably, the campaign saw the rise of Bill Clinton, a leader who combined rhetorical appeal with a political **centrism** that eclectically blended liberal and conservative philosophies and policies, sometimes called “the Third Way.” The Third Way consciously sought to avoid the liberal politics of the New Left and the conservatism of the New Right.

The 1992 contest also highlighted outsider candidates, such as Patrick Buchanan and H. Ross Perot, each of whom mobilized voters disaffected with the major parties and disaffected with American life as it seemed to be heading.

28-1a The Fall of Bush

But the initial frontrunner was the then-current president, George H. W. Bush. Saddled with a worsening economy, Bush’s poll numbers declined throughout 1991. Compounding his problems was a sense of despair that took hold of the nation during 1991 and 1992. Stories of the poor economy and episodes illustrating deep divisions in America dominated the news media, including (1) the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, (2) the culture wars, and (3) the Los Angeles riots.

CLARENCE THOMAS

One such division emerged in October 1991, when law professor Anita Hill accused Bush’s Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment. Hill’s testimony at Thomas’s confirmation hearings split the country and the Senate. Those on the political right, who supported Thomas, considered Hill a symbol of aggressive feminism gone awry. Those on the left accused

centrism Political ideology that eclectically blended liberal and conservative philosophies and policies, sometimes called “the Third Way,” during Bill Clinton’s presidency; components included conservative economic principles and liberal social principles

◀◀◀ The 1990s have rightly been called the Information Age, when personal computers and the Internet became omnipresent in American life. Not only did the “1s” and “0s” of coding, represented here, spark to life the American economy, but also the Internet made communication and commerce over long distances easier and quicker, speeding up a process called globalization.

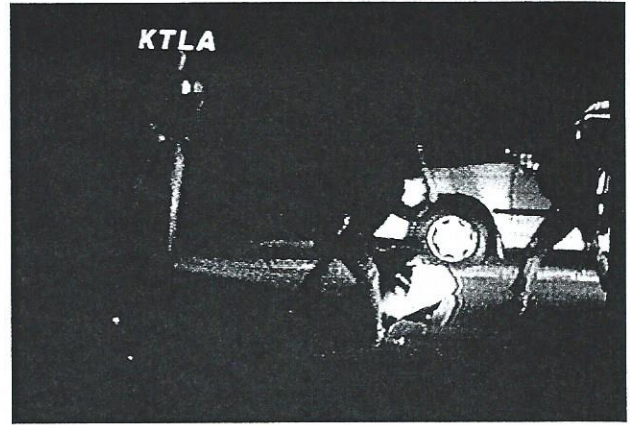
the right of ignoring women's claim to equal and civil treatment in the workplace. The controversy also invoked questions of race, because both Thomas and Hill were black, and both had worked at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. At one point, Thomas claimed that the Supreme Court confirmation hearings were nothing more than a "high tech lynching for uppity blacks." The Senate eventually confirmed Thomas by the narrow margin of 52 to 48. But the debate showed once again that divisions between left and right in America were more than just political divisions, but positions on how one viewed American pluralism, women's rights, and more.

THE "CULTURE WARS," CONT.

At the same time, several books appeared alleging that multiculturalism on college campuses was undermining students' awareness of the Western intellectual tradition, which conservatives said contained the core of American values. Multiculturalism can be defined as the view that nearly every culture deserves respect and a hearing, even those long denied mainstream acceptability. In the 1980s and 1990s, multiculturalism came to signify the inclusion of more than "dead white males" in literary and history curriculums and the growing prevalence of affirmative action regulations in schools and in the workplace. As conservatives and liberals debated the rightful role of minorities in the country, many saw conservatives as xenophobic; others saw liberals as disrespectful of core American principles, although these were rarely defined. Issues like abortion, gay rights, and religion in the public sphere also seemed to play into this growing divide.

L.A. RIOTS

Most troubling of all, however, was a deadly multiethnic riot that erupted in South Central Los Angeles in April 1992. An all-white jury acquitted four white police officers who had been videotaped beating a black man named Rodney King after King fled their pursuit, driving at speeds of more than 110 miles per hour to escape. King had been drinking alcohol at a friend's house before driving home and sped away when officers tried to pull him over. When they finally did stop him after an eight-mile chase, he acted bizarrely, leading the officers to gang tackle him and beat him with their batons, an event that was videotaped and publicized widely. After the acquittal, the city erupted in riots, which were broadcast live to viewers around the nation, dramatizing long-standing tensions among many of the nation's



Charles Steiner/Image Works/The Life Images Collection/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

>> Video image of L.A. police beating black motorist Rodney King as he lies on the ground, taken by camcorder enthusiast George Holliday from a window overlooking the street. The video and subsequent trial of police officers led to the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

ethnicities. South Central's problems had begun decades earlier, when in the 1950s white people abandoned the cities for suburbs and then again in the 1970s and 1980s, when companies moved out of the area, leaving many in the predominantly African American neighborhood without jobs. At the same time, new immigrants from Latin America and Asia moved into the area as a result of the Immigration Act of 1965. The newcomers competed for the few jobs that remained. Korean Americans and African Americans were especially at odds in South Central. When the L.A. riots began, it was unclear who was on which side, or how many sides there were. In all, fifty-three people died, and nearly a billion dollars' worth of property was destroyed.

This level of violence, against the backdrop of the declining economy and other divisive political events, made Bush's America look like it was reeling out of control.

28-1b The Rise of Bill Clinton

Despite these problems, Bush seemed a formidable enough candidate that few Democrats wanted to challenge him, especially after his popularity had risen so high in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. The field of Democrats had few nationally known figures, but, from the beginning, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton emerged as a party favorite. Reflecting a challenge to the Republicans' Southern Strategy, Clinton was



>> A rioter in downtown Los Angeles breaks the glass door of the Criminal Courts building in April 1992, protesting the acquittal of four white police officers who had been videotaped beating a black man who lay seemingly helpless on the ground. The riots lasted six days and 53 people died.

a southerner and polled well in the South, a region Democrats had lost since 1976. He also defined himself as a political moderate; he was in favor of the death penalty and welfare reform, which were typically Republican positions. And he proved remarkably able to weather political scandal. During the New Hampshire primary, he admitted to marital problems and apologized for his actions. The gamble worked, as voters seemed impressed by his honesty, and Clinton went on to win most Democratic primaries.

OUTSIDE CHALLENGERS

Meanwhile, Bush was hampered by a challenge within his own party. Former Nixon, Ford, and Reagan advisor Patrick Buchanan launched a fierce right-wing campaign against Bush, capturing media attention and some primary votes. Later, Buchanan was given a prime speaking slot at the Republican National Convention, an opportunity he used to describe the nation as caught in a “religious war . . . a culture war . . . for the soul of America” between liberals and conservatives. The culture wars had gone prime time, and the speech struck many moderates as an indication that ideological extremists on the right had taken control of the Republican Party.

The culture wars had gone prime time.

Another political outsider played a pivotal role in impeding Bush’s chances. In spring 1992, Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot launched an independent presidential campaign, calling for balancing the federal budget and attacking both parties as beholden to special interests. A critic of globalization and hard-line free-market principles, Perot’s plainspoken style and outsider stance energized alienated voters, and, for a brief time in the summer of 1992, he topped the list of candidates in public opinion polls. Perot drew supporters almost equally from Democrats and Republicans, but his attacks on establishment politicians, particularly in later campaign debates, were perceived as disproportionately harmful for Bush.

At the Democratic National Convention, Clinton chose as his running mate another youthful southerner, Senator Al Gore, and made the revival of America’s moribund economy the centerpiece of his campaign. Taking as their campaign song Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t

Stop (Thinking About Tomorrow),” Clinton and Gore were the first presidential candidates to come from the post-World War II baby boomer generation, and they presented themselves as the vanguard of a new style of leadership.

A DIVIDED ELECTORATE

Clinton’s charisma and encyclopedic knowledge of the issues carried him to victory, although the electorate was clearly divided. Clinton won a plurality of the popular vote, taking 43 percent to Bush’s 38 percent, while 19 percent of voters backed Perot; many Americans (45 percent of eligible voters) simply stayed home (Map 28.1). This fractured electorate gave Clinton a scant mandate for his programs.

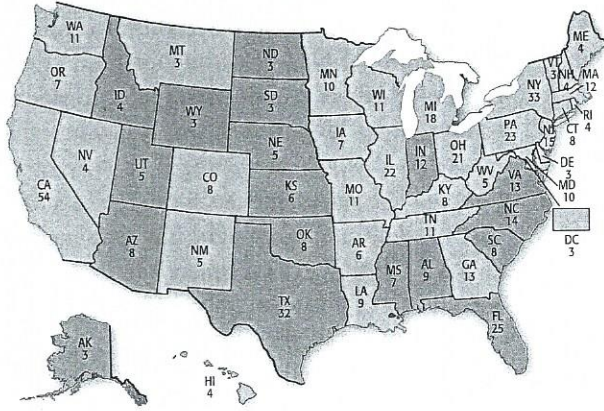
28-1c Bill Clinton, Free Trader

One of Clinton’s chief messages, as candidate and president, was that America and the world were rapidly changing, making old ideological divisions obsolete.

CLINTON’S “THIRD WAY”

The key to Clinton’s promise of innovation was what he called the “Third Way,” a centrist and eclectic blend of

1992



Candidate (Party)	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote
Clinton (Democrat)	370 68.8%	44,908,233 43.0%
Bush (Republican)	168 31.2%	39,102,282 37.4%
Perot (Independent)	0 0.0%	19,741,048 18.9%

Map 28.1 The Election of 1992

policy ideas taken from both liberal and conservative perspectives. He supported programs that were popular with a majority of the voters regardless of who had first proposed the plan. He was a strong advocate of liberal proposals like Head Start, air and water quality regulation, and moderate gun control. But he also supported conservative programs, such as tough anticrime measures, welfare reform, and reducing the federal deficit.

FREE TRADE

In the most substantial break with traditional Democratic policies, Clinton energetically advocated free-trade agreements that would open foreign markets to American companies and foreign companies to American markets. Many workers and the traditionally Democratic labor unions opposed trade deals, fearing that American companies would move their manufacturing jobs overseas, which is exactly what happened. But Clinton argued that, by lowering costs to consumers, such agreements would aid technological change and result in a net economic plus for the United States. And in a way, this is also exactly what happened, as the GDP went up and unemployment went

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Legislation signed in 1993 that removed tariff barriers between the United States, Mexico, and Canada

World Trade Organization (WTO) International agency designed to resolve disputes between trading partners and advocate free trade



Wally McNamee/Getty Images

>> One of Bill Clinton's chief legacies was the expansion of free trade. Here, he touts the benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by demonstrating how American apples will be able to reach a broader market.

down. To be sure, though, most of the new jobs were located in the service and information technology sectors, which were typically not unionized and thus helped exacerbate already growing divisions in wealth.

In 1993, Clinton worked hard to pass the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**, which removed tariff barriers between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. George H. W. Bush had begun negotiating the deal in the early 1990s, and Clinton supported and signed it in 1993. Two years later, Clinton secured American membership in the newly formed **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, an international agency designed to resolve disputes between trading partners and to advocate free trade. These were not uncontroversial issues in American

life, but Clinton was convinced that the United States needed to work through the problems presented by modern information technologies and not fight against them.

DEFICIT REDUCTION

Clinton also made America's deficit reduction a priority, hoping to correct the imbalance created by Reagan's huge defense spending and sputtering economy of the late 1970s. Against bitter Republican opposition, Clinton passed a deficit reduction package that raised taxes on the wealthy and curtailed government spending. By 1998, the federal budget had gone from running a yearly deficit to showing an annual surplus, although there was still a tremendous debt to pay off.

28-1d Post-Cold War Foreign Policy

In the post-Cold War world, international diplomacy was trickier than it might have at first appeared. While the demise of the Soviet Union had made the United States the only superpower in the world, it was unclear how Clinton would use American force. Would he walk softly and allow the nations of the world to work out their political problems themselves? If they engaged in civil wars, should he intervene? Or would he just use American power to force the nations of the world to adhere to American demands? He seemed to support UN peacekeeping missions, especially when they were acting on behalf of humanitarian efforts. But when in 1993 U.S. Marines in the East African nation of Somalia came under attack, Clinton withdrew American troops from the UN mission of which they were a part. In the wake of the Vietnam War, he was afraid to commit American troops to other nations' civil wars. This hesitancy prevented Clinton from intervening in Rwanda, where in 1994 the ethnic Hutu majority butchered 800,000 ethnic Tutsis.

Clinton was similarly hesitant to use American troops to create peace in the areas once controlled by the Soviet Union, especially in the Balkans, which had erupted in a series of ethnic wars between Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and

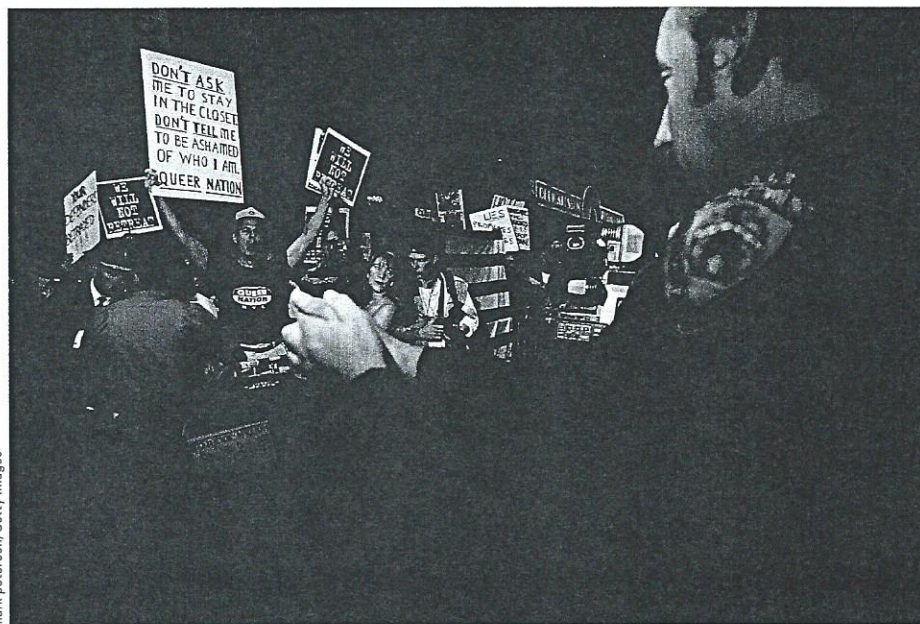
Croats. Through diplomacy, Clinton helped create the fragile state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. But the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic did not stop the ethnic violence, finally prompting Clinton, in 1999, to support a NATO aerial assault against the Serbs. He also committed the United States to support UN peacekeeping troops there. For every foreign policy success, Clinton seemed to tally a failure as well. And just as the Cold War had flung American foreign policy far and wide, the post-Cold War situation did the same, only without the United States having a preordained and fixed opposition.

28-1e The Republican Surge

Clinton ran into further trouble when he tried to push for certain social policies that brought out the rancorous partisanship of the cultural wars.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Upon taking office, Clinton fulfilled a campaign promise to end the U.S. government's ban on homosexuals' serving in the military. Civil rights groups applauded, but the measure was unpopular with military leaders and some members of Congress. Clinton quickly backtracked and offered a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy preventing the



mark peterson/Getty Images

>> Among the many compromises Bill Clinton stumbled into during the first years of his presidency, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy provoked perpetual opposition from both the political right and the political left. Shown here is a demonstration advocating gay rights, protesting Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

armed forces from inquiring about the sexual orientation of their members, while restoring their right to remove known homosexuals from service. The strained compromise satisfied neither side.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE

Clinton suffered his most serious political defeat of the first years of his presidency with his ambitious proposals to change the nation's health care system. Clinton had made health care a central element of his campaign, responding to the fact that 37 million Americans lacked health insurance and that the policy that developed in post-World War II America, where Americans received the bulk of their health care from policies subsidized by their employer, had developed when the American economy was strong. Soon after taking office, the administration charged a task force, headed by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, to develop a comprehensive health care plan.

As details of the proposals emerged (including a mandate that all employers offer insurance), small businesses and doctors began denouncing the plan as big government run amok. In September 1993, opponents of the plan began running TV ads featuring "Harry and Louise," a fictitious couple appalled that the Clinton plan would prevent them from choosing their doctor. Republicans, who until this point had been unsure of how to treat the Clinton plan, launched an all-out opposition. By late August 1994, the Democratic leadership in Congress, divided by internal arguments over the plan, decided to abandon it. Genuine health care reform would have to wait.

THE "CONTRACT WITH AMERICA"

The defeat of his health care plan and his waffling attitude about gays in the military eroded Clinton's popularity heading into the 1994 congressional elections. Conservatives were enraged by several of Clinton's social policies, while local issues (such as the nationwide push for **term limits** and a California ballot initiative to cut off illegal immigrants from social services) mobilized grassroots Republican voters and demonstrated a generalized mistrust of politicians.

term limits Legal restriction that limits the number of terms a person may serve in political office

Contract with America Document released by the Republican Party during the 1994 congressional elections promising to reform government, impose term limits, reduce taxes, increase military spending, and loosen regulations on businesses

The Republicans were remarkably united at this moment to take advantage of Clinton's weakness: House minority leader Newt Gingrich of Georgia pledged a "**Contract with America**," calling for significant tax and budget cuts, the return of many governmental responsibilities to the states, more defense spending, and a loosening of environmental regulations. The conservative coalition that was born in the 1950s and that matured in the 1970s and 1980s was coming of age in the 1990s.

The November 1994 congressional election results delivered a devastating blow to the Clinton presidency. Republicans gained a net total of fifty-two seats in the House of Representatives, recapturing control of the chamber for the first time since 1955. They also gained ten seats in the Senate. Clinton would have to govern with a hostile Congress for the remainder of his presidency.

28-1f Clinton's Recovery

Gingrich began 1995 as Speaker of the House, championing his ambitious Contract with America. As promised, he did usher most of the proposals in the Contract with America through the House. But the Senate rejected many of the proposals, and others passed the Senate only to be vetoed by the president. Clinton opposed the tax and spending cuts that were central to the conservative agenda, and he cleverly used his power to undercut popular support for Republicans. Notably, Clinton declared in his 1995 State of the Union address that "the era of big government is over." He thus seemed to agree with Republicans' antigovernment philosophy, while vetoing the biggest cuts, declaring certain government functions too vital to shut down.

CLOSING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT

As Clinton's popularity rose again, Gingrich overreached. In 1995, the president refused to approve the Republicans' budget, which would have forced cutbacks in federal spending on the environment, workplace safety, and consumer protection. In retaliation, Gingrich tried to pressure the president by refusing to pass any budget at all, forcing a shutdown of many federal offices around the country. National parks, museums, and federal agencies were closed, and many government employees were laid off. The shutdown proved to be a tremendous miscalculation on Gingrich's part: a majority of Americans agreed with the president that Gingrich had attempted to blackmail him. After three weeks, Republicans gave in and approved the funds needed to reopen the government. But the damage was done. Clinton enjoyed a resurgence of popularity, while the legislative initiatives of Gingrich's coalition slowed down.

THE 1996 ELECTION

During 1996, an election year, Clinton again positioned himself as a centrist. Strategically, he agreed to sign a Republican-sponsored welfare act setting limits on the number of years that a person can receive welfare and giving the states more power to draft their own regulations. Although liberals denounced Clinton's approval of the bill, it deprived Republicans of a major campaign issue and solidified Clinton's high ratings.

And as in 1992, Clinton benefited from chaos affecting his rivals. Ross Perot mounted another third-party campaign, while the eventual Republican nominee, Kansas Senator Bob Dole, had to spend campaign funds battling other candidates. In contrast, Clinton ran unopposed. Furthermore, Dole, a World War II veteran, had amassed an impressive record of public service, but voters saw his age (seventy-three) as a liability. Tapping into these concerns, Clinton declared at the Democratic Convention that his policies would better prepare Americans for the new challenges of the information age, building "a bridge to the twenty-first century." He coasted to an easy reelection, taking 49 percent of the vote to Dole's 41 percent. Clinton became the first Democrat since Franklin D. Roosevelt to be elected to two terms as president.

28-2

THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

Throughout his two terms in office, Clinton was aided by a solid economic rebound, largely caused by a revolution in information technology.

28-2a Economic Rebound

The American economy began to recover from its post-Reagan recession in 1992 and had shot upward by the late 1990s. In 1993, the United States' real annual growth rate in GDP was a healthy 2.7 percent; it ran more than 4 percent per year between 1997 and 1999, a level economists usually associate with high-growth economies in developing countries. Millions of new jobs were created during the 1990s, and the country enjoyed low rates of unemployment and slight inflation. The average price of stocks more than tripled during the decade, too; the composite index

of the NASDAQ stock exchange, which listed many new technology company stocks, grew by almost 800 percent.

Clinton received some credit for this development, with many commentators pointing to his administration's deficit reduction plan as important groundwork for economic growth. A more common view, however, was that having a Democratic president and a Republican-controlled Congress prevented either from making new policies that might interfere with the economy's success. The news media saw Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board (the central bank of the United States, which tries to regulate the economy's ups and downs), as the wizard behind the economic growth. Greenspan succeeded in setting healthy interest rates and controlling the money supply to avoid both recession and inflation. The widespread praise for Greenspan subtly demonstrated a continuing public cynicism about the abilities of elected political leaders, a cynicism prevalent since Watergate.

28-2b The Digital Age

To explain this growth, many economists argued that an "information revolution" had taken place.

THE INTERNET AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

The rapid development of new information technologies (IT) such as cellular phones and personal computers led many analysts to explain the sudden economic rise as a



>> During the 1990s, the Internet rapidly transformed into an electronic public square, becoming in the process a key component of American education. Here a group of young students use the Internet in their classroom.

result of the unforeseen savings brought on by expedited communications. Central to these gains was the Internet, a vast network of linked computers that allows information to be shared easily and instantly. Although universities and the federal government had developed much of the infrastructure behind the Internet in the 1970s and 1980s, it only emerged as a commercial tool in the mid-1990s, after inexpensive desktop computers became common fixtures in American homes and offices. As millions of Americans started going online, the Internet rapidly transformed into an electronic public square, a place to exchange ideas and sell wares, as well as to be educated and entertained. It helped to democratize the marketplace, as the widespread awareness of one product might lead someone else to invent a complementary product.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

Digital technology fueled rapid economic growth in other areas of the economy, as computers streamlined manufacturing processes, helped American companies reach overseas markets, and revolutionized new areas of medical research, particularly in biotechnology. Underpinning the information revolution was the work of hundreds of new companies laying fiber-optic cable, building cell-phone towers, networking offices, digitizing libraries, streamlining computer chips, and designing websites. Expanding the lines of digital communication also helped usher in a broader network of cable television networks, including a number of 24-hour cable news channels, which were constantly on the lookout for up-to-the-minute news stories and which fractured the unity perceived when there were only a handful of national news outlets. It also ushered in a trend in which fewer Americans read newspapers.

COSTS

Even as productivity remained high and unemployment dropped, some saw a downside to this revved-up American prosperity. Many economists warned that the growth in the price of stocks was driven not by sound investment but by what Greenspan termed “irrational exuberance.” Others warned of the widening disparity between rich and poor. Similarly, after NAFTA and other free-trade agreements lowered tariffs between the United States and other countries, it became more profitable for American companies to move their factories overseas to take advantage of lower labor costs. This left many American industrial workers unemployed and continued the decline of the American manufacturing sector. Ross Perot presciently won significant

political points in 1992 by referring to NAFTA as “that giant sucking sound” of jobs leaving the United States and heading elsewhere in the world. Many Americans simply felt as though the economy had left them behind, and politicians were unwilling or unable to help.

BENEFITS

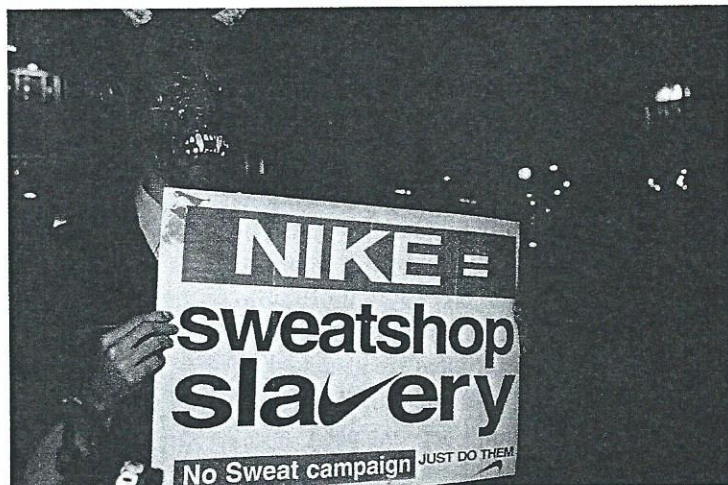
Nevertheless, the economy of the late 1990s brought benefits as well. Earning power improved dramatically for the wealthiest Americans, work was plentiful, and unemployment was generally low. The healthy economy helped federal and state governments balance their budgets, while police across the nation reported a steady decline in the crime rate, a trend usually attributed to the “trickle down” of American prosperity.

28-2c Consolidation and Globalization

The growth of the Internet and the information revolution had two other consequences beyond improving the economy: (1) corporate mergers and (2) increased globalization.

CORPORATE CONSOLIDATION

First, the information revolution stimulated a round of large corporate mergers because business leaders were convinced they should try to integrate media content with its transmission. Thus, companies that produced television, films, or music made efforts to provide their material to consumers through all available media: phone, cable, or



Janina Wiedel Photolibrary/Alamy Stock Photo

>> Critics complained that 1990s “globalization” merely meant imposing Western ideals and products on everyone without regard for native customs. Demonstrators here are protesting against Nike and its policy of using “sweatshop slavery.”

fiber-optic lines, over the airwaves, or on movie screens. This view was encouraged by Congress, which deregulated the industry in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Nowhere was this process more obvious than in the area of mass communication, as giant companies merged to create even bigger corporations, hoping to dominate aspects of the new information economy. The Disney Company bought the American Broadcasting Company; Time Warner bought Turner Broadcasting, only to then be taken over by Internet provider America Online. Each of these mega-corporations acquired a variety of media outlets, including television networks, cable channels, publishing houses, movie studios, home video stores, and Internet sites. This allowed them to both produce and distribute their news and entertainment programs.

The result has been that much of the information received by most Americans now comes from a small number of multinational corporations. Ironically, in an age of choice symbolized by countless cable channels and infinite websites, Americans receive their news and entertainment from an ever-shrinking number of corporate sources. The market consolidations of the 1990s resemble those of the Industrial Revolution of the previous century, when the process of industrialization led to the development of hundreds of new businesses, many of which were eventually consolidated within large corporations.

The Reasons Why...

There were several reasons why many people were disenchanted with the new globalization:

Cultural imperialism. Critics complained that globalization simply meant imposing Western ideals and products on everyone throughout the world with little regard for native or local customs. For every McDonald's that critics saw on the streets of some non-American nation, they thought of the local restaurateurs who could not compete with its streamlined operations and low wages.

Job departures. Labor unions argued that globalization was depriving working-class Americans of jobs, as reduced trading borders made it easier for companies to build their products in one place and sell them in

GLOBALIZATION

The other dramatic result of the information revolution has been the speeding up of a process called globalization. Globalization is easiest to understand in the business world, where companies from different nations have little difficulty working together because of the ease with which they can communicate and transport goods. National parochialisms seemed to be dying off.

Viewing globalization as a positive force, the Clinton administration advocated it energetically. It was the reason Clinton cited when signing the NAFTA agreement. It was the source of Clinton's drive to expand fiber-optic cable lines throughout the globe. And it was the reason Clinton endorsed the founding of the WTO in 1995. Indeed, Clinton did not fight the creation of multinational corporations, defined as companies that have offices and production centers in more than one nation. Throughout the 1990s, these companies expanded busily, moving production centers to where the cheapest labor could be hired.

CRITICS OF GLOBALIZATION

Not everyone was enamored with globalization. For their reasons why, see "The Reasons Why . . ." box.

In 1999, protesters against globalization staged a large rally outside a WTO meeting in Seattle, effectively halting the meeting. In 2001, an equally large protest descended on Genoa, Italy, to protest a meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

another. Many American companies began operations in Indonesia and China, taking advantage of the fact that foreign labor was so inexpensive that it did not matter that the goods would have to be transported halfway across the world. Corporations also realized they could easily move their headquarters overseas to avoid paying American taxes.

Environmental critiques. Environmentalists argued that globalization was creating industries and pollution in countries that were not equipped to handle them. These countries often countered that it was unfair for the United States to engage in its Industrial Revolution before the advent of environmental laws while these latecomers now had to abide by a stricter set of rules. Despite the arguments, the number of overseas factories powered by American corporations has increased dramatically during the past quarter-century.



>> This 1990s naturalization ceremony demonstrates some of the diverse populations that came to the United States in the aftermath of the Immigration Act of 1965. By the 1990s, many Americans had come to embrace multiculturalism, including some of its historic opponents.

Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

Individual activists targeted specific companies for unsavory business practices and for maintaining sweatshops. One popular T-shirt used the Nike shoe company's trademark swoosh as the *v* in the word *slavery*.

More daunting were militant critics of globalization who were furious about Western ideals encroaching on their lands and cultures. The most prominent of these violent protesters was Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network in the Middle East. Throughout the late 1990s, bin Laden and his associates used pinpointed assaults on American installations in the Middle East to challenge, disrupt, and discourage the Western presence there. In 1998, bin Laden, the wealthy scion of a successful Westernized businessman, escaped an assassination attempt approved by President Clinton.

28-3

MULTICULTURALISM

By the 1980s, the transformations brought about by the Immigration Act of 1965 had become increasingly visible in American life, and the number of immigrants from Latin American and Asian nations mushroomed. There were only about half a million immigrants coming to the country each decade in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1990s there were more than a million immigrants coming to the country *each year*. The census of 2000 revealed that, for the first time, Hispanics had become the country's largest minority group (at 13 percent of the total population), displacing African Americans (at about 11 percent), who had composed the largest racial minority group since the nation's founding. These immigrants also brought with them their many and various religions, such as Islam and Hinduism. By the 2020 census, it is projected that Protestants will, for

the first time in American history, constitute less than 50 percent of the American population.

Combined with calls for political and social recognition from African Americans, Chicanos, and American Indians during the 1960s and 1970s, this widespread immigration made most attempts to prioritize the British origins of the American nation seem untenable and xenophobic. Even Nathan Glazer, a Harvard sociologist who had been a staunch critic of Black Nationalism and other forms of early multiculturalism, wrote a book in 1997 called *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*. Throughout the 1990s, corporations attempted to demonstrate their friendliness to minority groups (even if the realities of their hiring and promotion priorities did not always live up to the images they were trying to foster). And as this happened, many but not all Americans began to accept racial and ethnic diversity as a positive good, something to be celebrated as a unique American achievement.

The heavily Hispanic and Asian post-1965 immigration was buttressed by huge numbers of illegal immigrants coming from Latin America, usually from Mexico. In search of better opportunities or searching for their families, illegal immigrants often came across the southern border of the United States, facing a treacherous crossing from Mexico. Although the number of illegal immigrants in the United States is unknown, the best estimates suggest that about 10 million illegal immigrants were living in the United States during the first years of the twenty-first century. Many of these immigrants come from Mexico and other Latin American countries, but thousands more come from Europe and other parts of the world.

Critics complained that illegal immigrants were burdening America's social services, such as hospitals and schools, and were doing so without paying proper taxes. Illegal immigration became a political issue, especially in states that border Mexico, like California, Arizona, and Texas. Democrats often showed concern for the wellbeing of illegal immigrants, suggesting that amnesty for those already in the United States combined with an immigration policy more aligned with reality might be the best solution. Republicans seemed more concerned

about the work that illegal immigrants were doing, arguing that those jobs would be better suited for those born in the United States or those who had come here legally. Both parties agreed that the current immigration laws were ineffective, and the stalemate continues.

28-4 HOMEFRONT TERRORISM

Although the economy remained good throughout the 1990s, several violent events made Americans question the moral integrity of their nation. Was it really on the right track? How might Americans respond to globalization and multiculturalism?

28-4a Discontent

With the economy humming along, few would have predicted that extreme instances of violence would flare up. But that is exactly what happened.

OKLAHOMA CITY

In 1995, Gulf War veteran Timothy McVeigh protested the federal government's fiery intervention into violent antigovernment sects (those at Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas), where the government had attacked and destroyed armed encampments of Americans angered by the growing size and reach of federal government. Using some of the skills he had learned as a soldier, McVeigh blew up a federal building in Oklahoma City. Unlike most Americans, McVeigh chose to vent his frustration through an act of homegrown terrorism. The blast killed 168 people, most of whom were children attending day care in the building. Authorities immediately captured McVeigh, and his actions provided a window into a widespread network of antigovernment militias scattered throughout the nation. These groups thought the federal government had become too big and was infringing too much on Americans' lives. They would only continue to grow throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

JAMES BYRD, JR.

Three years later, in 1998, three white supremacists from Jasper, Texas, murdered a forty-nine-year-old black man

named James Byrd, Jr. They then dragged him from the back of their truck for miles. Such a savage maiming had not been perpetrated for decades and was met with widespread horror by a nation that thought this kind of racial hatred was a thing of the past.

MATTHEW SHEPARD

Later in 1998, two men attacked Matthew Shepard, a young gay man, for allegedly approaching them in a Laramie, Wyoming, bar. The men beat and robbed him, then tied him to a fence in rural Wyoming. Shepard died of brain damage shortly thereafter. Many Americans pointed to Byrd's and Shepard's deaths as a signal that, despite the general acceptance of multiculturalism and America's pluralism, brutal racism and homophobia still existed in the United States, and was becoming increasingly brazen.

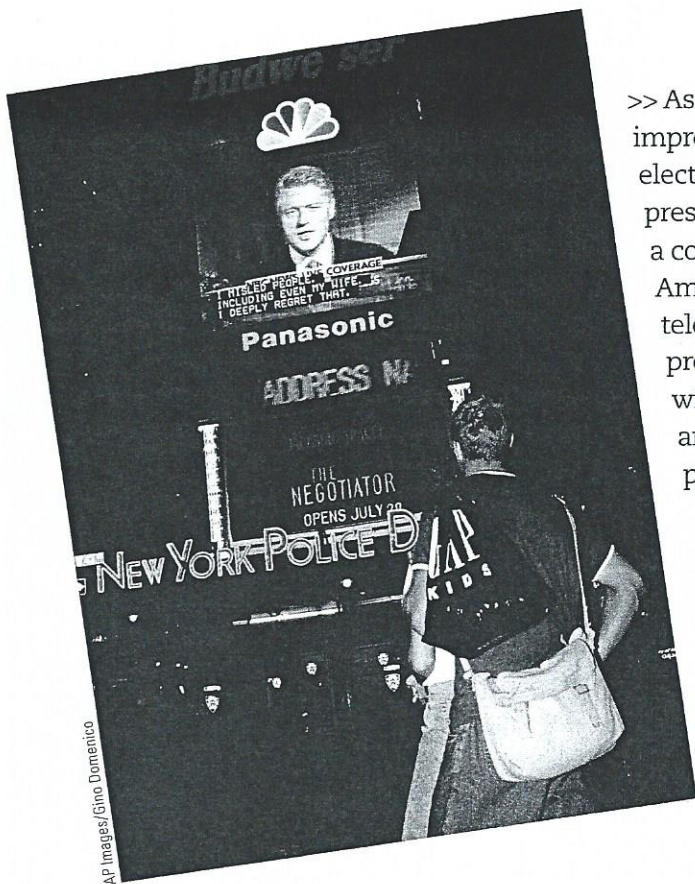
COLUMBINE

But perhaps most shocking of all, in 1999 two high school students in Columbine, Colorado, went on a shooting rampage at their school. In a highly orchestrated attack, the two students brought weapons to campus and killed thirteen classmates and one teacher before killing



Kevin Moloney/Getty Images News/Getty Images

>> One of the most chilling moments of the 1990s took place on April 20, 1999, when two angry and heavily armed students engaged in a seemingly random massacre of their peers at Columbine High School, near Denver, Colorado. Thirteen students lay dead before the two gunmen turned the weapons on themselves.



>> As the world watched, Bill Clinton's sexual improprieties further polarized an already divided electorate and led to the impeachment of an American president for only the second time in history. Here a couple watches President Clinton's speech to the American people on the giant closed-captioned television screen in New York's Times Square. The president acknowledged to having a relationship with Monica Lewinsky that was "not appropriate," and added the words, visible on the screen, "I misled people, including even my wife. I deeply regret that."

demanding that the House of Representatives impeach the president for committing perjury (Clinton had said under oath that he had not had "sexual relations" with Lewinsky). Clinton's critics argued that his unethical behavior had degraded and sullied the office of the president. Others, without defending the president's actions, claimed that he was the victim of a new kind of information age political warfare, his private life exposed to public scrutiny in a way that few public figures could survive.

themselves. No one has ever established a firm motive for their actions, but their violent actions and the number of copycats they inspired demonstrated discontent with some aspects of American society.

28-5b Rebuking the Republicans

Polls showed that, although voters disapproved of Clinton's actions, they were also fed up with the partisan bickering associated with the Lewinsky case. Perhaps as a result, the congressional elections of 1998 delivered an unexpected rebuke to the Republicans. They lost six seats in the House of Representatives and held on to only a slim majority in the Senate. The unexpected losses prodded Newt Gingrich to resign.

28-5 POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND THE 2000 ELECTION

Americans viewed these tragedies with nearly universal disgust, and some interpreted this disgust as a sign that Americans were ready for strong hate-crime legislation. Others saw these events as the result of an overly permissive society that provoked, encouraged, and even glorified violence. These polarized explanations gained further expression in a scandal concerning Bill Clinton's sexual liaisons.

Despite the election results, Republicans pressed ahead with the impeachment of the president. In the Constitution, impeachment is defined as a formal accusation of "high crimes and misdemeanors." And on December 19, 1998, on votes of 228 to 206 and then 221 to 212, the House approved two articles of impeachment and sent the case for trial to the Senate. The vote in the House was divided almost entirely along party lines, with most Democrats opposing impeachment and virtually all Republicans favoring it. These results foreshadowed the failure of the measure in the Senate, where Democrats had more than the 34 votes needed to block Clinton's removal from office. On February 12, 1999, the best prosecutors could secure was a 50-to-50 tie in the Senate over the issue of whether or not Clinton had obstructed justice and should therefore be removed from office. Clinton completed his term.

28-5a The Lewinsky Episode

In 1998, a House of Representatives special investigator named Kenneth Starr determined that Clinton had inappropriate sexual contact with a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. Clinton denied the claim, but when Starr found out that one of Lewinsky's friends had taped telephone conversations in which Lewinsky described the sexual conduct, Starr called Clinton's bluff. Starr then

28-5c The 2000 Election

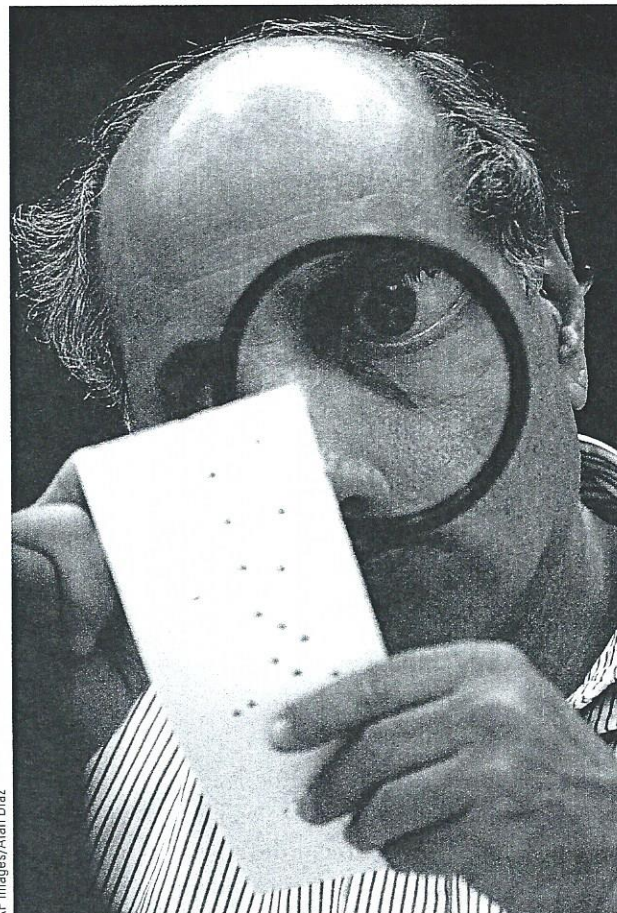
While Clinton certainly bears responsibility for his actions, the assault against him was prosecuted with particular energy and vigor. As such, it was a symbol of a larger political divide, as Republicans attempted to position themselves as moralistic defenders of pre-1960s order and Democrats sought to portray themselves as capable of maintaining order while acknowledging the social liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s. Clinton's scandal did not bolster the Democrats' image, but Kenneth Starr's investigation, which much of the public considered trite and juvenile, hurt Republicans.

THE CANDIDATES

At first, the 2000 campaign promised to be dull, as most commentators regarded the respective party nominees as foregone conclusions. For Republicans, George W. Bush, governor of Texas and son of the former president, appealed to party regulars; a conservative, he had also compiled a record of working with Democrats to pass legislation. On the Democratic side, the favored candidate was Vice President Al Gore, who promised to continue the Clinton policies that had brought eight years of "peace and prosperity." Gore chose as his running mate Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, the first Jewish vice-presidential nominee from one of the major parties. Gore faced a challenge from the political left, as the Green Party put forward the longtime consumer advocate Ralph Nader as its candidate. Nader argued that both Bush and Gore were beholden to big business and thus were not putting forward suitably different platforms, including ending corporate donations to political campaigns. Although Nader failed to win a single electoral vote, his candidacy reflected growing anger from the left at Clinton's centrism, in a similar fashion to what Perot and Robertson had done to Republicans in 1992.

THE VOTE

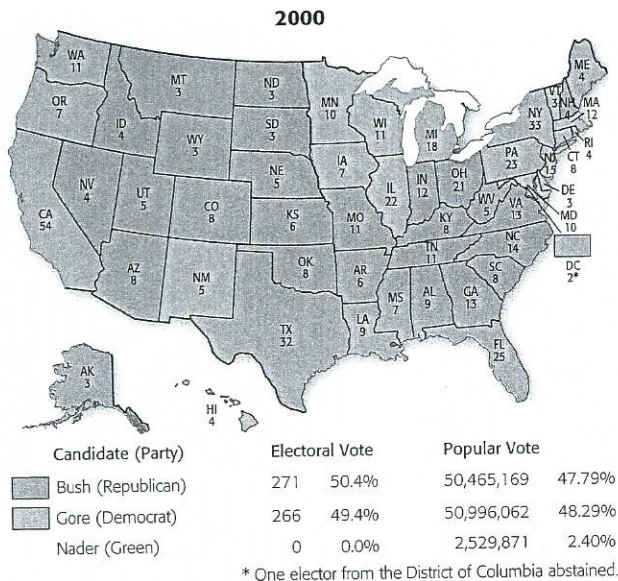
Neither major party candidate generated much enthusiasm. Gore was criticized as being stiff and wonkish; Bush was more affable, but many worried that he lacked experience and intellect. Uninspired and disillusioned with politics after eight years of scandal and partisanship, only 50 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots on Election Day. The lack of passion for either candidate was manifested in the extremely slim vote margins between the two. As millions of Americans tuned in to the major TV news networks to learn who their next president would be, they saw normally confident news anchors reduced to stuttering confusion. Projections switched back and forth on election night; neither candidate had captured the 270 votes necessary to win a majority of the Electoral College.



AP Images/Alan Diaz

>> In the confusing aftermath of the 2000 election, millions of Americans learned what a "hanging chad" was, although knowing what it was didn't make the election's outcome any easier to discern. Here a Broward County canvassing board member uses a magnifying glass to examine a disputed ballot at the Broward County Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The results illuminated a peculiarity of the American electoral system not seen since 1888: a candidate with a minority of the popular vote was poised to win a majority of the votes in the Electoral College. Gore actually won the popular vote by more than half a million votes. Yet Bush emerged with a razor-thin lead of 537 votes in Florida, a tiny fraction of the 6 million cast in that state, but enough to gain the state's 25 electoral votes, which gave him a total of 271 electoral votes overall—the bare minimum needed to become president (Map 28.2).



Map 28.2 The Election of 2000

THE CONTROVERSY

With this narrow margin, Florida law called for an automatic recount, a process made complicated by claims of voting irregularities around the state. Gore’s team pushed for recounts in counties carried by Gore, reasoning that disputed ballots from these areas might help their candidate if they were counted. Bush’s staff resisted holding any recount in the hope of hanging on to their lead. In some locations, such as Miami-Dade County, recounts were abandoned after crowds of Bush supporters disrupted the proceedings. Many were suspicious that Florida’s governor, who happened to be George W. Bush’s brother, might intervene and use his power to determine Florida’s vote. Others grew concerned when stories emerged alleging that many African Americans had been denied access to the polls. Gore went to court to ask for a recount of “undervotes,” the thousands of ballots that the vote-counting machine could not read, and, on December 8, the Florida Supreme Court granted Gore’s request.

Four days later, in the case of *Bush v. Gore* (2000), the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5 to 4 to halt the recount, allowing Florida governor Jeb Bush to certify George W. Bush’s 537-vote margin in Florida, thus making George W. Bush president. The conservative majority on the Court argued that Florida law made no provision for recounting undervotes and that the

state had no fair way to evaluate partially marked ballots. Four justices dissented, insisting that the federal government had no right to interfere with Florida’s attempt to determine the winner of its own electoral votes.

The confusing outcome provided more drama than had the year of political campaigning that preceded the election. It also revealed a sharply divided electorate.

>LOOKING AHEAD...

The United States in the 1990s had entered a new era of free trade, the economy had rebounded from recession due to the growth and expansion of new information technologies, and most Americans generally accepted America’s increasing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. Still, there were widening divides between various factions of Americans, and these divides seemed to be provoking increasingly violent responses. The gap between the left and the right seemed to be widening, and toeing the line of Clintonian centrism appeared to be an increasingly difficult act.

STUDY TOOLS 28

READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- Rip out the Chapter Review Card, which includes key terms and chapter summaries.

ONLINE AT WWW.CENGAGEBRAIN.COM, YOU CAN:

- Collect StudyBits while you read and study the chapter.
- Quiz yourself on key concepts.
- Find videos for further exploration.
- Prepare for tests with HIST5 Flash Cards as well as those you create.
- Read Clinton’s speech to the 1996 Democratic National Convention.
- Read excerpts from the Starr Report.

CH 28 TIMELINE

- ▶ 1991 Clarence Thomas appointed to Supreme Court.
- ▶ 1992 **April:** South Central L.A. riots after exoneration of police captured on video tape beating Rodney King.
November: Bill Clinton defeats incumbent Bush, and independent Ross Perot in presidential election.
- ▶ 1993 Clinton signs North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).
- ▶ 1994 **November:** Republicans capture congressional majority.
Telecommunications Act deregulates media and mass communications.
Congress defeats health care plan championed by Hillary Clinton.
Republican minority leader Newt Gingrich pledges "Contract with America."
- ▶ 1995 United States becomes part of World Trade Organization.
Antigovernment activist bombs Oklahoma City federal building, killing 168.
- ▶ 1996 **November:** Bill Clinton defeats Bob Dole, becomes first Democrat reelected to presidency since FDR.
- ▶ 1998 Clinton turns federal budget deficit into surplus.
- ▶ 1999 Clinton's impeachment for hiding Monica Lewinsky affair ends in Senate with Clinton's exoneration.
- ▶ 2000 U.S. Supreme Court decides deadlocked election in *Bush v. Gore*.
- ▶ 2001 Activists disturb World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings in Genoa.

What Else Was Happening

1997: Nevada becomes the first state to pass legislation categorizing Y2K data disasters as "acts of God," protecting the state from lawsuits that might be brought against it by residents in the year 2000.

Scientists at Roslin Institute in Scotland clone a sheep, Dolly.
Princess Diana killed in a car crash in Paris.

Osama bin Laden escapes U.S.-orchestrated assassination attempt.

Two students kill thirteen classmates and teacher in Columbine, Colorado.