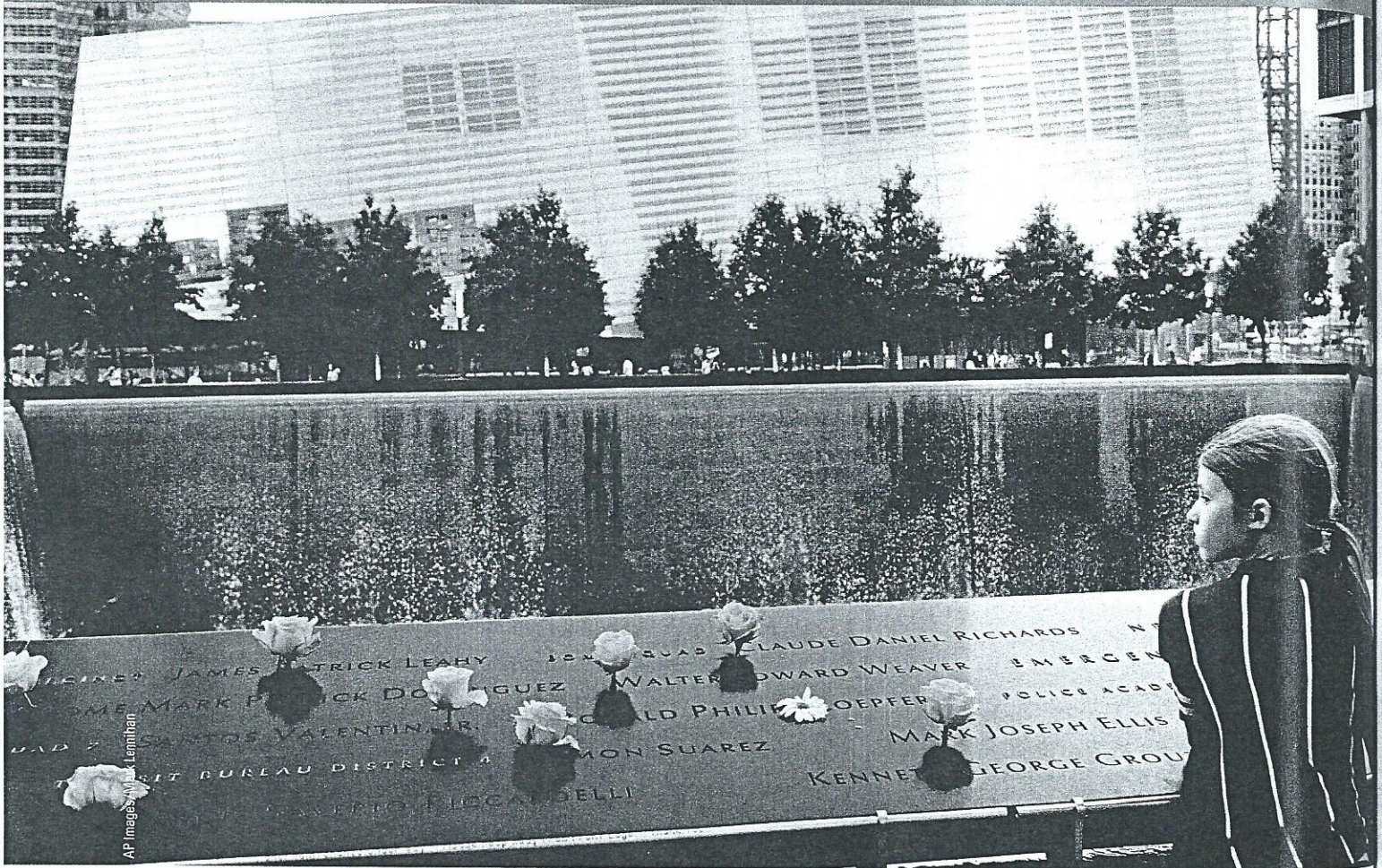


29 | Globalization and Its Discontents



AP Images/Mark Lennihan

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- 29-1 Describe the initial events of what came to be called “the War on Terror.”
- 29-2 Describe George W. Bush’s plans for democracy in the Middle East, including his declaration of a “War on Terror,” and assess the degree of his success.
- 29-3 Discuss the domestic problems that America faced during George W. Bush’s second term.
- 29-4 Explain some of the hopes and frustrations of Barack Obama’s two terms in office, and some of the persistent divisions within the United States.
- 29-5 Explain the rise of Donald J. Trump and the increased political polarization within the U.S.

AFTER FINISHING
THIS CHAPTER
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FOR STUDY TOOLS

The advent of the information age spawned challenges as well as opportunities. Cyber-thieves capable of stealing information over the Internet used that information to apply for credit cards to make a quick profit. International markets became more challenging to predict and manage. Most deadly of all, many people in the world began to view America's predominant place in the global economy as a threat to their way of life. Several nebulous multinational groups, inspired by religious fanaticism and anti-Americanism, and tied together by easy access to information and global communication, rose to challenge the United States, drawing the nation into what was called a global war on terror.

President Bush initiated the policies and legislation in the war on terror, although this was never his intended goal. He had emerged from the troubled presidential election of 2000 somewhat weakened, but he nonetheless governed from the right, passing tax cuts and expanding America's military profile. Before his first year in office was over, though, vital Republicans had defected, and the humming economy of the 1990s seemed to be fading into a recession. Then, in September 2001, the focus of his presidency changed. Critics of America's international power struck a terrible blow against the United States by hijacking four airplanes and flying three of them into iconic American buildings, symbolizing an attack on America's trading prowess and military reach. The September 11 attacks propelled the nation into a global war on terror, which influenced not only America's international policies but its domestic ones as well.

Bush's successor, Barack Obama, confronted many of the same problems Bush did: a faltering economy, a complex morass of diplomatic issues, and a divided and deeply partisan electorate. With two terms of Democratic Party leadership under Obama, the country remained evenly divided between right and left, although the gulf between the two sides seemed to widen, as issues like immigration, American economic interests, and the battle between security and freedom polarized the two political sides. The results of this division bore fruit in the 2016 election, when populist leaders on the right and left arose to challenge middle-of-the-road liberalism, embodied in the 2016 election by Hillary Rodham Clinton, President Bill Clinton's wife. During the Democratic primary, she successfully fended off a challenge from the left, in the form of Senator Bernie Sanders. But she eventually lost the presidency to a

populist voice on the right, Donald J. Trump, who became the forty-fifth president of the United States in 2017. As in much of the rest of the world, widespread disaffection with the political center has led to populists on the right and left being the loudest voices heard. But first, a deeper look into the presidency of George W. Bush.

29-1

THE WAR ON TERROR

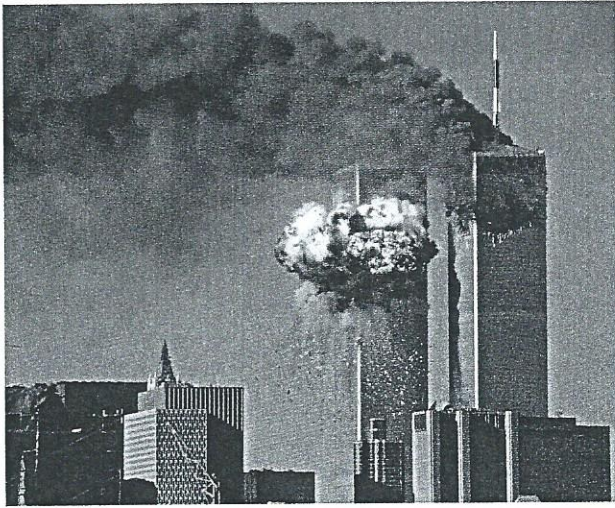
Winning only a minority of the popular vote, Bush came to office with no mandate. But he pressed ahead with his conservative agenda nonetheless. The centerpiece of this agenda was a large tax cut for wealthy Americans. And, despite critics' claims that the tax cut would wipe out the budget surplus created during the Clinton years, the Republican Congress passed Bush's \$1.3 trillion tax cut. Some argued that Bush was simply continuing the Reagan Revolution of "starving the beast" of government regulations and entitlements that had developed since the rise of the Industrial Age at the end of the nineteenth century and was carried through the Progressive era, the New Deal, and the Great Society. Bush similarly followed conservative strategy when it came to the environment, promising to search for oil reserves in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which critics called America's last wilderness. He also pulled out of missile treaty agreements with Russia and refused to participate in an international agreement to control global warming.

But Bush faced a strong rebuke on May 24, 2001, when Senator Jim Jeffords, a Republican from Vermont, declared himself unhappy with the president's rightward approach to governing, and announced that he would caucus as an independent, which shifted control of the Senate to the Democrats. Bush's policies now seemed unlikely to pass. His right-wing rhetoric had cost him necessary votes. In early September 2001 he was a president adrift.

29-1a September 11

Bush's presidency was revived on September 11, 2001, when nineteen of Osama bin Laden's associates hijacked four U.S. airliners and attempted to fly them into various buildings across the country. Three of the four planes hit their targets. Two flew into each of New York City's World Trade Center towers, causing both of the 110-story towers to collapse. Another plane crashed into the side

◀◀◀ **The National September 11 Memorial & Museum, on the site of the World Trade Center attacks in New York City, opened in 2011, exactly a decade after the attacks. The 9/11 terrorist attacks challenged the nation to think anew about its role in the world and how the Information Age presented both challenges and opportunities to Americans everywhere.**



Sean Adair/Landov/Reuters

>> September 11, 2001. On September 11, 2001, 19 associates of Osama bin Laden hijacked four American airplanes and targeted four iconic American sites. Three of them reached their targets, including two that hit the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center.

of the Pentagon, the government's central military office. On the fourth jet, passengers, aware of the unfolding tragedy through the use of cellular phones, overtook the hijackers, and the jet crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. In total, more than 3,000 people died in the attacks.

The country was stunned by the tragedies, which were totally unanticipated by the public and which emerged from a source that was completely unknown to most Americans. Within hours of the attack, the Bush administration determined that bin Laden's **al Qaeda** network had masterminded the plan and that al Qaeda operated out of Afghanistan with the blessing of that country's ruling party, the Taliban, which had risen to power after it quelled an Afghan civil war in 1996. The Taliban's ideology of Islamic fundamentalism was combined with a severely repressive rule and also made it sympathetic to militant fundamentalist groups such as

al Qaeda A global militant Islamic organization founded in 1988 or 1989 by Osama bin Laden to advocate through publicity and violence a strict interpretation of Islamic law and to prohibit the penetration of the Middle East by Western and other outside influences

Bush doctrine Political principle articulated by President George W. Bush in which he declared America's right to fight a "preemptive war" against any nation that, one day, might threaten the United States

al Qaeda, who were willing to use violence to protest American involvement in the Middle East.

Throughout the 1990s, Osama bin Laden, the son of a wealthy Saudi developer whose allowance from his parents totaled \$7 million a year, tried to rid the Middle East of any Western influence in order to return it to what he saw as its purer Islamic roots. To understand more about why al Qaeda was so angry at the United States, see "The Reasons Why . . ." box.

Bush, with the country's overwhelming blessing, decided to forge an international coalition and go to war against Afghanistan in order to oust al Qaeda.

29-1b War in Afghanistan and War on Terror

The war in Afghanistan started in October 2001, and the Taliban were driven from power two months later. Unfortunately, U.S. and coalition troops at first found neither bin Laden nor many of his leading associates, who fled to the mountains of Pakistan. Coalition forces and Afghans, meanwhile, had a difficult time establishing a stable government capable of holding the nation together, and the American military began a lengthy presence in Afghanistan, perhaps a major irony of Osama bin Laden's attacks on 9/11, which of course sought to oust the U.S. from the Middle East. Instead, the continued American presence in Afghanistan has made it the United States' longest war.

The seemingly easy initial victory in Afghanistan and the stinging memory of the September 11 attacks prompted Bush to call for an expanded, broader war, which he called a "war on terror." While many said that a war on a tactic, could not be easily fought because there was no definable end, no specific battleground, and no specific enemy, most Americans went along with the president. He established military bases in Central Asia and the Philippines to combat militant Islamic insurgencies. He also sought to renew friendships with India and Pakistan in order to have well-positioned allies within the Middle East. He developed a new doctrine, called the **Bush doctrine**, which declared America's right to fight a "preemptive war" against any nation that, one day, might threaten the United States.

Bush also used the war on terror to reorganize the U.S. intelligence community. Shortly after September 11, he created the Department of Homeland Security as a cabinet-level position. In 2005, Bush established the director of National Intelligence, which supplanted the CIA director as the principal intelligence officer in the nation, coordinating the efforts of the entire intelligence community.

The Reasons Why...

There were several reasons why Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network were so angry at the United States:

Cold War blowback. Throughout the 1980s, Afghanistan was the location of yet another Cold War proxy battle, with the Soviet Union attempting to exert control over Afghanistan and the United States supporting Afghan resistance fighters. (One American-supported organization was Osama bin Laden's Maktab al-Khadamat, which funneled weapons and guns to Afghan fighters.) The war ended in 1988 when the Soviets departed, unable to control the country. Like the Soviet Union, the United States pulled its support in 1988, long before the country was politically stable. The subsequent instability led to several years of civil war and the rise of a radical Islamic government, the Taliban, which would later allow al Qaeda to use Afghanistan as its base of operations. The American and Soviet departure also allowed bin Laden to claim the role of the savior of the Middle East who had helped bring down the mighty Soviet Union.

American involvement in the Middle East. Osama bin Laden was radicalized during the Afghan civil war. Sensing that the Middle East had departed from its historic and godly ways, he laid the blame on outside influences, including American cultural and military involvement in the area. He was alarmed that, after the Gulf War of 1991, the American military had remained in the Middle East, and in 1996 he issued his first call for the United States to leave. Bin Laden and many others argued that the American military presence existed only to preserve American access to Middle Eastern oil. They did not want to be part of an American Empire.

Bin Laden also did not want the Middle East to be exposed to what he perceived as Western values, which to him included sexual licentiousness, tolerance of outsider faiths, and a revision of traditional gender roles.

Israel. Another flashpoint was American support for Israel. Since Israel's founding in 1948, the United States has supplied Israel with weapons and military support. Many, though certainly not all, Muslims believe Israel has no right to exist as a nation in the Middle East, on land that was largely populated by Muslim Palestinians before Israel came into existence. (Israel sits on land that is holy to Muslims, Christians, and Jews.) Several Middle Eastern nations came together in 1967 and 1973 to try to push Israel out of the Middle East, but the Israelis, with American support, resisted the attacks. American support for Israel has been a persistently contentious issue between the United States and many Middle Eastern nations. In a 1998 religious statement called, in Islam, a fatwa, bin Laden formally objected to American foreign policy toward Israel and to the continued American military presence in Saudi Arabia. Seeing these as threats to the creation of the pure Islamic Middle East he envisioned, bin Laden also urged the use of violence against the United States until his demands were met.

Islamic justifications. While many people might criticize American involvement in the Middle East or its support for Israel, the vast majority do not resort to violence. To justify his violent diatribes, bin Laden embraced an Islamic schismatic movement that believed things could only be set right in the Middle East by restoring Islamic Sharia law (or, God's law) throughout the land. Bin Laden used Islam to justify the killing of innocent bystanders, arguing that, if they are right with God, they will enter Paradise for their sacrifice. The combination of legitimate complaint, wrong-headed scapegoating, advocacy of violence, and the promise of holy reward proved a deadly concoction.

29-1c USA PATRIOT Act

September 11 also allowed Bush to push his conservative social agenda domestically. Claiming his policies were useful in the war on terror, Bush (1) passed another round of tax cuts, aimed especially at the wealthy; (2) increased the size of the military; and (3) cut back spending on social welfare programs, the same three agenda items begun during the Reagan Revolution.

The war in Afghanistan gave Bush the political capital to push for greater intrusions into privacy as well. In an effort to root out terrorism, the **USA PATRIOT Act** allowed the federal government to monitor—without

USA PATRIOT Act Act passed in October 2001 allowing the federal government greater latitude in surveillance of its citizens in order to monitor for potential acts of terrorism

judicial warrants—libraries, bookstores, banks, and even people's homes, although notable abuses of these policies have yet to emerge.

29-2 REMAKING THE MIDDLE EAST?

With justifiable fears of another 9/11 attack keeping him, in his words, “up at night,” Bush decided to use his recently declared right to “preemptive action” in the war on terror.

29-2a Regime Change in Iraq

First on Bush's list was Iraq, the country his father had battled a decade before in the 1991 Gulf War, but which had been friendly toward the United States during the Cold War. Some of Bush's key advisors had been his father's advisors as well, and many of them were troubled by his father's 1991 decision not to invade Iraq in order to remove dictator Saddam Hussein. One of these was Bush's powerful vice president, Richard “Dick” Cheney.

To justify an invasion, the second Bush administration argued that Iraq had a variety of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including nuclear weapons, that it could use against the United States. (This claim has since proved to

be false, and CIA director George Tenet resigned for this failure of intelligence.) The administration also argued that there were traceable connections between bin Laden and Iraq (also never proven). And the Bush administration argued that Iraq had committed horrific and sustained human rights abuses against its political enemies since the U.S. departed in 1991, a claim no one rejected.

Critics and proponents alike disregarded most of this rhetoric and instead viewed the potential invasion as an attempt to remake the Middle East, which had been the breeding ground of much anti-American terrorism for three decades and which continued to be a crucially important region for the United States because of its large oil reserves. After several months of struggling for authorization, first from the U.S. Senate, then from the United Nations, Bush decided that their lukewarm approval was enough to merit an invasion. On March 19, 2003, 250,000 American and 45,000 British troops invaded Iraq, overtaking it and marching on the capital of Baghdad less than three weeks later. Nine months later, in December 2003, U.S. forces rooted Hussein out of a dirt hole and handed him over to his Iraqi enemies, who hanged him after a speedy trial (Map 29.1).

29-2b A Democratic Middle East?

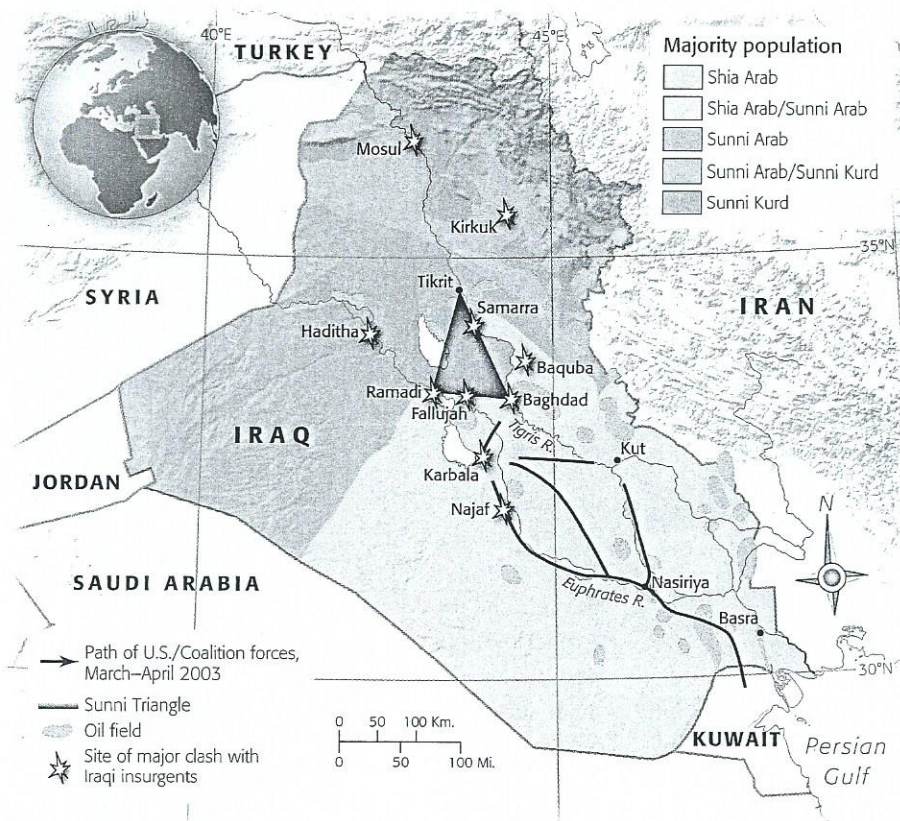
After the fall of Baghdad and the death of Saddam Hussein, the American military attempted for eight

years to create a democracy in Iraq. Violent attacks from insurgents continued throughout the attempt, and nearly ten times more Americans died in Iraq after President Bush declared victory in 2003, but some progress has been made. A hateful and hated dictator, Saddam Hussein, was ejected. In early 2005, Iraqis voted for members of a constitutional convention, and in May 2005, the convention elected its first prime minister and cabinet. By December 2011, the nation was deemed stable enough for the American operation to end formally, but the violent insurgency continues to kill Iraqis and destabilize the



Scott Nelson/Getty Images News/Getty Images

>> An Iraqi boy cheers as a statue of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein topples in Baghdad's al-Fardous (Paradise) Square on April 9, 2003.



Map 29.1 Iraq in Transition

>> A map of Iraq, showing the major battles of the Second Iraq War.

nation, leading many commentators, including some American military leaders, to suggest that creating a democratic state in Iraq might be impossible, with the more likely short- and perhaps long-term result being an enduring civil war between rival religious and ethnic factions.

29-2c Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay

In April 2004, at the same time U.S. forces were attempting to rebuild Iraq into what many hoped would be a stable democratic republic in the mold of the United States, America's claims to be fighting to expand freedoms in the Middle East were undermined by reports from Iraq. These news reports revealed that U.S. Army prison guards had tortured suspected terrorists in the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib. When pictures surfaced showing inmates strapped to electrical charges and stripped naked while being exposed to growling dogs, many Americans wondered how the U.S. government could claim to be advancing democracy while engaging in such behavior.

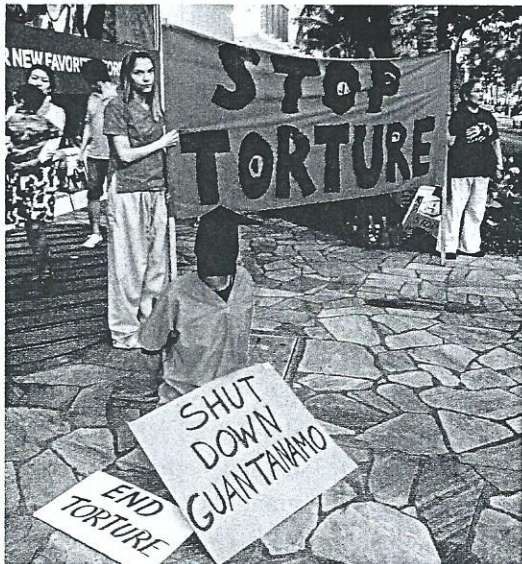
This debate carried over into the U.S. government's decision to bring some of the war's prisoners to a military detention camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where the United States secures a naval base opened by President Bush in 2002. The U.S. government quickly determined that the detention camp resided outside international law and thus could be used to bring alleged criminals and not grant them the benefit of a trial. Even worse, news reports emerged claiming that many of the alleged criminals had been tortured during their tenure in the prison. The United Nations and other international bodies have requested the camp be closed, but the U.S. government has yet to do so. As of early 2017, there were 41 prisoners there, once again calling into question the U.S. government's commitment to many tenets of democracy.

29-3 DOMESTIC WOES

As expenses for the fight against terrorism mounted, the economy slowed considerably from the frenetic pace of the 1990s. One reason was that the information technology companies that had sustained much of the 1990s growth began to consolidate. The broad expansion associated with creating an entirely new industry began to slow down.

29-3a Corporate Scandals

Concurrent with this slowdown, a number of corporate scandals erupted. The most shocking of these concerned the Enron Corporation, a large Houston energy company, which filed for bankruptcy in December 2001. Badly overextending itself in its quest to consolidate different kinds of businesses and led by unscrupulous cheats, the company could not pay its bills, leading to a spiral of other business



Anna Bryukhanova/Stock.com

>> The prison at Guantanamo Bay, where “enhanced interrogation techniques” were used to glean information from prisoners, has called into question America’s commitment to many tenets of democracy.

failures. Twenty thousand employees lost much of their pensions, while corrupt and mercenary executives, who saw the crash coming, cashed out before the company’s decline and were well provided for. The scandal prompted a congressional investigation, especially because President Bush was a close friend of several of Enron’s leaders, including its chairman, Kenneth Lay. Several other companies, including Arthur Andersen and Halliburton, also came under scrutiny, and many similarly fell into disrepute.

29-3b The Election of 2004

Bush came up for reelection with the newspapers filled with corporate scandals, continued insurgencies in Iraq, and a slowing economy. But his approval rating remained high, and many Americans praised his leadership following the September 11 attacks. In addition, the extreme partisanship that had emerged during the Clinton years ensured that Bush would have a strong base of conservative supporters, no matter what his current political status.

THE CANDIDATES

For their part, the Democrats nominated Massachusetts senator John Kerry, a Vietnam War hero who in

the 1970s had alarmed many veterans when he came home from Vietnam and began publicly calling the war a mistake. During the 2004 election, Kerry argued that Bush had lost touch with middle-class Americans. He pointed to Bush’s tax cuts for the wealthy and his eagerness to intervene in Iraq despite the American population’s tepid support. But Kerry was hurt by his lack of charisma and his uncertainty about what he would do in Iraq if he were elected president. His image was also tarnished by an expensive media blitz from conservative shadow organizations that questioned his heretofore untarnished military record in Vietnam.

THE ELECTION

Polls revealed that the election would be close. It was. But in the end, Americans decided that Bush had done an acceptable job defending America’s interests abroad. The president was also boosted by the continued development of Republican grassroots support in states vital to the election. In 2004, Florida was clearly a Bush state after the Republicans had spent millions of dollars there to develop and encourage voter turnout. In the 2004 election, no recount was necessary.

29-3c Hurricane Katrina

Seven months after Bush was sworn into his second term as president, a huge hurricane swept across the Caribbean, pummeling the Gulf Coast. Katrina had been a mild, Category 1 hurricane as it crossed Florida from the Atlantic, but it picked up strength in the Gulf of Mexico, wreaking havoc on Gulf Coast cities in Florida, Mississippi, and Alabama. Then the storm took an unexpected northward turn, slamming into New Orleans. While many locals had fled the city, most of those who remained witnessed a harsh storm but, they thought, not one strong enough to destroy the city. They were wrong. After the hurricane passed, it became clear that the storm had fatally weakened several already defective levees that protected the city from nearby waterways. Because much of the city sits below sea level, once the levees failed, the city filled with water. Entire districts drowned. People were told to go to the Louisiana Superdome for shelter, only to find the Superdome overcrowded, leaking, and generally unprepared to handle the crisis.

The federal government was slow to respond to the Katrina disaster, waiting several days to send in relief workers. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which was supposed to assist in these kinds of tragedies, was slow to coordinate efforts and, in numerous instances, stopped or impeded state or



>> The destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina showcased the persistence of racialized poverty in America. Many of the poor neighborhoods destroyed when New Orleans's levees broke were overwhelmingly populated by black Americans. Here, some of those stranded spell out H-E-L-P.

local efforts to provide relief because of its insistence on being the principal relief coordinator. Meanwhile, news cameras televised the destruction for the world to see. People were stranded on roofs for days, holding signs that read, "Help us, please." The most badly affected were African Americans, who made up a disproportionate number of the city's poor people. In total, around 1,900 people lost their lives during the hurricane, and the catastrophe showcased the continued racial imbalance in America's impoverished class.

29-3d The Financial Crisis of 2008

Domestic woes continued throughout 2008, culminating toward the end of that year with the announcement that several of the nation's largest banks had overextended themselves and were filing for bankruptcy protection from the federal government. Many smaller banks had consolidated into a handful of large ones, taking advantage of the 1999 repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act, the act that had been passed during the Great Depression to prevent rampant speculation by banks. Most of these large banks either had offered housing loans to unqualified buyers by enticing them through low, "teaser"

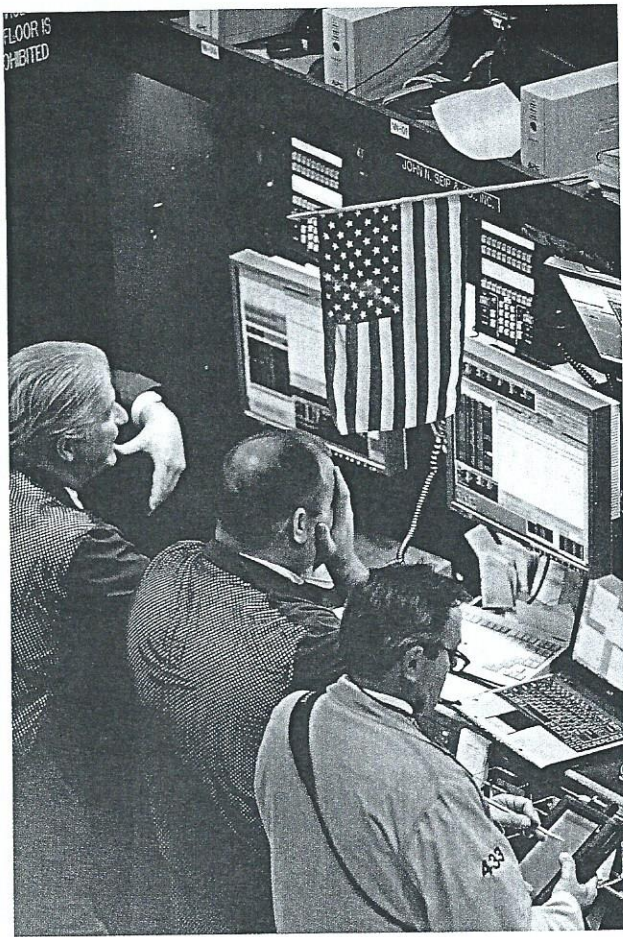
rates or had purchased large numbers of these risky loans from other banks. When buyers began defaulting on their loans, often once the three-or five-year "teaser" rates expired, banks stopped receiving payments and went into a cash crisis. Unwilling to part with their remaining cash reserves, they made it more difficult for borrowers to obtain loans and less money entered the American economy. Businesses stopped expanding, and people became increasingly unable to borrow money to buy homes and goods. With the consumer market slowing down, the rest of the economy slowed down as well, and by late 2008 the American economy settled into what economists have called "the Great Recession."

Making matters worse, the economic crunch was not simply an American phenomenon. European banks had made similar gambles, badly overextending investments and often defaulting. Many nations took these banks into receivership, taking on the burden of their debts, and many nations whose economies

were not as large as the United States (including Iceland, Greece, and Spain) are still badly in debt, barely managing to stave off national bankruptcy.

To address the growing urgency of the crisis, the American federal government passed a financial bailout of its own banks in October 2008, offering as much as \$750 billion of taxpayers' money to ease the credit crunch. The bank bailout prevented many of the nation's largest banks from declaring bankruptcy, but nonetheless, with less money in the markets, that money harder to access, and countries around the world falling into similar travails, a deep recession took hold in 2008, and world markets reacted erratically and unhelpfully. Throughout 2008, for example, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, the benchmark average of stock prices, declined by nearly 40 percent.

During 2008 and 2009, the U.S. unemployment rate remained just under 10 percent, significantly less than the 25 percent mark reached during the Great Depression, although changes in the way the number of unemployed are tallied make direct comparisons difficult. The housing market stalled as well, and many consumer industries had a difficult time convincing Americans to part with their money.



New York Daily News Archive/Getty Images

>> Traders were despondent watching the events of October 9, 2008. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 678.91 points that day, to finish at 8579.19, closing below 9000 for the first time since 2003 and representing a crushing 40 percent loss in value for the year.

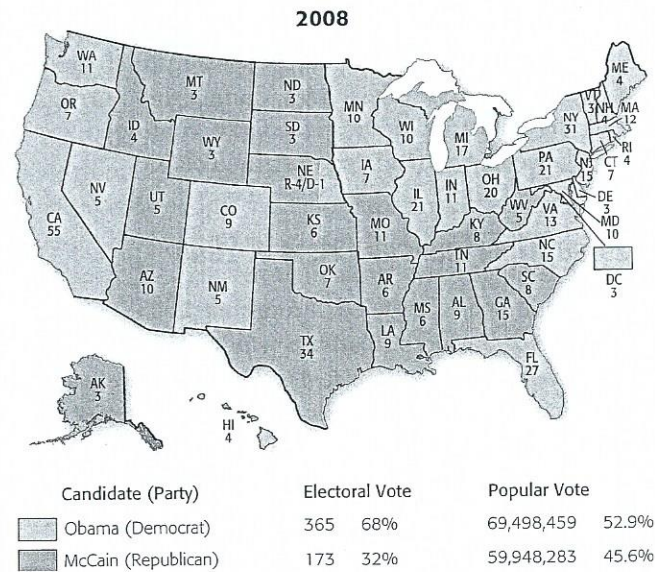
29-4 PRESIDENT OBAMA

As Bush concluded his second term in office, the nation was divided by culture wars, frightening foreign events continued to preoccupy Americans, and, most importantly, the economy seemed on the verge of collapse. In the atmosphere of Republican failure, Democrats sensed they could win back the White House and, perhaps, stop the conservative ascendancy that had been mounting since the 1970s. Democrats vowed to expand some social programs, including nationalizing America's health care system. They promised to take a less militant stance in world affairs,

hoping to reach out diplomatically to potentially hostile countries. And they promised to rein in the war on terror.

29-4a The Election of 2008

Within these debates, the Democratic Party witnessed the emergence of two historic candidates, Hillary Clinton, senator from New York State and former First Lady, and Barack Obama, a mixed-race senator from Illinois. After a grueling primary battle, Obama became the first African American to win the nomination of a major political party, a dramatic demonstration of the transformation of American life since the civil rights movement. Promising a change from the cultural wars ascendant since the 1980s, Obama squared off against Vietnam War veteran John McCain, who, at seventy-two, would have become the oldest person to win the presidency. But McCain's candidacy was plagued by his ties to the increasingly unpopular George W. Bush and by a generally disorganized campaign. In addition, his vice-presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, the governor of Alaska, polarized the population with her folksy antigovernment rhetoric and her seeming lack of preparedness for the job, something especially troubling because of McCain's age. Meanwhile, Obama's message of practical centrism and an end to the politics of division was greatly boosted by the economic turmoil taking place in the midst of the campaign (and on the watch of a Republican president). On Election Day, the race was not close, with Obama handily winning the Electoral College and emerging with 52 percent of the popular vote to McCain's 46 percent—a difference of more than 7 million voters (see Map 29.2).



Map 29.2 The Election of 2008

29-4b Obama's Presidency

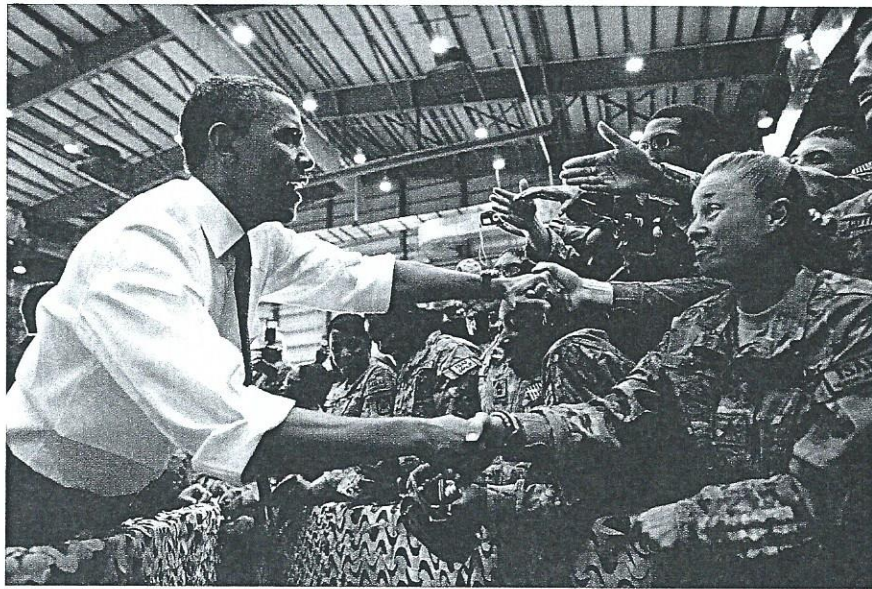
As president, Obama confronted a host of challenges, but three issues occupied him most: (1) drawing down the war on terror; (2) passing the nation's first comprehensive health care bill; and (3) handling the Great Recession and the collection of protestors surrounding it.

DRAWING DOWN THE WAR ON TERROR

The expenses of waging a nebulous war on terror continued to mount throughout Obama's first term, although he did develop several benchmarks by which U.S. troops would be removed from both Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of these were quickly met, and in December 2011, the United States officially withdrew its troops from Iraq, the last troops departing on December 18.

Sectarian violence has continued to plague the Middle Eastern nation, though, especially between Sunni and Shia Arabs competing for political control of Iraq. In 2013 and 2014, several extremist militant Sunni groups from Iraq merged with various militant groups in Syria and created a new organization, called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (**ISIL**). Demanding a return to a caliphate ruling over all Muslims in the world, and governed by a stern interpretation of Islamic law, ISIL has gained converts in both the Middle East and several Western nations. It currently controls land occupied by more than ten million people in the region. The State Department has declared ISIL to be among the world's most dangerous groups, and almost every mainstream Muslim group has disavowed it.

Creating a stable Afghanistan has been equally tricky. On December 28, 2014, NATO officially ended combat operations with a ceremony in Kabul, although the U.S. continued to have a significant military presence throughout the country. The goal of the more than 10,000 American troops is to prevent political instability and curtail the continued use of violence by radical Islamic groups. It is unclear when a complete withdrawal will happen. The United States' broad departure from Afghanistan, though, was due in large part to the death of Osama bin Laden, who was finally located and assassinated on May 2, 2011. For a few days thereafter, the United States briefly overcame its increasing



White House Photo/Pete Souza

>> President Obama greeting troops during his surprise visit to Afghanistan on May 1, 2012.

political divisions to celebrate the death of the mastermind of 9/11. Shortly thereafter, President Obama announced an end to the "war on terror," favoring instead more targeted attacks against specific groups.

Obama was, however, less willing to draw down other instruments in the name of national security. The detention camps at Guantanamo Bay continue to exist despite Obama's campaign promises to close them, and Obama did renew George W. Bush's PATRIOT Act. He also revealed that, as American troops left the Middle East, the military has increasingly relied on unmanned drones that, guided by on-the-ground-intelligence, have targeted and sometimes killed key enemy personnel (as well as many innocents) in an effort to prevent American enemies from rising to power.

In addition, President Obama did little to dismantle the various spying programs developed by the National Security Agency (NSA). This led to some embarrassing diplomatic situations, as when it was discovered that the NSA had been spying on a close American ally, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, by tapping her cellular phone.

This culture of surveillance has led to many criticisms, including several occurrences of citizens leaking huge amounts of classified information on the Internet. The most dramatic of these leaks occurred in

ISIL a jihadist militant group that follows a fundamentalist doctrine of Sunni Islam and uses violence and terrorism in its attempts to return an Islamic caliphate



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

>> In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor became the U.S. Supreme Court's 111th justice, its third woman, and its first Hispanic. With Sotomayor's confirmation, the Court also for the first time did not have a single Protestant member, but six Catholics and three Jews. It was a measure of Catholic and Jewish acceptance in modern America that hardly anyone noticed.

2010, when the hacking organization wikileaks posted more than 250,000 classified documents relating to all sorts of government activity. Wikileaks was not alone however, and the sheer amount of leaks has led to vigorous debates about what a government is entitled to keep from its citizens.

THE HEALTH CARE ACT

While having marginal success in drawing down the war on terror, Obama did have better luck passing the nation's first comprehensive health care bill. It came after a difficult, year-long debate, concluding in March 2010. The bill's aim was to ensure that all Americans had some form of health insurance, including the 40 million who at the time of the bill's signing did not have any. The law allowed parents to extend coverage to their children until they turn twenty-six years old. It also made it illegal for health insurance companies to deny insurance to people with

Affordable Care Act A federal statute signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010, designed to increase health insurance quality and affordability, and increase the number of Americans covered by health insurance. Opponents derisively called it "Obamacare," a name President Obama eventually adopted himself

preexisting conditions, a common occurrence before the bill passed. It gave small businesses tax breaks for offering health care for their employees. And it set a deadline to create a marketplace for affordable care. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld challenges to the **Affordable Care Act** in 2012 and 2015, and the Act was completely rolled out in 2014. Republican attempts to overturn it failed in fall of 2017, and the law was one of the major liberal accomplishments of the first decades of the twenty-first century, expanding, however slightly, the social safety net first proposed during the Progressive Era more than one hundred years prior.

CONTINUED DIVISIONS OF WEALTH

If Obama had success in passing a comprehensive health care bill and concluding certain aspects of the war on terror, the economy continued to plague him. In 2010, Obama modestly increased banking regulations, attempting to prevent further financial crises in an industry that has quickly sped ahead of outdated laws and been hampered by thirty years of deregulation. He also passed a large stimulus bill that initiated more than 75,000 projects across the nation. And indeed, the economy began to grow again, beginning in 2010 and picking up pace ever since.

This growth, however, has been uneven. The growing sectors of the economy have largely favored the well educated. Manufacturing, on the other hand, has continued to decline, leaving less educated Americans with few job options beyond working in the service industry. The result has been an increase in the division of wealth that re-appeared in the late 1970s and has grown ever since.

29-4c Backlash from the Right and the Left

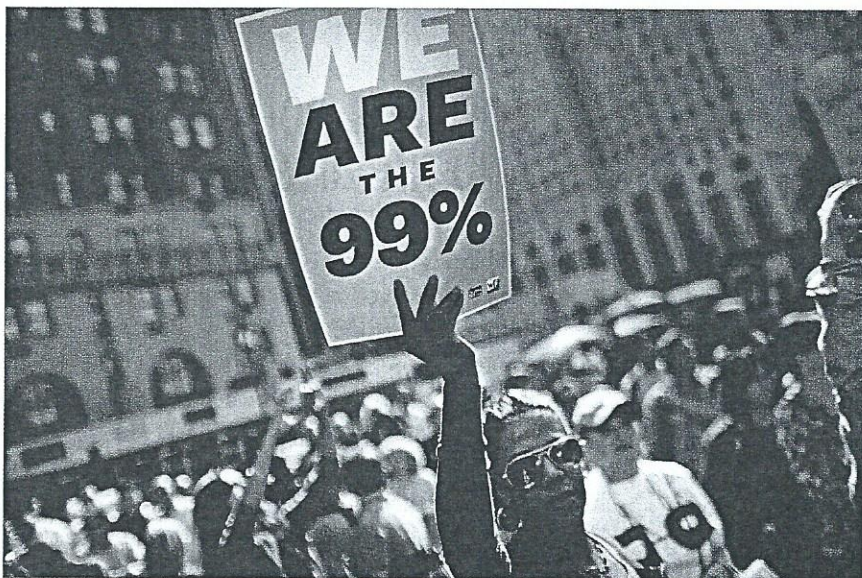
Given that Reagan, then Bill Clinton, then George W. Bush all used the language of advocating small government (even if their actions did not live up to the rhetoric), it was predictable that a conservative backlash would emerge to Obama's efforts to institute things like mandatory health care and to bail out several failing industries. Calling themselves the Tea Party and embracing the folksy language of Sarah Palin, in early 2009 many conservative Americans began protesting what they saw as Obama's expansion of the federal government, a complaint made against Democrats since the New Deal. With Tea Party support, in 2010 Republicans won back control of the House of Representatives, although it wasn't entirely clear whether the results reflected a genuine sentiment against Obama's expansion of the welfare state or a broader discomfort with

the stalled economy. Furthermore, in 2010 Republicans took advantage of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which prohibited the federal government from limiting the amount of money corporations could spend on elections. The combination of increased corporate expenditures and free-market libertarianism espoused by the Tea Party has captured increasing amounts of the Republican Party since its inception.

If the Tea Party flanked Obama from the right and took hold of the Republican Party, another movement emerged from the left. Calling themselves Occupy Wall Street, in September 2011, a group of disaffected Americans began to camp out in Zuccotti Park, adjacent to Wall Street in lower Manhattan, New York. Using the slogan "We are the 99 percent," the protestors raged against the growing gap in wealth distribution in the United States, especially between the top 1 percent of wealth capturers and the rest of the population. The protestors rejected more typical political protests, seeing politics as overly infected by corporate wealth and useless in advocating real social change. The protest sparked a wave of sympathy movements across the nation, movements that demonstrated large-scale frustrations with the widening gap between America's haves and have-nots, and the perceived inability of either party to advocate for real progressive change.

29-4d Obama's Second Term

Despite the challenges from the right and the left, in 2012, Obama was easily re-elected, although the excitement he generated in 2008, when he promised "hope" and "change" from the divisive politics of the 1980s and 1990s,



seemed to have vanished, as his promise to introduce a new kind of responsive politics appeared largely unfulfilled. Nevertheless, Obama handily defeated his opponent, Willard "Mitt" Romney, who, when nominated by the Republican Party, became the first Mormon put forward as a presidential candidate from a major political party.

The election was less notable for its presidential election than for other results. Perhaps most telling was how the changes of the previous fifty years had transformed the electorate, especially the transformations brought about by the 1965 Immigration Act and the increasing recognition of the diversity of the United States. For instance, overwhelming numbers of ethnic and racial minorities voted for Obama (making up 45 percent of his total popular vote—a record), while white Americans supported Romney, 59 percent to 39 percent. Meanwhile, more than 55 percent of women voted for Obama, while only 47 percent of men did.

Reflecting similar trends, in Wisconsin, Tammy Baldwin became the first openly gay person elected to the U.S. Senate. Ballot initiatives allowing same-sex marriage passed in Maine, Maryland, and Washington, while Minnesota voters rejected a constitutional ban on the practice. Twenty women were elected to the Senate, a record, while a state like New Hampshire sent all women to Congress, elected a female governor, and chose a female-controlled state legislature.

GAY MARRIAGE

Another major transition has occurred in the years following Obama's re-election: the widespread acceptance of gay marriage, which, in June 2015, became the law of the land. Since 2004, when Massachusetts legalized same-sex marriage, several states passed laws making similar allowances. An opposition arose, with opponents of same-sex marriage pushing for state laws, and sometimes even state constitutional amendments, assuring

>> In 2011, protestors in New York City began a movement to challenge increased income disparity in American life. Using the slogan, "We are the 99%," the protest quickly spread nationwide.

Spencer Platt/Getty Images



>> The movement to increase the rights of gay Americans started a major uptick in the 1990s, beginning with the movement to allow openly gay people to serve in the military (shown here) and continuing to the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015.

half of his presidency paved the way for populism on the right and left to help shape the 2016 election.

29-5a Black Lives Matter

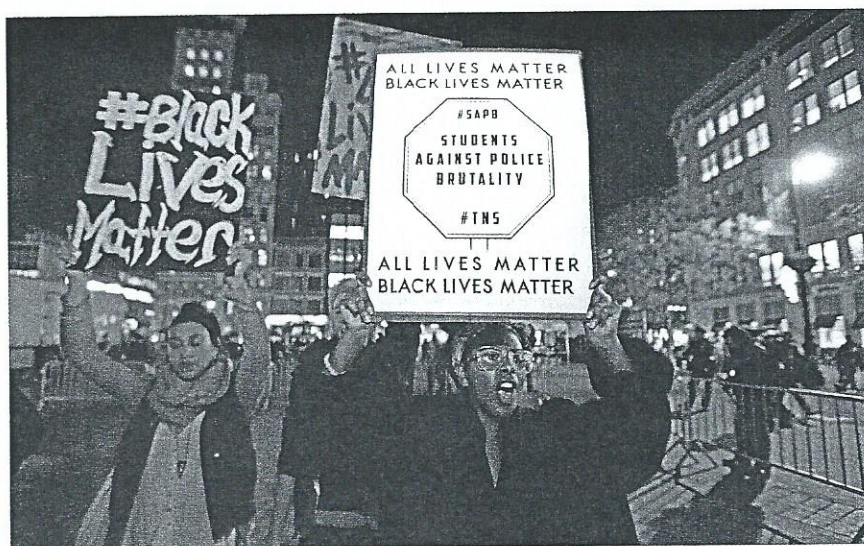
If Obama could celebrate the legalization of same-sex marriage, he, and many other Americans, were troubled by a seeming increase in racialized violence in 2014 and 2015. It began with the 2013 killing of an unarmed black Florida teenager named Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, a member of the local neighborhood watch. Zimmerman was later acquitted of second-degree murder, leading to bouts of protest across the nation. Unrest continued through the 2014 killings, all

by police, of Micheal Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Walter Scott in South Carolina, John Crawford III in Ohio, and Eric Garner in New York City. Large numbers of Americans of all races began to protest the seemingly wanton violence targeted at African American men. That many of these murders were filmed by passers-by using mobile phones prompted many Americans to wonder how widespread the practice was and how many instances went unrecorded. Rather than serve as a harbinger of a postracial America, where ethnic and racial identities didn't matter as much as they had in previous years, it seemed the Obama presidency was just as markedly amping up age-old racial hatreds.

To call attention to the violence, a protest campaign, under the banner "Black Lives Matter," held marches across the country. Alas, it wasn't marches but more violence that led to perhaps the most substantive change. On June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old white man named Dylann Roof allegedly entered Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine people including the senior pastor, state senator Clementa C. Pinckney. The church's history as one of the nation's oldest black churches, and Roof's apparent engagement with several racist organizations (including numerous photographs of him with a Confederate flag) suggested it was a racist hate crime. In response, several Southern leaders, Republican and Democrat, demanded the removal of Confederate flags from public buildings throughout their states. Many quoted President Obama's eulogy for Pinckney, where he said, "history can't be a sword to justify injustice or a shield against progress. It must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, how to break the cycle, a roadway toward a better world."

29-5b The Rise of Hate Groups

The shooting in Charleston may have been the work of a lone gunman, but groups embodying this type of hate almost doubled in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century. Hate groups are those perpetuating beliefs or practices that attack an entire class of people, usually for characteristics those people can't change. The spike could be attributed to increased immigration and the inability of the federal government to curb it, President Obama's skin color, and negative media images (and actions) of Muslims and other groups committing acts of terrorism. Since 2015, anti-Muslim groups increased by almost 200%. In 2016, there were at least 130 Ku Klux Klan groups operating, and the number of "patriot" groups, threatened by the perceived



>> A 2014 march in New York City protesting the continued harassment and violence perpetrated against African Americans. Under the banner “Black Lives Matter,” the protesters brought national attention to an issue that has plagued the African American community for decades.

a katz/Shutterstock.com

decline in power of white Protestant Americans, grew to more than 660. These groups would come to play an outsized role in the 2016 presidential election.

29-5c The 2016 Presidential Campaign

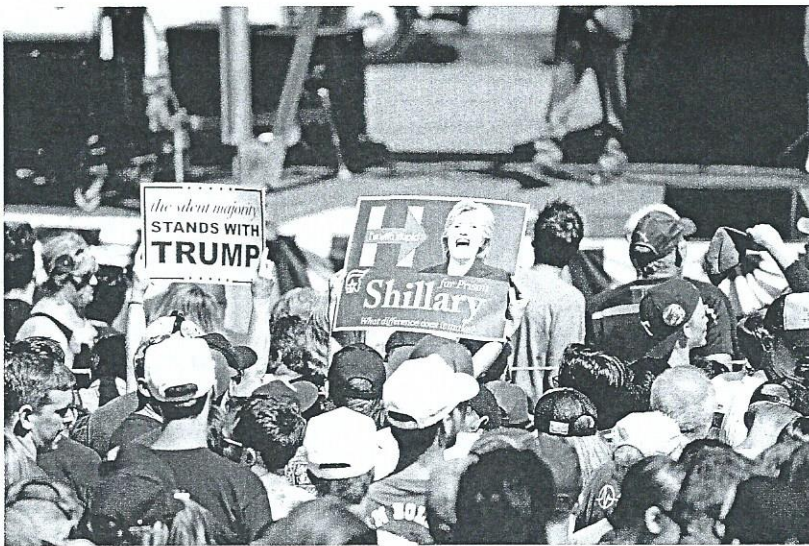
In 2016, the economy remained strong but gains were increasingly tilted to the wealthiest Americans. Obama had shored up American banks and corporations with bailouts and other government incentives. But he had done little to promote jobs programs for the middle class or rebuild the sagging American infrastructure. Wages for most of his two terms stagnated. He had tread softly in shaping environmental policy, shepherding the United States through various international agreements without becoming an environmental leader. And he had done little to solve long-standing issues such as immigration or increased corporate involvement in American politics. In short, his socially moderate, internationally minded, business-friendly policies resembled “the third way” pioneered by Bill Clinton in the 1990s. Even his most far-reaching expansion of the social safety net, the Affordable Care Act, had its origins in Republican think tanks and was moderate compared to proposals coming from the political left.

Both the major parties, in turn, were beset by outsider candidates, populist politicians from the left and the right. From the left, Vermont Senator Bernard “Bernie” Sanders voiced a sustained critique of Obama’s mainstream liberalism. Sanders advocated a stronger social safety net developed by the government, higher taxes on the wealthy, regulations on corporations, and a rebuilding of the nation’s infrastructure through a broadening of middle-class jobs. Many on the left saw his rebuke of both mainstream Democrats and Republicans as a breath of fresh air; the Clintonian

third way, in their view, seemed only to enhance the fortunes of the wealthiest Americans.

In the Democratic primary, Sanders gained traction in states in the American northeast, where factories had been hollowed out after the great post-World War II economic boom. But it was another candidate who eventually secured the nomination. Hillary Clinton, who had narrowly lost the 2008 nomination to Barack Obama, eventually defeated Sanders after a long primary season, and served as the embodiment of continuing the policies of mainstream American liberalism. The populist left had been defeated, but only narrowly.

There would be no such defeat on the right. A large number of seasoned politicians entered the Republican primary, but it was a true outsider who, from the beginning, stole the limelight. Donald J. Trump was not taken very seriously as a candidate at first. The scion of a millionaire real estate mogul from New York City, Trump continued his father’s legacy and made a name for himself as America’s businessman *par excellence* in the 1980s and 1990s. He parlayed that success into becoming a reality television star, using the signature line, “you’re fired,” in his show “The Apprentice.” He then became increasingly political during the Obama presidency, firing off tweets and Facebook messages that constantly criticized the president, even going so far as to question the president’s birth place, claiming Obama wasn’t born in the United States and was thus ineligible to be president. On the campaign trail, Trump spoke his mind, made numerous gaffes and false accusations, but his rambunctious sensibility resonated with a certain part of the electorate that was disaffected by mainstream liberalism and tired of constant reminders that the United States was a multicultural nation committed



JASON REDMOND/Getty Images

>> The 2016 election was full of raucous name-calling and dismissiveness, on both sides. Here, supporters of Donald Trump lambast Hillary Clinton for her supposed corruptness.

to diversity and multiculturalism. Trump's most insistent campaign promises included building a thousand-mile long wall along the border between the United States and Mexico in order to keep Mexicans from illegally crossing into the U.S.; repealing the Affordable Care Act, which he derisively called "Obamacare"; having a stronger hand in international affairs; and passing a vague series of economic reforms. All told, he vowed to "Make America Great Again," although he never specified to what past it was he was referring.

Up until the night of the election, pollsters anticipated a Clinton triumph, a seeming reassurance of the continued success of mainstream liberalism. It quickly became apparent, however, that several of the states in the American Rust Belt were increasingly leaning toward Trump. In addition, in the large cities of those states, which Obama had carried overwhelmingly, Clinton was not winning by as wide a margin, or drawing as large of a turnout. By the end of the night, it was clear Clinton was going to win the popular vote by as many as three million votes, but that Trump would take the electoral college and become the next president. And that is exactly what happened. Clinton won overwhelming majorities in reliably Democratic states like California and New York, but Trump had narrowly carried many more mid-sized and smaller states, like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, giving him the win in the Electoral College. For the fifth time in American history, and the second time since 2000, the winner of the popular vote would

not become president (and in both recent occurrences, it was a Democrat who won the popular vote but lost the electoral college).

29-5d President Trump

Since becoming president, Trump has forged ahead tumultuously. During his first hundred days, he tried to halt travel from several Middle Eastern nations, attempts that were eventually barred by the courts. He tried to repeal the Affordable Care Act, but could not get enough votes in Congress to pass a full repeal, despite Congress being controlled by Republicans. And he continues to be hounded by his close ties to leading members of the right-wing media and by his relationship with Vladimir Putin, the president of the Russian Federation. He even took flack for firing the Director of the FBI, James Comey, who was in charge of investigat-

ing Trump's connections to the role Russian hackers played in the 2016 election. Trump did succeed in getting Neil Gorsuch appointed to the US Supreme Court, assuring that body's conservative tilt for the foreseeable future.

But Trump's presidency has also revitalized activists on the left. Immediately following his election, protestors around the U.S. staged simultaneous protests in what was called "the Women's March." Its list of demands included women's rights, immigration reform, healthcare reform, LGBTQ rights, racial equality, and workers' rights. Between the 408 simultaneous marches around the country, it was the largest one-day protest in U.S. history.

Trump's presidency seems to have exacerbated political divides in the country, as increasing numbers of Americans leave behind mainstream liberalism in favor of something more responsive to their needs. In this, the U.S. is following the trend of other nations around the world, including Britain, France, and the Netherlands.

>LOOKING AHEAD...

As the United States delves deeper into the twenty-first century, it proceeds with its unique blend of belief and fear: belief that the country will inevitably and always improve, and fear that any change

will unmoor the country from the traditions of the past. Issues such as environmental degradation, political gridlock, and increased income inequality continue to plague the country, as does a broader sense that the nation is unified in any significant way. What does it mean

to fulfill the American dream? Who decides what that dream is, anyway? Regardless of how the debate turns out, it is the debate itself that is the most American of traits, a debate about the shape of the future that continues to create the American present.

STUDY TOOLS 29

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- Find videos for further exploration.
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- Read a revealing biography of Osama bin Laden published by *The Observer* of London.
- Read the BBC's examination of the Enron scandal.
- Read Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the UN advocating war with Iraq.

CH 29 TIMELINE

2000 Reality TV shows experience an explosion of popularity, beginning with *Big Brother* and *Survivor*.

2001 Republican Congress passes Bush's \$1.3 trillion tax cut.
September 11: Terrorists fly hijacked planes into World Trade Center, Pentagon; over 3,000 die.
October: United States invades Taliban-controlled Afghanistan to hunt down al Qaeda and bin Laden. Bush forms fifteenth cabinet position for Department of Homeland Security.

2002 Enron bankruptcy begins series of corporate scandals of fraud and corruption.

What Else Was Happening

Apple launches the iPod, revolutionizing the music industry.