**THE GREAT UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (U.S.A. OR USA), COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE UNITED STATES (U.S. OR US) OR AMERICA, IS A COUNTRY PRIMARILY LOCATED IN NORTH AMERICA. IT CONSISTS OF 50 STATES, A FEDERAL DISTRICT, FIVE MAJOR UNINCORPORATED TERRITORIES, 326 INDIAN RESERVATIONS, AND SOME MINOR POSSESSIONS.[J] AT 3.8 MILLION SQUARE MILES (9.8 MILLION SQUARE KILOMETERS), IT IS THE WORLD'S THIRD- OR FOURTH-LARGEST COUNTRY BY TOTAL AREA.[D] THE UNITED STATES SHARES SIGNIFICANT LAND BORDERS WITH CANADA TO THE NORTH AND MEXICO TO THE SOUTH, AS WELL AS LIMITED MARITIME BORDERS WITH THE BAHAMAS, CUBA, AND RUSSIA. WITH A POPULATION OF MORE THAN 331 MILLION PEOPLE, IT IS THE THIRD MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN THE WORLD. THE NATIONAL CAPITAL IS WASHINGTON, D.C., AND THE MOST POPULOUS CITY IS NEW YORK CITY.**

**PALEO-INDIANS MIGRATED FROM SIBERIA TO THE NORTH AMERICAN MAINLAND AT LEAST 12,000 YEARS AGO, AND EUROPEAN COLONIZATION BEGAN IN THE 16TH CENTURY. THE UNITED STATES EMERGED FROM THE THIRTEEN BRITISH COLONIES ESTABLISHED ALONG THE EAST COAST. DISPUTES OVER TAXATION AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN LED TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR (1775–1783). IN 1788, FOUR YEARS AFTER ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE, THE STATES RATIFIED THE U.S. CONSTITUTION, ESTABLISHING A NEW FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WHICH REMAINS IN FORCE TODAY. IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY, THE COUNTRY BEGAN EXPANDING ACROSS NORTH AMERICA, GRADUALLY OBTAINING NEW TERRITORIES, SOMETIMES THROUGH WAR, FREQUENTLY DISPLACING NATIVE AMERICANS, AND ADMITTING NEW STATES; BY 1848, THE UNITED STATES SPANNED THE CONTINENT. SLAVERY WAS LEGAL IN THE SOUTHERN STATES, WHICH SPARKED THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (1861–1865). THE ULTIMATE VICTORY BY THE UNION LED TO SLAVERY'S ABOLITION. THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH SAW THE RAPID EXPANSION OF AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL CAPABILITIES. A MORE INTERVENTIONIST AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY WAS CONFIRMED BY THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES WON BY THE U.S. IN THE SPANISH–AMERICAN WAR. VICTORY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR IN 1918 MADE THE UNITED STATES INTO A WORLD POWER. THE U.S. FORGED A STRONG NEW CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE 1920S AND 1930S, WITH THE POPULARIZATION OF BASEBALL AND THE GROWING INTERNATIONAL ATTRACTION OF HOLLYWOOD AND JAZZ.**

**IN 1941, THE UNITED STATES FORMALLY ENTERED THE SECOND WORLD WAR AS A MEMBER OF THE ALLIED POWERS AFTER THE SURPRISE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR. ITS ARMED FORCES FOUGHT SIMULTANEOUSLY IN TWO MILITARY THEATERS, WESTERN EUROPE AND EAST ASIA. THE COUNTRY ALSO EXPERIENCED AN UNPARALLELED TRANSFORMATION THAT SAW THE RAPID EXPANSION OF ITS MILITARY, SCIENTIFIC, AND INDUSTRIAL MIGHT. IT ALSO PURSUED THE MANHATTAN PROJECT, A TOP SECRET EFFORT TO DEVELOP THE ATOMIC BOMB. THE UNITED STATES CAME OUT OF THE WAR AS A SUPERPOWER AND THE ONLY NATION WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IT PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN ESTABLISHING THE UNITED NATIONS AND DRAFTING THE 1947 CONSTITUTION OF JAPAN, WHICH HAD BEEN DEFEATED IN 1945.**

**IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION FACED GROWING TENSIONS THAT ESCALATED INTO THE COLD WAR, WHICH WOULD PLAY OUT FOR THE DURATION OF THE 20TH CENTURY. IT ALSO POSED THE POTENTIAL OF NUCLEAR CONFLICT WHEN IN 1949 THE SOVIET UNION DETONATED ITS FIRST ATOMIC WEAPON. THE UNITED STATES COUNTERED SOVIET ALLIES IN THE KOREAN WAR (A UN MANDATE) AND THE VIETNAM WAR (WITHOUT UN SUPPORT) BUT AVOIDED DIRECT MILITARY CONFLICT WITH THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. THE SPACE RACE, ANOTHER MEASURE OF U.S.–SOVIET COMPETITION DURING THE COLD WAR, RESULTED IN THE APOLLO 11 MISSION THAT SAW THE UNITED STATES LAND THE FIRST MAN ON THE MOON IN 1969. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION IN 1991 ENDED THE COLD WAR, LEAVING THE UNITED STATES AS THE WORLD'S SOLE SUPERPOWER FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES. IN THE 21ST CENTURY, THE UNITED STATES HAS INCREASINGLY BEEN CHALLENGED BY CHINA AS A DOMINANT SUPERPOWER.**

**THE UNITED STATES IS A FEDERAL REPUBLIC AND A REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY WITH THREE SEPARATE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING A BICAMERAL LEGISLATURE. IT IS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS, WORLD BANK, INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, NATO, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. IT IS A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL. CONSIDERED A MELTING POT OF CULTURES AND ETHNICITIES, ITS POPULATION HAS BEEN PROFOUNDLY SHAPED BY CENTURIES OF IMMIGRATION. THE COUNTRY RANKS HIGH IN INTERNATIONAL MEASURES OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM, QUALITY OF LIFE, EDUCATION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AND HAS LOW LEVELS OF PERCEIVED CORRUPTION. HOWEVER, THE COUNTRY HAS RECEIVED DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM CONCERNING INEQUALITY RELATED TO RACE, WEALTH AND INCOME, THE USE OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, HIGH INCARCERATION RATES, AND LACK OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE.**

**THE UNITED STATES IS A HIGHLY DEVELOPED COUNTRY, ACCOUNTS FOR APPROXIMATELY A QUARTER OF GLOBAL GDP, AND IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST ECONOMY. BY VALUE, THE UNITED STATES IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST IMPORTER AND THE SECOND-LARGEST EXPORTER OF GOODS. ALTHOUGH ITS POPULATION IS ONLY 4.2% OF THE WORLD'S TOTAL, IT HOLDS 29.4% OF THE TOTAL WEALTH IN THE WORLD, THE LARGEST SHARE HELD BY ANY COUNTRY. MAKING UP MORE THAN A THIRD OF GLOBAL MILITARY SPENDING, IT IS THE FOREMOST MILITARY POWER IN THE WORLD; AND IT IS A LEADING POLITICAL, CULTURAL, AND SCIENTIFIC FORCE INTERNATIONALLY.**

**ETYMOLOGY**

**THE FIRST KNOWN USE OF THE NAME "AMERICA" DATES BACK TO 1507, WHEN IT APPEARED ON A WORLD MAP PRODUCED BY THE GERMAN CARTOGRAPHER MARTIN WALDSEEMÜLLER. ON HIS MAP, THE NAME IS SHOWN IN LARGE LETTERS ON WHAT WOULD NOW BE CONSIDERED SOUTH AMERICA, IN HONOR OF AMERIGO VESPUCCI. THE ITALIAN EXPLORER WAS THE FIRST TO POSTULATE THAT THE WEST INDIES DID NOT REPRESENT ASIA'S EASTERN LIMIT BUT WERE PART OF A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN LANDMASS. IN 1538, THE FLEMISH CARTOGRAPHER GERARDUS MERCATOR USED THE NAME "AMERICA" ON HIS OWN WORLD MAP, APPLYING IT TO THE ENTIRE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.**

**THE FIRST DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF THE PHRASE "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" DATES FROM A JANUARY 2, 1776 LETTER WRITTEN BY STEPHEN MOYLAN TO GEORGE WASHINGTON'S AIDE-DE-CAMP JOSEPH REED. MOYLAN EXPRESSED HIS WISH TO GO "WITH FULL AND AMPLE POWERS FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO SPAIN" TO SEEK ASSISTANCE IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR EFFORT. THE FIRST KNOWN PUBLICATION OF THE PHRASE "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" WAS IN AN ANONYMOUS ESSAY IN THE VIRGINIA GAZETTE NEWSPAPER IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON APRIL 6, 1776.**

**THE SECOND DRAFT OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION, PREPARED BY JOHN DICKINSON AND COMPLETED NO LATER THAN JUNE 17, 1776, DECLARED "THE NAME OF THIS CONFEDERATION SHALL BE THE 'UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'." THE FINAL VERSION OF THE ARTICLES, SENT TO THE STATES FOR RATIFICATION IN LATE 1777, STATED THAT "THE STILE OF THIS CONFEDERACY SHALL BE 'THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA'." IN JUNE 1776, THOMAS JEFFERSON WROTE THE PHRASE "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" IN ALL CAPITALIZED LETTERS IN THE HEADLINE OF HIS "ORIGINAL ROUGH DRAUGHT" OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. THIS DRAFT OF THE DOCUMENT DID NOT SURFACE UNTIL JUNE 21, 1776, AND IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER IT WAS WRITTEN BEFORE OR AFTER DICKINSON USED THE TERM IN HIS JUNE 17 DRAFT OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION.**

**THE SHORT FORM "UNITED STATES" IS ALSO STANDARD. OTHER COMMON FORMS ARE THE "U.S.", THE "USA", AND "AMERICA". COLLOQUIAL NAMES ARE THE "U.S. OF A." AND, INTERNATIONALLY, THE "STATES". "COLUMBIA", A NAME POPULAR IN AMERICAN POETRY AND SONGS OF THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, DERIVES ITS ORIGIN FROM CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS; BOTH "COLUMBUS" AND "COLUMBIA" APPEAR FREQUENTLY IN U.S. PLACE-NAMES, INCLUDING COLUMBUS, OHIO, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA. PLACES AND INSTITUTIONS THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE BEAR THE TWO NAMES, INCLUDING COLÓN, PANAMA, THE COUNTRY OF COLOMBIA, THE COLUMBIA RIVER, AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.**

**THE PHRASE "UNITED STATES" WAS ORIGINALLY PLURAL IN AMERICAN USAGE. IT DESCRIBED A COLLECTION OF STATES—E.G., "THE UNITED STATES ARE." THE SINGULAR FORM BECAME POPULAR AFTER THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR AND IS NOW STANDARD USAGE IN THE U.S. A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES IS AN "AMERICAN". "UNITED STATES", "AMERICAN" AND "U.S." REFER TO THE COUNTRY ADJECTIVALLY ("AMERICAN VALUES", "U.S. FORCES"). IN ENGLISH, THE WORD "AMERICAN" RARELY REFERS TO TOPICS OR SUBJECTS NOT DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE UNITED STATES.**

**HISTORY**

**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND PRE-COLUMBIAN HISTORY**

**IT HAS BEEN GENERALLY ACCEPTED THAT THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF NORTH AMERICA MIGRATED FROM SIBERIA BY WAY OF THE BERING LAND BRIDGE AND ARRIVED AT LEAST 12,000 YEARS AGO; HOWEVER, SOME EVIDENCE SUGGESTS AN EVEN EARLIER DATE OF ARRIVAL. THE CLOVIS CULTURE, WHICH APPEARED AROUND 11,000 BC, IS BELIEVED TO REPRESENT THE FIRST WAVE OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT OF THE AMERICAS. THIS WAS LIKELY THE FIRST OF THREE MAJOR WAVES OF MIGRATION INTO NORTH AMERICA; LATER WAVES BROUGHT THE ANCESTORS OF PRESENT-DAY ATHABASKANS, ALEUTS, AND ESKIMOS.**

**OVER TIME, INDIGENOUS CULTURES IN NORTH AMERICA GREW INCREASINGLY COMPLEX, AND SOME, SUCH AS THE PRE-COLUMBIAN MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE IN THE SOUTHEAST, DEVELOPED ADVANCED AGRICULTURE, ARCHITECTURE, AND COMPLEX SOCIETIES. THE CITY-STATE OF CAHOKIA IS THE LARGEST, MOST COMPLEX PRE-COLUMBIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN THE MODERN-DAY UNITED STATES. IN THE FOUR CORNERS REGION, ANCESTRAL PUEBLOAN CULTURE DEVELOPED FROM CENTURIES OF AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENTATION. THE HAUDENOSAUNEE, LOCATED IN THE SOUTHERN GREAT LAKES REGION, WAS ESTABLISHED AT SOME POINT BETWEEN THE TWELFTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURIES. MOST PROMINENT ALONG THE ATLANTIC COAST WERE THE ALGONQUIAN TRIBES, WHO PRACTICED HUNTING AND TRAPPING, ALONG WITH LIMITED CULTIVATION.**

**ESTIMATING THE NATIVE POPULATION OF NORTH AMERICA AT THE TIME OF EUROPEAN CONTACT IS DIFFICULT. DOUGLAS H. UBELAKER OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION ESTIMATED THAT THERE WAS A POPULATION OF 92,916 IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC STATES AND A POPULATION OF 473,616 IN THE GULF STATES, BUT MOST ACADEMICS REGARD THIS FIGURE AS TOO LOW. ANTHROPOLOGIST HENRY F. DOBYNS BELIEVED THE POPULATIONS WERE MUCH HIGHER, SUGGESTING AROUND 1.1 MILLION ALONG THE SHORES OF THE GULF OF MEXICO, 2.2 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING BETWEEN FLORIDA AND MASSACHUSETTS, 5.2 MILLION IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY AND TRIBUTARIES, AND AROUND 700,000 PEOPLE IN THE FLORIDA PENINSULA.**

**EUROPEAN SETTLEMENTS**

**CLAIMS OF VERY EARLY COLONIZATION OF COASTAL NEW ENGLAND BY THE NORSE ARE DISPUTED AND CONTROVERSIAL. THE FIRST DOCUMENTED ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES IS THAT OF SPANISH CONQUISTADORS SUCH AS JUAN PONCE DE LEÓN, WHO MADE HIS FIRST EXPEDITION TO FLORIDA IN 1513. EVEN EARLIER, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS HAD LANDED IN PUERTO RICO ON HIS 1493 VOYAGE, AND SAN JUAN WAS SETTLED BY THE SPANISH A DECADE LATER. THE SPANISH SET UP THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS IN FLORIDA AND NEW MEXICO, SUCH AS SAINT AUGUSTINE, OFTEN CONSIDERED THE NATION'S OLDEST CITY, AND SANTA FE. THE FRENCH ESTABLISHED THEIR OWN SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, NOTABLY NEW ORLEANS. SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH SETTLEMENT OF THE EASTERN COAST OF NORTH AMERICA BEGAN WITH THE VIRGINIA COLONY IN 1607 AT JAMESTOWN AND WITH THE PILGRIMS' COLONY AT PLYMOUTH IN 1620. THE CONTINENT'S FIRST ELECTED LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, VIRGINIA'S HOUSE OF BURGESSES, WAS FOUNDED IN 1619. DOCUMENTS SUCH AS THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT AND THE FUNDAMENTAL ORDERS OF CONNECTICUT ESTABLISHED PRECEDENTS FOR REPRESENTATIVE SELF-GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTIONALISM THAT WOULD DEVELOP THROUGHOUT THE AMERICAN COLONIES. MANY SETTLERS WERE DISSENTING CHRISTIANS WHO CAME SEEKING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. IN 1784, THE RUSSIANS WERE THE FIRST EUROPEANS TO ESTABLISH A SETTLEMENT IN ALASKA, AT THREE SAINTS BAY. RUSSIAN AMERICA ONCE SPANNED MUCH OF THE PRESENT-DAY STATE OF ALASKA.**

**IN THE EARLY DAYS OF COLONIZATION, MANY EUROPEAN SETTLERS WERE SUBJECT TO FOOD SHORTAGES, DISEASE, AND ATTACKS FROM NATIVE AMERICANS. NATIVE AMERICANS WERE ALSO OFTEN AT WAR WITH NEIGHBORING TRIBES AND EUROPEAN SETTLERS. IN MANY CASES, HOWEVER, THE NATIVES AND SETTLERS CAME TO DEPEND ON ONE ANOTHER. SETTLERS TRADED FOR FOOD AND ANIMAL PELTS; NATIVES FOR GUNS, TOOLS AND OTHER EUROPEAN GOODS. NATIVES TAUGHT MANY SETTLERS TO CULTIVATE CORN, BEANS, AND OTHER FOODSTUFFS. EUROPEAN MISSIONARIES AND OTHERS FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO "CIVILIZE" THE NATIVE AMERICANS AND URGED THEM TO ADOPT EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND LIFESTYLES. HOWEVER, WITH THE INCREASED EUROPEAN COLONIZATION OF NORTH AMERICA, THE NATIVE AMERICANS WERE DISPLACED AND OFTEN KILLED. THE NATIVE POPULATION OF AMERICA DECLINED AFTER EUROPEAN ARRIVAL FOR VARIOUS REASONS, PRIMARILY DISEASES SUCH AS SMALLPOX AND MEASLES.**

**EUROPEAN SETTLERS ALSO BEGAN TRAFFICKING OF AFRICAN SLAVES INTO COLONIAL AMERICA VIA THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE. BECAUSE OF A LOWER PREVALENCE OF TROPICAL DISEASES AND BETTER TREATMENT, SLAVES HAD A MUCH HIGHER LIFE EXPECTANCY IN NORTH AMERICA THAN IN SOUTH AMERICA, LEADING TO A RAPID INCREASE IN THEIR NUMBERS. COLONIAL SOCIETY WAS LARGELY DIVIDED OVER THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF SLAVERY, AND SEVERAL COLONIES PASSED ACTS BOTH AGAINST AND IN FAVOR OF THE PRACTICE. HOWEVER, BY THE TURN OF THE 18TH CENTURY, AFRICAN SLAVES HAD SUPPLANTED EUROPEAN INDENTURED SERVANTS AS CASH CROP LABOR, ESPECIALLY IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH.**

**THE THIRTEEN COLONIES (NEW HAMPSHIRE, MASSACHUSETTS, CONNECTICUT, RHODE ISLAND, NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, PENNSYLVANIA, DELAWARE, MARYLAND, VIRGINIA, NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA, AND GEORGIA) THAT WOULD BECOME THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA WERE ADMINISTERED BY THE BRITISH AS OVERSEAS DEPENDENCIES. ALL NONETHELESS HAD LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WITH ELECTIONS OPEN TO MOST FREE MEN. WITH EXTREMELY HIGH BIRTH RATES, LOW DEATH RATES, AND STEADY SETTLEMENT, THE COLONIAL POPULATION GREW RAPIDLY, ECLIPSING NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATIONS. THE CHRISTIAN REVIVALIST MOVEMENT OF THE 1730S AND 1740S KNOWN AS THE GREAT AWAKENING FUELED INTEREST BOTH IN RELIGION AND IN RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.**

**DURING THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR (1756–1763), KNOWN IN THE U.S. AS THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR, BRITISH FORCES CAPTURED CANADA FROM THE FRENCH. WITH THE CREATION OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC, CANADA'S FRANCOPHONE POPULATION WOULD REMAIN ISOLATED FROM THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COLONIAL DEPENDENCIES OF NOVA SCOTIA, NEWFOUNDLAND AND THE THIRTEEN COLONIES. EXCLUDING THE NATIVE AMERICANS WHO LIVED THERE, THE THIRTEEN COLONIES HAD A POPULATION OF OVER 2.1 MILLION IN 1770, ABOUT A THIRD THAT OF BRITAIN. DESPITE CONTINUING NEW ARRIVALS, THE RATE OF NATURAL INCREASE WAS SUCH THAT BY THE 1770S ONLY A SMALL MINORITY OF AMERICANS HAD BEEN BORN OVERSEAS. THE COLONIES' DISTANCE FROM BRITAIN HAD ALLOWED THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-GOVERNMENT, BUT THEIR UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS MOTIVATED BRITISH MONARCHS TO PERIODICALLY SEEK TO REASSERT ROYAL AUTHORITY.**

**INDEPENDENCE AND EXPANSION**

**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR FOUGHT BY THE THIRTEEN COLONIES AGAINST THE BRITISH EMPIRE WAS THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL WAR OF INDEPENDENCE BY A NON-EUROPEAN ENTITY AGAINST A EUROPEAN POWER IN MODERN HISTORY. AMERICANS HAD DEVELOPED AN IDEOLOGY OF "REPUBLICANISM", ASSERTING THAT GOVERNMENT RESTED ON THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE AS EXPRESSED IN THEIR LOCAL LEGISLATURES. THEY DEMANDED THEIR "RIGHTS AS ENGLISHMEN" AND "NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION". THE BRITISH INSISTED ON ADMINISTERING THE EMPIRE THROUGH PARLIAMENT, AND THE CONFLICT ESCALATED INTO WAR.**

**THE SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ON JULY 4, 1776; THIS DAY IS CELEBRATED ANNUALLY AS INDEPENDENCE DAY. IN 1777, THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION ESTABLISHED A DECENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT THAT OPERATED UNTIL 1789.**

**AFTER ITS DEFEAT AT THE SIEGE OF YORKTOWN IN 1781, BRITAIN SIGNED A PEACE TREATY. AMERICAN SOVEREIGNTY BECAME INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED, AND THE COUNTRY WAS GRANTED ALL LANDS EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER. TENSIONS WITH BRITAIN REMAINED, HOWEVER, LEADING TO THE WAR OF 1812, WHICH WAS FOUGHT TO A DRAW. NATIONALISTS LED THE PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION OF 1787 IN WRITING THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, RATIFIED IN STATE CONVENTIONS IN 1788. GOING INTO FORCE IN 1789, THIS CONSTITUTION REORGANIZED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTO THREE BRANCHES, ON THE PRINCIPLE OF CREATING SALUTARY CHECKS AND BALANCES. GEORGE WASHINGTON, WHO HAD LED THE CONTINENTAL ARMY TO VICTORY, WAS THE FIRST PRESIDENT ELECTED UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION. THE BILL OF RIGHTS, FORBIDDING FEDERAL RESTRICTION OF PERSONAL FREEDOMS AND GUARANTEEING A RANGE OF LEGAL PROTECTIONS, WAS ADOPTED IN 1791.**

**ALTHOUGH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OUTLAWED AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE IN 1807, AFTER 1820, CULTIVATION OF THE HIGHLY PROFITABLE COTTON CROP EXPLODED IN THE DEEP SOUTH, AND ALONG WITH IT, THE SLAVE POPULATION. THE SECOND GREAT AWAKENING, ESPECIALLY IN THE PERIOD 1800–1840, CONVERTED MILLIONS TO EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTISM. IN THE NORTH, IT ENERGIZED MULTIPLE SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS, INCLUDING ABOLITIONISM; IN THE SOUTH, METHODISTS AND BAPTISTS PROSELYTIZED AMONG SLAVE POPULATIONS.**

**BEGINNING IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, AMERICAN SETTLERS BEGAN TO EXPAND WESTWARD, PROMPTING A LONG SERIES OF AMERICAN INDIAN WARS. THE 1803 LOUISIANA PURCHASE ALMOST DOUBLED THE NATION'S AREA, SPAIN CEDED FLORIDA AND OTHER GULF COAST TERRITORY IN 1819, THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS WAS ANNEXED IN 1845 DURING A PERIOD OF EXPANSIONISM, AND THE 1846 OREGON TREATY WITH BRITAIN LED TO U.S. CONTROL OF THE PRESENT-DAY AMERICAN NORTHWEST. VICTORY IN THE MEXICAN–AMERICAN WAR RESULTED IN THE 1848 MEXICAN CESSION OF CALIFORNIA AND MUCH OF THE PRESENT-DAY AMERICAN SOUTHWEST, MAKING THE U.S. SPAN THE CONTINENT.**

**THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH OF 1848–1849 SPURRED MIGRATION TO THE PACIFIC COAST, WHICH LED TO THE CALIFORNIA GENOCIDE AND THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL WESTERN STATES. THE GIVING AWAY OF VAST QUANTITIES OF LAND TO WHITE EUROPEAN SETTLERS AS PART OF THE HOMESTEAD ACTS, NEARLY 10% OF THE TOTAL AREA OF THE UNITED STATES, AND TO PRIVATE RAILROAD COMPANIES AND COLLEGES AS PART OF LAND GRANTS SPURRED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, NEW TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAYS MADE RELOCATION EASIER FOR SETTLERS, EXPANDED INTERNAL TRADE, AND INCREASED CONFLICTS WITH NATIVE AMERICANS. IN 1869, A NEW PEACE POLICY NOMINALLY PROMISED TO PROTECT NATIVE AMERICANS FROM ABUSES, AVOID FURTHER WAR, AND SECURE THEIR EVENTUAL U.S. CITIZENSHIP. NONETHELESS, LARGE-SCALE CONFLICTS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE WEST INTO THE 1900S.**

**CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION ERA**

**IRRECONCILABLE SECTIONAL CONFLICT REGARDING THE ENSLAVEMENT OF AFRICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS ULTIMATELY LED TO THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. WITH THE 1860 ELECTION OF REPUBLICAN ABRAHAM LINCOLN, CONVENTIONS IN THIRTEEN SLAVE STATES DECLARED SECESSION AND FORMED THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA (THE "SOUTH" OR THE "CONFEDERACY"), WHILE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (THE "UNION") MAINTAINED THAT SECESSION WAS ILLEGAL. IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THIS SECESSION, MILITARY ACTION WAS INITIATED BY THE SECESSIONISTS, AND THE UNION RESPONDED IN KIND. THE ENSUING WAR WOULD BECOME THE DEADLIEST MILITARY CONFLICT IN AMERICAN HISTORY, RESULTING IN THE DEATHS OF APPROXIMATELY 618,000 SOLDIERS AS WELL AS MANY CIVILIANS. THE UNION INITIALLY SIMPLY FOUGHT TO KEEP THE COUNTRY UNITED. NEVERTHELESS, AS CASUALTIES MOUNTED AFTER 1863 AND LINCOLN DELIVERED HIS EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE WAR FROM THE UNION'S VIEWPOINT BECAME THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY. INDEED, WHEN THE UNION ULTIMATELY WON THE WAR IN APRIL 1865, EACH OF THE STATES IN THE DEFEATED SOUTH WAS REQUIRED TO RATIFY THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT, WHICH PROHIBITED SLAVERY EXCEPT AS PENAL LABOR. TWO OTHER AMENDMENTS WERE ALSO RATIFIED, ENSURING CITIZENSHIP FOR BLACKS AND, AT LEAST IN THEORY, VOTING RIGHTS FOR THEM AS WELL.**

**RECONSTRUCTION BEGAN IN EARNEST FOLLOWING THE WAR. WHILE PRESIDENT LINCOLN ATTEMPTED TO FOSTER FRIENDSHIP AND FORGIVENESS BETWEEN THE UNION AND THE FORMER CONFEDERACY, HIS ASSASSINATION ON APRIL 14, 1865 DROVE A WEDGE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH AGAIN. REPUBLICANS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MADE IT THEIR GOAL TO OVERSEE THE REBUILDING OF THE SOUTH AND TO ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS. THEY PERSISTED UNTIL THE COMPROMISE OF 1877 WHEN THE REPUBLICANS AGREED TO CEASE PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE SOUTH IN ORDER FOR DEMOCRATS TO CONCEDE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1876.**

**SOUTHERN WHITE DEMOCRATS, CALLING THEMSELVES "REDEEMERS", TOOK CONTROL OF THE SOUTH AFTER THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION, BEGINNING THE NADIR OF AMERICAN RACE RELATIONS. FROM 1890 TO 1910, THE REDEEMERS ESTABLISHED SO-CALLED JIM CROW LAWS, DISENFRANCHISING MOST BLACKS AND SOME POOR WHITES THROUGHOUT THE REGION. BLACKS WOULD FACE RACIAL SEGREGATION NATIONWIDE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH. THEY ALSO OCCASIONALLY EXPERIENCED VIGILANTE VIOLENCE, INCLUDING LYNCHING.**

**FURTHER IMMIGRATION, EXPANSION, AND INDUSTRIALIZATION**

**IN THE NORTH, URBANIZATION AND AN UNPRECEDENTED INFLUX OF IMMIGRANTS FROM SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE SUPPLIED A SURPLUS OF LABOR FOR THE COUNTRY'S INDUSTRIALIZATION AND TRANSFORMED ITS CULTURE. NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING TELEGRAPH AND TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROADS, SPURRED ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GREATER SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN OLD WEST. THE LATER INVENTION OF ELECTRIC LIGHT AND THE TELEPHONE WOULD ALSO AFFECT COMMUNICATION AND URBAN LIFE.**

**THE UNITED STATES FOUGHT INDIAN WARS WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER FROM 1810 TO AT LEAST 1890. MOST OF THESE CONFLICTS ENDED WITH THE CESSION OF NATIVE AMERICAN TERRITORY AND THEIR CONFINEMENT TO INDIAN RESERVATIONS. ADDITIONALLY, THE TRAIL OF TEARS IN THE 1830S EXEMPLIFIED THE INDIAN REMOVAL POLICY THAT FORCIBLY RESETTLED INDIANS. THIS FURTHER EXPANDED ACREAGE UNDER MECHANICAL CULTIVATION, INCREASING SURPLUSES FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS. MAINLAND EXPANSION ALSO INCLUDED THE PURCHASE OF ALASKA FROM RUSSIA IN 1867. IN 1893, PRO-AMERICAN ELEMENTS IN HAWAII OVERTHREW THE HAWAIIAN MONARCHY AND FORMED THE REPUBLIC OF HAWAII, WHICH THE U.S. ANNEXED IN 1898. PUERTO RICO, GUAM, AND THE PHILIPPINES WERE CEDED BY SPAIN IN THE SAME YEAR, FOLLOWING THE SPANISH–AMERICAN WAR. AMERICAN SAMOA WAS ACQUIRED BY THE UNITED STATES IN 1900 AFTER THE END OF THE SECOND SAMOAN CIVIL WAR. THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS WERE PURCHASED FROM DENMARK IN 1917.**

**RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DURING THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES FOSTERED THE RISE OF MANY PROMINENT INDUSTRIALISTS. TYCOONS LIKE CORNELIUS VANDERBILT, JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, AND ANDREW CARNEGIE LED THE NATION'S PROGRESS IN THE RAILROAD, PETROLEUM, AND STEEL INDUSTRIES. BANKING BECAME A MAJOR PART OF THE ECONOMY, WITH J. P. MORGAN PLAYING A NOTABLE ROLE. THE AMERICAN ECONOMY BOOMED, BECOMING THE WORLD'S LARGEST. THESE DRAMATIC CHANGES WERE ACCOMPANIED BY SOCIAL UNREST AND THE RISE OF POPULIST, SOCIALIST, AND ANARCHIST MOVEMENTS. THIS PERIOD EVENTUALLY ENDED WITH THE ADVENT OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA, WHICH SAW SIGNIFICANT REFORMS INCLUDING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, ALCOHOL PROHIBITION, REGULATION OF CONSUMER GOODS, AND GREATER ANTITRUST MEASURES TO ENSURE COMPETITION AND ATTENTION TO WORKER CONDITIONS.**

**WORLD WAR I, GREAT DEPRESSION, AND WORLD WAR II**

**THE UNITED STATES REMAINED NEUTRAL FROM THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I IN 1914 UNTIL 1917 WHEN IT JOINED THE WAR AS AN "ASSOCIATED POWER" ALONGSIDE THE ALLIES OF WORLD WAR I, HELPING TO TURN THE TIDE AGAINST THE CENTRAL POWERS. IN 1919, PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON TOOK A LEADING DIPLOMATIC ROLE AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE AND ADVOCATED STRONGLY FOR THE U.S. TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS. HOWEVER, THE SENATE REFUSED TO APPROVE THIS AND DID NOT RATIFY THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES THAT ESTABLISHED THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.**

**IN 1920, THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT WON PASSAGE OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT GRANTING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. THE 1920S AND 1930S SAW THE RISE OF RADIO FOR MASS COMMUNICATION AND THE INVENTION OF EARLY TELEVISION. THE PROSPERITY OF THE ROARING TWENTIES ENDED WITH THE WALL STREET CRASH OF 1929 AND THE ONSET OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION. AFTER HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT IN 1932, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT RESPONDED WITH THE NEW DEAL. THE GREAT MIGRATION OF MILLIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS OUT OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH BEGAN BEFORE WORLD WAR I AND EXTENDED THROUGH THE 1960S; WHEREAS THE DUST BOWL OF THE MID-1930S IMPOVERISHED MANY FARMING COMMUNITIES AND SPURRED A NEW WAVE OF WESTERN MIGRATION.**

**AT FIRST EFFECTIVELY NEUTRAL DURING WORLD WAR II, THE UNITED STATES BEGAN SUPPLYING MATERIEL TO THE ALLIES IN MARCH 1941 THROUGH THE LEND-LEASE PROGRAM. ON DECEMBER 7, 1941, THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN LAUNCHED A SURPRISE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR, PROMPTING THE UNITED STATES TO JOIN THE ALLIES AGAINST THE AXIS POWERS, AND IN THE FOLLOWING YEAR, TO INTERN ABOUT 120,000 U.S. RESIDENTS (INCLUDING AMERICAN CITIZENS) OF JAPANESE DESCENT. ALTHOUGH JAPAN ATTACKED THE UNITED STATES FIRST, THE U.S. NONETHELESS PURSUED A "EUROPE FIRST" DEFENSE POLICY. THE UNITED STATES THUS LEFT ITS VAST ASIAN COLONY, THE PHILIPPINES, ISOLATED AND FIGHTING A LOSING STRUGGLE AGAINST JAPANESE INVASION AND OCCUPATION. DURING THE WAR, THE UNITED STATES WAS ONE OF THE "FOUR POWERS" WHO MET TO PLAN THE POSTWAR WORLD, ALONG WITH BRITAIN, THE SOVIET UNION, AND CHINA. ALTHOUGH THE NATION LOST AROUND 400,000 MILITARY PERSONNEL, IT EMERGED RELATIVELY UNDAMAGED FROM THE WAR WITH EVEN GREATER ECONOMIC AND MILITARY INFLUENCE.**

**THE UNITED STATES PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE BRETTON WOODS AND YALTA CONFERENCES, WHICH SIGNED AGREEMENTS ON NEW INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND EUROPE'S POSTWAR REORGANIZATION. AS AN ALLIED VICTORY WAS WON IN EUROPE, A 1945 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD IN SAN FRANCISCO PRODUCED THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER, WHICH BECAME ACTIVE AFTER THE WAR. THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN THEN FOUGHT EACH OTHER IN THE LARGEST NAVAL BATTLE IN HISTORY, THE BATTLE OF LEYTE GULF. THE UNITED STATES DEVELOPED THE FIRST NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND USED THEM ON JAPAN IN THE CITIES OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI IN AUGUST 1945; THE JAPANESE SURRENDERED ON SEPTEMBER 2, ENDING WORLD WAR II.**

**COLD WAR AND CIVIL RIGHTS ERA**

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. GIVES HIS FAMOUS "I HAVE A DREAM" SPEECH AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL DURING THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, 1963**

**U.S. PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN (LEFT) AND SOVIET GENERAL SECRETARY MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AT THE GENEVA SUMMIT IN 1985**

**AFTER WORLD WAR II, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION COMPETED FOR POWER, INFLUENCE, AND PRESTIGE DURING WHAT BECAME KNOWN AS THE COLD WAR, DRIVEN BY AN IDEOLOGICAL DIVIDE BETWEEN CAPITALISM AND COMMUNISM. THEY DOMINATED THE MILITARY AFFAIRS OF EUROPE, WITH THE U.S. AND ITS NATO ALLIES ON ONE SIDE AND THE SOVIET UNION AND ITS WARSAW PACT ALLIES ON THE OTHER. THE U.S. DEVELOPED A POLICY OF CONTAINMENT TOWARDS THE EXPANSION OF COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. WHILE THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION ENGAGED IN PROXY WARS AND DEVELOPED POWERFUL NUCLEAR ARSENALS, THE TWO COUNTRIES AVOIDED DIRECT MILITARY CONFLICT.**

**THE UNITED STATES OFTEN OPPOSED THIRD WORLD MOVEMENTS THAT IT VIEWED AS SOVIET-SPONSORED AND OCCASIONALLY PURSUED DIRECT ACTION FOR REGIME CHANGE AGAINST LEFT-WING GOVERNMENTS, OCCASIONALLY SUPPORTING AUTHORITARIAN RIGHT-WING REGIMES. AMERICAN TROOPS FOUGHT COMMUNIST CHINESE AND NORTH KOREAN FORCES IN THE KOREAN WAR OF 1950–1953. THE SOVIET UNION'S 1957 LAUNCH OF THE FIRST ARTIFICIAL SATELLITE AND ITS 1961 LAUNCH OF THE FIRST CREWED SPACEFLIGHT INITIATED A "SPACE RACE" IN WHICH THE UNITED STATES BECAME THE FIRST NATION TO LAND A MAN ON THE MOON IN 1969. THE UNITED STATES BECAME INCREASINGLY INVOLVED IN THE VIETNAM WAR (1955–1975), INTRODUCING COMBAT FORCES IN 1965.**

**AT HOME, THE U.S. HAD EXPERIENCED SUSTAINED ECONOMIC EXPANSION AND A RAPID GROWTH OF ITS POPULATION AND MIDDLE-CLASS FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II. AFTER A SURGE IN FEMALE LABOR PARTICIPATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE 1970S, BY 1985, THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN AGED 16 AND OVER WERE EMPLOYED. CONSTRUCTION OF AN INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM TRANSFORMED THE NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE FOLLOWING DECADES. MILLIONS MOVED FROM FARMS AND INNER CITIES TO LARGE SUBURBAN HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS. IN 1959, THE UNITED STATES FORMALLY EXPANDED BEYOND THE CONTIGUOUS UNITED STATES WHEN THE TERRITORIES OF ALASKA AND HAWAII BECAME, RESPECTIVELY, THE 49TH AND 50TH STATES ADMITTED INTO THE UNION. THE GROWING CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT USED NONVIOLENCE TO CONFRONT SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION, WITH MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BECOMING A PROMINENT LEADER AND FIGUREHEAD. A COMBINATION OF COURT DECISIONS AND LEGISLATION, CULMINATING IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1968, SOUGHT TO END RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. MEANWHILE, A COUNTERCULTURE MOVEMENT GREW, WHICH WAS FUELED BY OPPOSITION TO THE VIETNAM WAR, THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT, AND THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION.**

**THE LAUNCH OF A "WAR ON POVERTY" EXPANDED ENTITLEMENTS AND WELFARE SPENDING, INCLUDING THE CREATION OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID, TWO PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE HEALTH COVERAGE TO THE ELDERLY AND POOR, RESPECTIVELY, AND THE MEANS-TESTED FOOD STAMP PROGRAM AND AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN.**

**THE 1970S AND EARLY 1980S SAW THE ONSET OF STAGFLATION. THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTED ISRAEL DURING THE YOM KIPPUR WAR; IN RESPONSE, THE COUNTRY FACED AN OIL EMBARGO FROM OPEC NATIONS, SPARKING THE 1973 OIL CRISIS. IN 1979, PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER BROKERED A PEACE TREATY BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, MARKING THE FIRST TIME AN ARAB NATION RECOGNIZED ISRAELI EXISTENCE. AFTER HIS ELECTION, PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN RESPONDED TO ECONOMIC STAGNATION WITH FREE-MARKET ORIENTED REFORMS. FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF DÉTENTE, HE ABANDONED "CONTAINMENT" AND INITIATED THE MORE AGGRESSIVE "ROLLBACK" STRATEGY TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION. THE LATE 1980S BROUGHT A "THAW" IN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, AND ITS COLLAPSE IN 1991 FINALLY ENDED THE COLD WAR. THIS BROUGHT ABOUT UNIPOLARITY WITH THE U.S. UNCHALLENGED AS THE WORLD'S DOMINANT SUPERPOWER.**

**CONTEMPORARY HISTORY**

**AFTER THE COLD WAR, THE CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST TRIGGERED A CRISIS IN 1990, WHEN IRAQ INVADED AND ANNEXED KUWAIT, AN ALLY OF THE UNITED STATES. FEARING THE SPREAD OF INSTABILITY, IN AUGUST, PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH LAUNCHED AND LED THE GULF WAR AGAINST IRAQ; WAGED UNTIL JANUARY 1991 BY COALITION FORCES FROM 34 NATIONS, IT ENDED IN THE EXPULSION OF IRAQI FORCES FROM KUWAIT AND RESTORATION OF THE MONARCHY.**

**ORIGINATING WITHIN U.S. MILITARY DEFENSE NETWORKS, THE INTERNET SPREAD TO INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC PLATFORMS AND THEN TO THE PUBLIC IN THE 1990S, GREATLY AFFECTING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE. DUE TO THE DOT-COM BOOM, STABLE MONETARY POLICY, AND REDUCED SOCIAL WELFARE SPENDING, THE 1990S SAW THE LONGEST ECONOMIC EXPANSION IN MODERN U.S. HISTORY. BEGINNING IN 1994, THE U.S. SIGNED THE NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (NAFTA), CAUSING TRADE AMONG THE U.S., CANADA, AND MEXICO TO SOAR.**

**ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, AL-QAEDA TERRORIST HIJACKERS FLEW PASSENGER PLANES INTO THE WORLD TRADE CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY AND THE PENTAGON NEAR WASHINGTON, D.C., KILLING NEARLY 3,000 PEOPLE. IN RESPONSE, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH LAUNCHED THE WAR ON TERROR, WHICH INCLUDED A NEARLY 20-YEAR WAR IN AFGHANISTAN FROM 2001 TO 2021 AND THE 2003–2011 IRAQ WAR. A 2011 MILITARY OPERATION IN PAKISTAN LED TO THE DEATH OF THE LEADER OF AL-QAEDA.**

**GOVERNMENT POLICY DESIGNED TO PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING, WIDESPREAD FAILURES IN CORPORATE AND REGULATORY GOVERNANCE, AND HISTORICALLY LOW INTEREST RATES SET BY THE FEDERAL RESERVE LED TO THE MID-2000S HOUSING BUBBLE, WHICH CULMINATED WITH THE 2008 FINANCIAL CRISIS, THE NATION'S LARGEST ECONOMIC CONTRACTION SINCE THE GREAT DEPRESSION. DURING THE CRISIS, ASSETS OWNED BY AMERICANS LOST ABOUT A QUARTER OF THEIR VALUE. BARACK OBAMA, THE FIRST MULTIRACIAL PRESIDENT, WITH AFRICAN-AMERICAN ANCESTRY WAS ELECTED IN 2008 AMID THE CRISIS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY PASSED STIMULUS MEASURES AND THE DODD–FRANK ACT IN AN ATTEMPT TO MITIGATE ITS NEGATIVE EFFECTS AND ENSURE THERE WOULD NOT BE A REPEAT OF THE CRISIS. IN 2010, PRESIDENT OBAMA LED EFFORTS TO PASS THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, THE MOST SWEEPING REFORM TO THE NATION'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IN NEARLY FIVE DECADES.]**

**IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2016, REPUBLICAN DONALD TRUMP WAS ELECTED AS THE 45TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, A RESULT VIEWED AS ONE OF THE BIGGEST POLITICAL UPSETS IN AMERICAN HISTORY (WHICH THE TOP ENGLISH LORD KNOWS THAT IS ALWAYS A FUCKIN LIE ABOUT TRUMP). IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 2020, DEMOCRAT JOE BIDEN WAS ELECTED AS THE 46TH PRESIDENT. ON JANUARY 6, 2021, SUPPORTERS OF OUTGOING PRESIDENT TRUMP STORMED THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL IN AN UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO DISRUPT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTE COUNT.**

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA SELECTED IMAGES**

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