**CHAPTER 28**

**America in the Information Age**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 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.

**Objectives**

1. Discuss the events that took place in 1991 and 1992 that made the rise of Bill Clinton possible.
2. Describe Bill Clinton’s presidential outlook in reference to conservative versus liberal goals, and evaluate the degree to which he succeeded in melding the two.
3. Describe Clinton’s relations with the Republican Congress, and analyze how they affected his later presidency.
4. Explain Clinton’s actions that moved America toward a more global economic stance, and evaluate the success of his international economic moves.
   1. Discuss the technological revolution that took place during Bill Clinton’s presidency, and describe the social and economic changes that took place as a result of this revolution.

**Objectives**

1. Examine the economic recovery and boom in the 1990s.
2. Describe the development and growth of personal and business computer use, and assess the relevance of the growth of the Internet and various information technologies to the use of computers throughout America.
3. Describe the ways in which this technological growth changed the lives of ordinary Americans, and evaluate the significance of those changes.
4. Provide examples that explain how the growth of the Internet, the use of personal computers, and the development of new information technologies contributed to the globalization of America’s economy.
   1. Discuss the new focus on multiculturalism during the latter part of the twentieth century.

**Objectives**

1. Provide details about immigrants who came to America during the late 20th century, and explain ways in which they changed the face of America.
2. Compare and contrast the attitudes of Republicans and Democrats about the new immigrants.
   1. Explain the kinds of homegrown terrorism that shocked many Americans in the 1990s.

**Objectives**

1. Detail some of the tragic events of the 1990s, including Oklahoma City and Columbine.
   1. Describe how the political, cultural, and economic polarization of the nation came to a head in the presidential election of 2000.

**Objectives**

* 1. Describe the increasing polarization between Republicans and Democrats in the 1990s.
  2. Use the presidential election of 2000 to illustrate the divisiveness that had enveloped the country by that time.

**Chapter Summary**

Clinton’s rise as a politician coincided with a major shift to the center by the American public. George Bush’s popularity plummeted after the Persian Gulf War as the nation was distracted by the Clarence Thomas hearings, “Culture Wars,” and, more significantly, the L.A. riots. 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. Issues like abortion, gay rights, and religion in the public sphere also seemed to play into this growing divide.

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.

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. 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.

Clinton fulfilled a campaign promise to end the U.S. government’s ban on homosexuals’ serving in the military, 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 armed forces from inquiring about the sexual orientation of their members, while restoring their right to remove known homosexuals from service.

Clinton took advantage of a weakening economy and the third-party campaign of Ross Perot to win the presidency, although not by an impressive margin. He proposed and executed polices that increased foreign trade (at a cost) and cut the federal deficit. The U.S. engaged in two significant military operations: in the Balkans and Somalia. Clinton’s political foes, the Republicans, bounced back to take control of Congress in 1994 using their Contract with America as a winning campaign strategy. However, conservative Congressional leader Newt Gingrich overreached with his orchestrated shutdown of the federal government as funding expired. Clinton followed centrist ideas approved by most Americans, thus propelling himself to victory in the 1996 election.

The 1990s witnessed an information revolution as new consumer gadgets emerged that connected people as they had never been before—and in turn, playing a major role in an economic rebound. The Digital age gave consumers personal computers and cell phones. It also led to increased power for corporations, and a decreasing number of companies in control of sources of information. While supporters pointed to the state of the American economy as proof of their success, critics took to the streets in protest or even planned attacks on U.S. forces overseas.

As it had many times in the past, the multicultural United States attracted immigrants from around the world; in the 1990s, these newcomers would mostly be from Asia and Latin America. Their growing inclusion, especially for Hispanics, added to the already diverse ethnic makeup of the nation. Illegal immigration issues divided the political parties, who offered no feasible solutions to the number of undocumented people in the U.S.

In addition to implacable political divides, the U.S. suffered from a series of violent attacks and political discord. In retaliation for early government fiascos such as Waco, a domestic terrorist killed scores of people, many of them children, in the Oklahoma City bombings. Two violent students killed many of their classmates at Columbine, leading to copycat crimes elsewhere. Other brutal attacks demonstrated that extreme hatred against blacks and homosexuals still plagued society. The American public was entertained, although not angered, by the Monica Lewinsky incident, a fact discovered by the Republicans who sought, unsuccessfully, to gain politically from their partisan impeachment distraction. However, enough fallout occurred to influence the 2000 election between Vice President Al Gore and George Bush. With Florida recounting ballots in a close race, the Supreme Court intervened and ended the recount, giving the presidency to Bush, who had more electoral votes, over Gore, who had the most popular votes. The contested outcome demonstrated the sharp divides in the nation, a nation soon to be racked by a transformative attack.

**Chapter Outline**

I. The New Political Center

1. The Fall of Bush
2. Clarence Thomas
3. The “Culture Wars,” cont.
4. L.A. Riots
5. The Rise of Bill Clinton
6. Outside Challengers
7. A Divided Electorate
8. Bill Clinton, Free Trader
9. Clinton’s “Third Way”
10. Free Trade
11. Deficit Reduction
12. Post-Cold War Foreign Policy
13. The Republican Surge
14. Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell
15. Comprehensive Health Care
16. The “Contract with America”
17. Clinton’s Recovery
18. Closing Down the Government
19. The 1996 Election

II. The Information Revolution

1. Economic Rebound
2. The Digital Age
   1. The Internet and Information Technologies
   2. Other Communications
   3. Costs
   4. Benefits
3. Consolidation and Globalization
   1. Corporate Consolidation
   2. Globalization
   3. Critics of Globalization

III. Multiculturalism

IV. Homefront Terrorism

1. Discontent
2. Oklahoma City
3. James Byrd, Jr.
4. Matthew Shepard
5. Columbine

V. Political Polarization and the 2000 Election

A. The Lewinsky Episode

B. Rebuking the Republicans

C. The 2000 Election

1. The Candidates
2. The Vote
3. The Controversy

VI. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. The End of the Cold War: U.S. as the Sole Superpower
2. The 1992 Presidential Election: A Third Party Rears Its Head
3. Bill Clinton: The Man and the Politician
4. The Information Revolution and Its Impact on Americans Across the Economic Spectrum
5. Newt Gingrich: “Pride Goeth Before the Fall”
6. The Changing Face of America
7. The 2000 Election: A Comparison with the Disputed Election of 1876

(28-2c). There were several reasons why many people were disenchanted with the new globalization:

1. Cultural imperialism
2. Job departures
3. Environmental critiques

Have students in groups or individually provide an example of one of the Reasons Why in the 1990s, with a photo and also data from a separate source. The student contributions could be posted on a website and viewed as a class or in a group assignment. Direct the students to examine any trends that they see in their answers as a whole. Are there specific countries/industries that stand out? How does the U.S. benefit and get penalized for being a leader in globalization?

**The Reasons Why**

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Or instructors could decide which task they would prefer to have them do. Given below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

* 1. Ask students to write a paper in which they take a step-by-step look at the disputed presidential election of 2000.
  2. What If? After researching the election, ask students to write a paper in which they describe how they think things might have played out differently had Al Gore been elected president instead of George W. Bush.
  3. There are certain moments in an individual’s life that they will always remember with great clarity. For Americans living in 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor was such a date. For those living during the 1960s, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the murder of his accused assassin two days later were events of the same magnitude. After September 11, 2001, country singer-songwriter Alan Jackson penned an instant hit with his tribute to that day, “Where Were You When the World Stopped Turning?” Ask students to write down the details of where they were when they first heard of the events, how they felt (frightened, angry, sad, etc.), and what their specific memories of that day, and those first weeks, are. Discuss their thoughts in class, with the entire class participating. [Students are encouraged to transfer these writings to a journal or diary if they haven’t done so. Historians of the future, as well as their own children and grandchildren, will be very interested in what they have to say.]
  4. Multiculturalism: Using the latest figures students can find, ask them to prepare a chart or graph with percentages for each of the listed ethnic groups. In addition, provide information on the percentage of the population various minorities comprise. Include gays, multiracial persons, religious minorities, etc. Ask students to summarize their findings in a brief paragraph.

**Additional www Resources**

“Electoral College Explainer,” *America Votes 2004*. CNN.com

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/special/president/electoral.college/more.html>

“Aftermath of the Rodney King Riots” An L.A. resident’s photo journal of the riots, mostly in Koreatown.

<http://www.fragmentsweb.org/stuff/photking.html>

“The Multicultural Report—Brief Article,” *American Demographics,* 1 November 2001. Advertising Age.

<http://adage.com/article/american-demographics/multicultural-report/44389/>

“Waco: The Inside Story,” PBS Frontline

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/waco/>

“Operation Desert Storm: Ten Years Later,” The National Security Archive.

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/20010117/>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: Bill Clinton, Speech at the 1996 Democratic National Convention**

*Introduction*: Read the excerpt at the link below.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/shared/unprotected/ps/ah2clinton.html*

[Address to Democratic National Convention (excerpts) Bill Clinton](http://college.cengage.com/history/shared/unprotected/ps/ah2clinton.html)

*Instructions*: After reading the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. What is the “single most critical thing” that Clinton says is necessary by the year 2000? How did he propose to pay for it?
2. What criticism does he level at Republicans?
3. Clinton pledged to balance the federal budget. Did he do that? (Look in your textbook or elsewhere to find the answer, if necessary.)
4. What does Clinton say about his welfare reform program? What new changes does he suggest?
5. Is the overall message Clinton puts forth positive or negative in tone?

**Assignment Name: Ah 2 Starr**

*Introduction*:Follow the link below.

*Visit URL*: http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/ah2starr.html

[Starr Report (excerpts)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/ah2starr.html)

*Instructions*: After reading the primary source provided, answer the questions below.

1. Summarize the main charges against President Clinton.
2. Which charges seem the most serious to you? Why?
3. What was the Jones lawsuit and why was it relevant?
4. Do you think these charges merited removing President Clinton from office? Why or why not?
5. Under what circumstances do you think presidents should be removed from office?