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By [1900](#), the United States had become the [world's largest economy](#), and the [Spanish–American War](#) and [World War I](#) established the country as a [world power](#). After Japan's [surprise attack on Pearl Harbor](#) in 1941, the U.S. [declared war](#) on [the Axis powers](#) during [World War II](#).

The [aftermath of the war](#) left the United States and the [Soviet Union](#) as the world's two [superpowers](#). During the [Cold War](#), both countries engaged in a struggle for ideological dominance, but avoided direct military conflict. They also competed in the [Space Race](#), which culminated in the [1969 American spaceflight](#) that first landed humans on the [Moon](#).

Simultaneously, the [civil rights movement](#) led to legislation outlawing [racial discrimination](#) against [African Americans](#). The [Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991](#) ended the Cold War, leaving the United States as the world's sole superpower. The [September 11 attacks](#) in 2001 resulted in the United States-US launching the [war on terror](#), which included the [War in Afghanistan](#) (2001–2021) and the [Iraq War](#) (2003–2011).

The United States-US is a [federal republic](#) with [three separate branches of government](#), including a [bicameral legislature](#). It is a [liberal democracy](#) and [market economy](#); it [ranks high](#) in international measures of [human rights](#), [quality of life](#), [income](#) and [wealth](#), [economic competitiveness](#), and [education](#); and it has low levels of [perceived corruption](#). It has high levels of [incarceration](#) and [inequality](#), retains [capital punishment](#), and lacks [universal health care](#).