

Chapter 41 (14th)

America Confronts the Post-Cold War Era

1. Bill Clinton: the First Baby-Boomer President
 1. In the 1992 presidential election, the Democrats chose **Bill Clinton** for president along with **Al Gore** for V.P. They were the first baby boomer presidential candidates.
 1. Clinton carried baggage—accused womanizing, sampling marijuana as a youth, avoiding the draft for Vietnam).
 2. The Democrats moved away from their extreme-liberal positions more "toward the center." They advocated economic growth, a strong defense, and anti-crime measures.
 2. George H. W. Bush sought reelection. **J. Danforth Quayle** was nominated as V.P. candidate.
 1. The Republicans championed ending the Cold War, success in the Persian Gulf, and focused on "family values" and claimed that "character matters", thus Clinton and his baggage should not be elected.
 3. **Ross Perot** rose as a significant third party candidate. A tech-company billionaire who spent his own money campaigning, he ran on one main issue: the U.S. must get the debt under control.
 4. Bill Clinton won the election, 374 to 168, because of two reasons...
 1. The poor economy was the #1 issue—bad news for Bush, good for Clinton. Clinton had a slogan to remind his staff, "It's the economy, stupid."
 2. Ross Perot took votes away from George H.W. Bush. Perot received 19% of the popular vote. Most Perot supporters would've voted Republican if he'd not been in the election.
 5. Both houses of Congress also went to the Democrats.
 6. Minorities also did well in 1992. **Carol Moseley-Braun** was the first woman ever elected to the Senate. There were minorities and women in the president's cabinet, including the first female attorney general, **Janet Reno**.
 1. Clinton would also appoint **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** to the Supreme Court giving it a second female justice.
2. A False Start for Reform
 1. Clinton quickly pressed to allow homosexuals in the military. He had to draw back a bit and settle with the compromise of a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Homosexuals were still banned if they said they were gay, but no one would ask. Thus, a homosexual could enter the military without having to lie.
 2. One of Clinton's main ambitions was to reform America's health-care system. The task was huge.
 1. He appointed his wife, **Hillary Clinton**, to head the committee of health-care reform. This was obviously a very different role for a First Lady.
 2. Meeting after meeting after meeting was held. To match a complicated problem, the plan that was developed was incredibly confusing and complicated itself. It was not going to make it through Congress and didn't.
 3. Good news came with budget. Clinton got a deficit-reduction bill passed in 1993. By 1996, the economy was doing very well. The annual budget *deficit* would actually become a budget *surplus* and the national debt would actually go *down*.
 4. Guns came under fire.
 1. The "**Brady Bill**" was passed to place restrictions on buying a gun. It was named after James Brady who'd been shot during the Reagan assassination attempt.
 2. An \$30 billion anti-crime bill was also passed to ban certain assault weapons.
 5. There were terrorist activities.
 1. A religious cult called the "Branch Davidians" gathered weapons and holed themselves up in a Waco, TX compound. After a standoff with the ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms), the feds moved in, set the compound on fire. Everyone inside, including women and children, either were killed by their leaders, committed suicide, or died from the fire.
 2. A "homegrown" anti-government terrorist blew up a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. 168 people died.
 3. Later, in 1998, the anti-gun movement gained steam when two students killed twelve others in Littleton, CO.
 1. Those *against* restricting guns used two arguments: (1) the Second Amendment simply states the "right to bear arms" and, (2) that simply *banning* guns doesn't mean they disappear—criminals would still get them if they wanted. The slogan was, "If guns were outlawed, only outlaws would get guns."
 4. Foreign terrorists struck too. These were the work of the radical Islamic terrorist sect **Al-Qaeda**.
 1. In 1993, terrorists drove a truck bomb underneath the World Trade Center and detonated it. The parking garage was gutted, but the buildings stood (until 9/11/2001 when Al Qaeda struck again).
 2. 1998, Al-Qaeda & **Bin Laden** sent truck bombs to U.S. embassies, Tanzania & Kenya. Hundreds died.
 3. Al-Qaeda struck in 2000 when a suicide boat exploded against *U.S.S. Cole* killing 17 American sailors.
 4. Unfortunately, little action was taken to halt this trend of terrorism.
3. The Politics of Distrust
 1. In the 1994 mid-term elections, the Republicans pushed back, led by **Newt Gingrich**.
 1. Gingrich developed "Contract with America" deal to reduce deficit & cut welfare-state programs.
 2. It was successful. Republicans took over both houses of Congress. Gingrich became Speaker of the House.
 2. Now, with a Republican Congress, Clinton would have to play politics for sure. Things see-sawed back-and-forth.
 1. The Republicans scored victories.
 1. They passed a law restricting "unfunded mandates" where the federal government mandates the states to do something, but provides no money to do it.

2. They also passed the **Welfare Reform Bill** which rolled back welfare handouts and forced able-bodied people to get off taxpayer money and go to work.
2. The Democrats and Clinton scored victories.
 1. The very fact Clinton signed those bills hurt Republicans. He (1) stole their thunder, and (2) he moved even more "to the center" and perhaps made himself even more electable. Liberals on the left were mad, but "the center" has more voters.
 2. Gingrich rubbed many Americans wrong as if he were going too far. Like his suggestion of sending children of families on welfare to orphanages was bad & when budget was not agreed upon, federal gov. shut down for several days. Again, it looked bad and the Republican Congress got the blame.
3. The 1996 presidential election was almost a moot point. Clinton ran for reelection. **Bob Dole** ran for the Republicans.
 1. Dole was from the WWII generation and his campaign was uninspiring. To the younger baby boom generation, electing Dole would seem to be moving backward. More importantly, the economy was doing great.
 2. Clinton was reelected easily, 379 to 159. He was the first Democrat reelected since FDR.
4. Clinton Again
 1. Again, Clinton governed "to the middle."
 1. He embraced the Welfare Reform Bill, which he'd initially signed with reluctance.
 2. He addressed affirmative action with a "mend it, don't end it" approach.
 1. By this time, the courts and America's mood was beginning to turn away from affirmative action. Clinton spoke out against this movement, but didn't pursue action (again, a middle ground move).
 2. Clinton was largely a popular president—always the result of a strong economy. There were some money disputes...
 1. Clinton supported the hot-topic of NAFTA (North American Free-Trade Agreement). It cut tariffs and trade barriers to set up a free trade zone between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico.
 2. Clinton supported the beginning of World Trade Organization to lower tariffs & trade barriers internationally.
 3. Campaign finance reform came forth. Many people disliked political donors giving tons of money to a candidate. The thinking was, "I'll give you money for the campaign, & when you're in office, remember me." Both parties talked about campaign finance reform, but with big money so critical in elections, neither did anything.
5. Problems Abroad
 1. With Cold War over, there was a question of where and how to apply U.S. foreign policy. Clinton dotted around the globe.
 2. President Clinton deployed troops to Somalia to help restore order from chaos. Dozens of U.S. troops died. Clinton pulled the troops out without having set or accomplished a clear goal.
 1. Notably, the U.S. did *not* intervene in Rwanda. There, some 500,000 people were killed in ethnic fighting.
 3. In Haiti president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted in a military coup in 1994. Clinton sent 20,000 U.S. troops to put Aristide back into power. (He was booted again in 2004).
 4. As a campaigner, Clinton talked tough on China's poor human rights record. As president, he realized the importance of China as a trade partner. He softened his talk and with Congress, made China a full trade partner of the U.S.
 5. Yugoslavia's ethnic groups began fighting. Clinton and NATO sent a peace-keeping force in attempt to restore order.
 1. Things there were ugly; Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic started "ethnic cleansing" - a miniature Holocaust.
 2. Clinton ordered an air raid in response. People scattered, but Milosevic did accept a cease-fire. (He was later arrested and tried at the International Criminal Court).
 6. Clinton also negotiated another Middle East peace treaty. This time, the leaders were Israel's **Yitzhak Rabin** and the controversial Palestinian Liberation Org. (PLO) head **Yasir Arafat**.
 1. This treaty would prove brief—two years later Rabin would be assassinated.
 7. Nearing the end of his second term, Clinton seemed eager to leave a lasting legacy to his presidency.
 1. He & his Sec. of State **Madeleine Albright**, worked unsuccessfully to broker another Mid East peace agreement.
 2. Clinton also tried to work peace in Ireland, the Koreas, India, and Pakistan. He wasn't successful.
6. Scandal and Impeachment
 1. Rumors and scandal seemed to follow Clinton, earning him the nickname "Slick Willy."
 1. Womanizing rumors had followed Clinton since the campaign days.
 2. He and Hillary were accused of shady business in their home state of Arkansas with investments in the Whitewater Land Corp. A special federal prosecutor investigated the Whitewater deal, but nothing came out of it.
 3. Eyebrows rose and conspiracy theories went wild when Vincent Foster, Jr. committed suicide. He was in charge of managing Clinton's legal and financial affairs. It seems apparent that his suicide was due to personal reasons.
 2. All scandals became secondary to the Monica Lewinsky sex scandal in the White House.
 1. Lewinsky was an intern. She and Clinton had a sexual affair.
 2. Then, while under oath for a different woman's sexual harassment lawsuit, Clinton lied about the Lewinsky affair.
 1. Clinton was asked if he'd had "sexual relations", and whatever went on between he and "that woman" did not meet his definition of sex. Clinton felt he didn't lie.
 2. The DNA in the stain on Lewinsky's infamous blue dress said otherwise.
 3. For "obstruction of justice" and perjury, the House voted to impeach Clinton—the second president to be impeached after Andrew Johnson in the 1960s.
 4. However, the Senate did *not* get the 2/3 vote necessary to kick Clinton from office.
7. Clinton's Legacy
 1. Clinton wanted a lasting legacy to his presidency, one that did not involve the words "scandal" or "impeach."
 1. Clinton preserved lands, set up a "patients' bill of rights", and hired more teachers and police officers.
 2. Clinton did make some good marks.

1. He truly did "govern to the middle"—this angered the far Left and Right, but appealed to *most* Americans.
2. The economy was strong and the budget was at surplus levels. Unemployment was a bare minimum, poverty rates went down, and median income reached new highs.
 1. History may in fact make the budget surplus Clinton's non-scandal legacy.
3. Clinton left on something on a sour note.
 1. With a few days left, he negotiated a deal on the Lewinsky scandal. To get immunity from any future legal action in the case in return for paying a fine and suspension of his law license for 5 years.
 2. Also, at the last moment, he gave pardons to political donors and backers which got them out of jail.
3. The Bush-Gore Presidential Battle
 1. The 2000 presidential election was predicted to be a close one.
 2. VP **Al Gore** was nominated by Democrats. Gore had Clinton paradox-the good was that he could lay claim to the prosperity of the Clinton years, the bad was that aligning too close with Clinton also aligned with his scandals.
 3. The Republicans chose Texas governor **George W. Bush**, (nicknamed "W" or Texas-style, "Dubya"). Bush spoke of being a "compassionate conservative." He chose **Dick Cheney** as his running-mate. Cheney had been a major player in Bush's father's presidency during the Persian Gulf War.
 1. A "Green Party" nominated **Ralph Nader** & consisted mostly of environmentalists & extreme liberals.
 4. With government collecting a budget surplus, the question became, "What should be done with extra money?"
 1. Bush believed money belonged to taxpayers & wanted large tax cut to return money "to the people."
 2. Gore wanted small tax cuts, use the rest to pay down debt, invest Social Security, & expand Medicare.
 3. This was age-old class warfare. Bush's plan would've helped people who paid taxes-generally higher wage earners. However, some 45% of Americans do not pay income tax. That group votes dominantly Democratic. Therefore, Gore's plan focused more on spending the tax money on social services.
 5. Nader was little more than a side-show.
8. The Controversial Election of 2000
 1. Though predicted close, no one predicted it to be as close as it was.
 1. Only the Hayes-Tilden standoff of 1876 was comparable.
 2. The election boiled down a few states. Florida was the critical swing state because it had the nation's fourth most electoral votes. Florida was essentially a tie, but very slightly favored Bush. There were even more twists to the election...
 1. **Jeb Bush** was governor of Florida, and the president's brother—perfect fuel for conspiracy theories.
 2. A recount was made. Bush was still ahead, by a margin of around 500 votes out of 6 million.
 3. The questions narrowed to Broward and Palm Beach counties. There was a large Jewish population there so it was figured it would go heavily Democratic (Gore's running-mate was **Joseph Lieberman**, himself Jewish).
 1. In Palm Beach County, the infamous "butterfly ballot" had supposedly tricked seniors who wanted to vote for Gore into voting for Bush. Another excruciating recount was undertaken there.
 3. The process dragged on for about a month and America still didn't know who the next president would be.
 1. The recounted votes were finally made official and Bush won the election 271 to 266 in the electoral.
 4. There were ironies in the election...
 1. The American electoral system showed its quirkiness. Gore actually got more popular votes (50,999,897 to Bush's 50,456,002), but he lost the critical electoral vote (266 to Bush's 271).
 2. Similar to how a third party candidate (Ross Perot) helped the Democrats by hurting the first Bush an election in 1992, a third party candidate came back to bite the Democrats in 2000. Nader's Green Party got only 2.7% of the vote, however without him in the race, they would've almost certainly voted Democratic and Gore would've won.
 5. Election maps from the 2000 election showed how Americans broke down in terms of voters.
 1. Democrats drew from cities, west & east coasts, heavy Latino areas, & African-Americans (viewing a blue-red Democrat-Republican map, old "Cotton Belt" from Mississippi River to Virginia is clearly seen as a blue arc).
 2. Republicans drew from rural areas, mostly the South and the West.
9. Bush Begins
 1. Like his father, Bush was an odd mix of good ol' boy from Texas and Ivy League. Bush took office talking up his Texas upbringing (true) and talking down his family's privileged life "Back East" (also true).
 2. Bush stepped to culture wars, almost always siding conservative. Conservatives & Christians cheered, liberals were irate.
 1. Bush removed support from international groups that were pro-abortion.
 2. He supported federally funded faith-based welfare programs.
 3. He opposed stem-cell research, which had great medical possibilities, on the grounds that the embryo in reality was a small person and doing tests on it was nothing other than abortion.
 4. He frustrated environmentalists and the legitimacy of global warming; shunning Kyoto agreement that limited greenhouse emissions, speaking of new oil exploration in Alaska. Businesses were happy by these positions.
 5. Bush went ahead with his promised tax cut amounting to \$1.3 trillion. By 2004, the cut combined with the economy yielding a \$400 billion deficit.
10. Terrorism Comes to America
 1. On **September 11**, 2001, America's centuries-old enjoyment of being on "our side of the pond" ended when militant Islamic radicals attacked America. Radicals hijacked passenger planes & used the planes, & hostages, as guided missiles.
 1. 2 planes slammed into World Trade Center towers in New York City. The towers caught fire, then came down.
 2. A third plane slammed into the Pentagon.
 3. A fourth plane was thought to be aiming for the White House or Capitol building, but heroic passengers took back the plane before it crashed in a Pennsylvania field.

2. President Bush's legacy was essentially made for him-responding to **9/11 attacks**. Bush proved strong in the aftermath.
 1. The whole plan was the work of Al-Qaeda, headed by **Osama bin Laden**.
 2. Bush called for Bin Laden's head. Afghanistan refused to hand him over so Bush ordered military to go on the offensive & hunt him down. The hunt proved difficult in rugged Afghanistan and Bin Laden proved elusive.
 3. With the jitters high, the American economy took a turn for the worse, and a few Americans died after receiving anthrax-laden letters. Coupled with fear of another attack, anxiety loomed.
 3. Terrorism launched a "new kind of war"/a "war on terror" requiring tactics beyond conventional battlefields.
 1. The **Patriot Act** gave the government extended surveillance rights. Critics charged this was a Big Brother-like infringement of rights, a reversal of the freedoms that Americans were fighting for.
 2. **Department of Homeland Security** established the newest cabinet department with goals of securing America.
11. Bush Takes the Offensive Against Iraq
1. Saddam Hussein had been a long time menace to long list of people. With Bush, Saddam's time had run out. Bush stated he'd not tolerate Hussein's defiance of the U.N.'s weapons inspectors.
 1. Also, Bush lumped Iraq and Saddam into an "axis of evil" that he believed helped and harbored terrorists. To Bush, attacking Saddam was just one part of the "war on terror."
 2. The center of the problem was information and lack of action.
 1. Intelligence at the time suggested Hussein had & was actively making weapons of mass destruction ("WMDs").
 2. When U.N. tried to disprove the WMD threat, Hussein continually thumbed his nose at the weapons inspectors.
 3. WMD intelligence in hand, Bush decided it was time for action.
 1. Bush sought the U.N.'s approval for taking military action, but some nations, notably France, Russia, and Germany with their Security Council veto, had cold feet.
 2. Bush decided to go it alone. Heavy majorities of Congress in October of 2002 approved armed force against Iraq.
 3. The U.N. tried one last time to inspect, Hussein blocked the inspectors again. The U.N. and inspectors asked for more time still. The U.N. appeared to lack any muscle—they'd made a rule, but could not enforce it.
 4. For Bush, time was up and it was time for action. In March of 2003, the U.S. launched an attack and Baghdad fell within a month. Saddam went on the run, and then was found nine months later, literally hiding in a hole in the ground.
 1. He would later be turned over to Iraq. The Iraqi court tried Saddam, convicted him of murder, and hanged him.
 5. Taking Iraq, though not easy, was swift and successful, but securing and rebuilding Iraq would prove tougher.
12. Owning Iraq
1. Most Iraqi people welcomed the Americans, but certainly not all.
 1. Factions broke out. Iraqi insurgents attacked American G.I.'s and casualties mounted to nearly 1,200 by 2004.
 2. Although removing Saddam was successful, it was feared that if U.S. came home leaving political void, whatever emerged to fill the void may be worse. Americans soon began to wonder, "How long will we be there?"
 2. The new goals were to (1) establish security in Iraq, eventually by Iraqi troops, and (2) create and turn over control to a new democratically elected Iraqi government.
 1. Training Iraqi security troops proved pitifully slow.
 2. A new government was created and limited power handed over on June 28, 2004.
 3. Meanwhile, American casualties and deaths added up due to localized fighting and roadside bombs.
 3. Iraq became a divisive issue in America. Conservatives generally supported the war and post-war efforts. Liberals charged that Bush was on some ego-tripping battle charge to hunt down phantom weapons of mass destruction.
 4. A Country in Conflict
 1. Other issues divided America:
 1. Democrats continually grumbled about the "stolen" 2000 election.
 2. Civil libertarians fumed over the Patriot Act.
 3. Pacifists said the WMD reasoning was made up from the get-go to start a war in Iraq they felt unjust.
 4. Big businesses, like Enron & WorldCom, fooled around with accounting and supposedly fattened the rich and gleaned the poor. They went bankrupt and wiped out many people's retirement funds.
 5. Social warfare continued over abortion and homosexuality.
 6. Affirmative action still boiled, and Supreme Court came up mathematical formulae for minority admittance to undergrads. It also stated that in 25 years racial preferences would likely be unnecessary.
13. Reelecting George W. Bush
1. Republicans put Bush up for reelection in 2004.
 2. The Democrats selected Sen. **John Kerry** of Massachusetts.
 3. Despite the usual litany of issues (education, health care, etc.) the key issue of the 2004 election was national security.
 1. At the heart of the security issue, was the question of the war in Iraq.
 2. Bush said the U.S. was making progress and should thus "stay the course" in Iraq.
 3. Kerry took an anti-war position. However, Kerry's position on war and his image was somewhat confounding:
 1. Kerry was a Vietnam War hero, but became a Vietnam War protester. This trend continued in 2004...
 2. Kerry voted for military action in Iraq, but then voted against a bill for military spending for the war and said he was against the war.
 3. Kerry gained support by criticizing Bush's management (or mismanagement) of the Iraq situation.
 1. Kerry charged that Bush had no plan for Iraq after the initial take-over.
 2. Kerry focused only on Bush's failure, not effectively presenting voters with his own action.
 4. Most pollsters predicted Kerry to win. But, Bush won with a strong showing of 286 electoral votes to Kerry's 252.