

AMERICAN HISTORY SINCE 1945:

notes for a series of lectures
offered at Corvinus University, Budapest,
Thursday evenings, October-December 2015 ,

by Richard Major

richard@richardmajor.com

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

I have prepared these notes as a summary of postwar American history.

Before each class, make sure that you have read them through thoroughly and thought about them; also, do have a look at the original sources, and other resources, I have linked to this text and marked in gray.

I	1 October	America's destiny	make sure you have read pp. 1-11 of these notes
II	15 October	America's empire	make sure you have read pp. 12-22
III	29 October	America's art-form and America's crisis	make sure you have read pp. 23-25, and watched the film clips make sure you have read pp. 26-34
IV	12 November	America's triumph	make sure you have read pp. 35-47
V	26 November	America's crusade	make sure you have read pp. 48-56
VI	10 December	America's future	make sure you have read pp. 57-64
VII	17 December	exam	80 factual questions (80%); 2 very short essays from a choice of 10 (20%) Here, for comparison, is the exam I gave for this course last year .

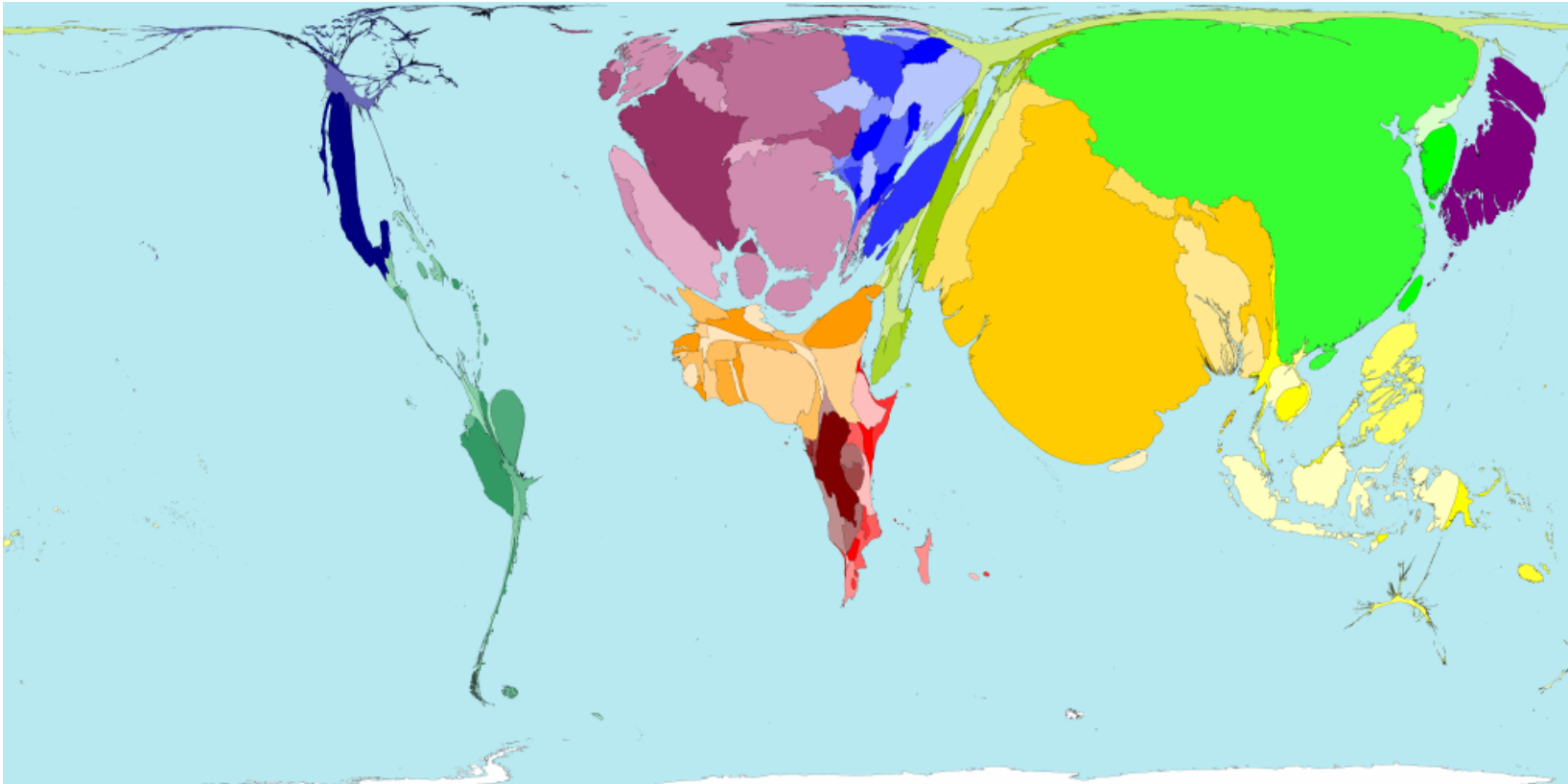
Dr Richard Major, lecturer:
telephone 0670 364 3877, richard.major@magd.oxon.org

Bálint Toronyai, Szakkollegium contact:
0036-30-432-28-29 toronyai.balint@heller.uni-corvinus.hu

CHAPTER I: America before 1945

1. The phenomenon of the Americas

1492: the Old World **discovers** (accidentally) the New



1500: here is a map of **global wealth** (size of each territory shows its proportion of worldwide Gross Domestic Product measured in US\$, equalised for purchasing power parity).

As usual over the millennia, wealth and power lie almost equally with Western Europe, India and China. The New World is peripheral.

1763: the end of the **colonial wars**. France largely evicted from North America; the New World is now divided between British and the Spanish – whose heirs still compete for control!

2. The United States of America

1775-1833: wars of independence. Most British and Spanish colonies in the New World become very unstable **independent republics**. **The United States**, which allies with France to win its 1775-83 revolt against Britain, is almost uniquely fortunate.

1800: The United States ends its alliance with France and embraces **isolationism**: no more 'entangling alliances'. Neutrality in European wars (after 1815), mercantilism, expansion to the Pacific (the Midwest purchased 1803, northern Mexico taken 1848).

Study George Washington's famous [farewell address](#): see paragraphs 35-42 for the classic statement of American isolationism.

1861-1865: Sectional division leads to the horrific **Civil War**; but afterwards

1865-1924: comes an era of prosperity, from the **Gilded Age** (1869-1898) to the **Roaring 'Twenties**. Physical splendour, industrialisation, almost perpetual economic growth, heavy immigration, westward settlement. 'God looks after drunks, children, and the United States of America' – which is, with its easy neighbours north and south, and its oceans east and west, virtually an island.

1898: **Spanish-American War**: the U.S. seizes the colonial empire of Spain (the weakest on offer) to become a Power.

1917-1919: America is reluctantly drawn into the **First World War**. She enjoys her easy victory (0.1 million dead, cf. 1.2 for the British Empire, 3.8 Russia, 2.5 Germany), and the war-time boom, but not the prospect of permanent 'entanglement' in the League of Nations. She therefore rejects the Treaty of Versailles and retreats into isolation.

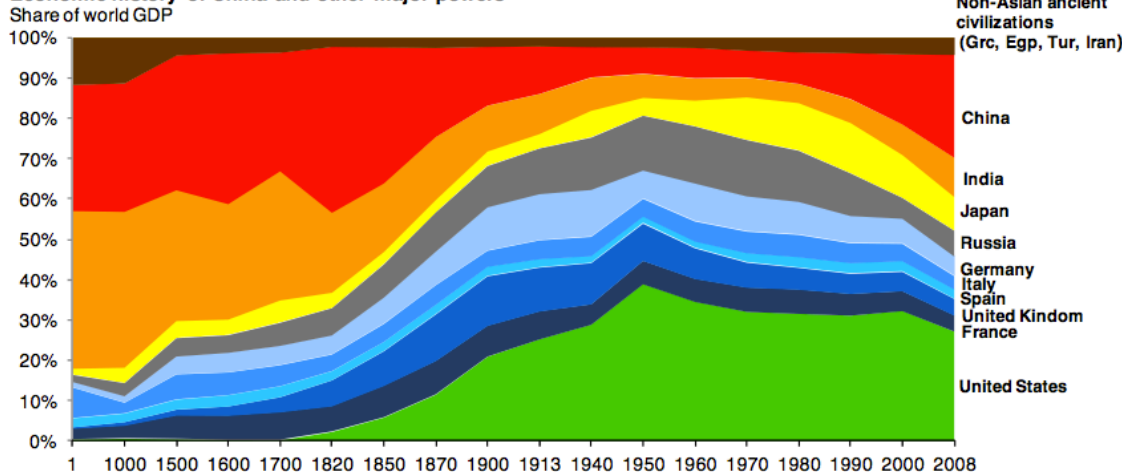
1929: The stupendous prosperity of the 'Twenties ends with the Wall Street Crash and the **Great Depression**. America recovers even more slowly than Europe, despite (or because of) welfarist economic experiments by her government.

1933-1941: **International security breaks down**. World War I losers (Germany, Russia, Hungary, Croatia) or discontented winners

(Japan, Italy) overturn the Versailles settlement through aggressive annexations and wars.

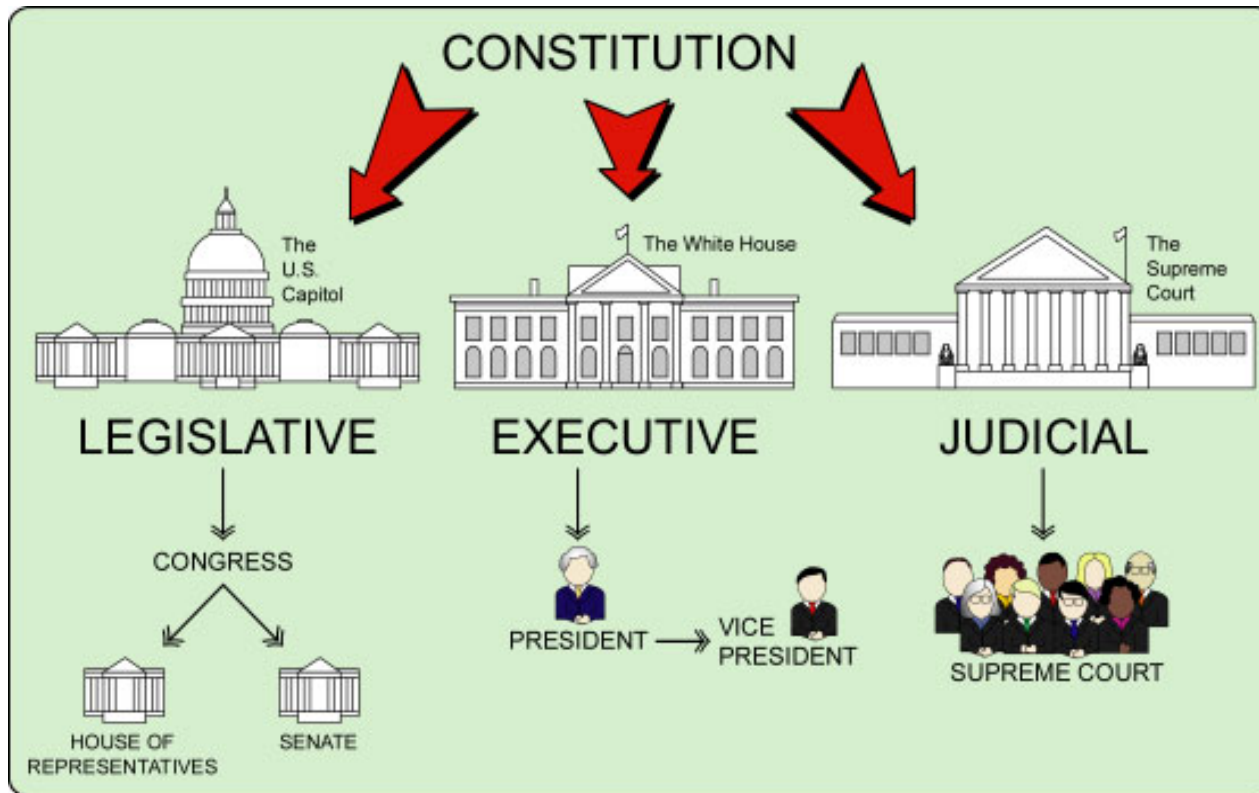
1937: a new **World War** begins, first in Asia, then in Europe. Americans are desperate to avoid it. President Roosevelt (1933-45; 'FDR') sends economic and military aid to the Allies but, until '40, seeks to evade war. **History reaches a climax**.

Economic history of China and other major powers



3. American governance

The Thirteen Colonies which revolted in 1775 formed first a loose confederation, then (in 1789) a **Federal Government** which tended, especially after the Civil War, to assume the authority of a traditional national state.



The powers and structure of the Federal Government are defined by the (ambiguous and heavily amended) **Constitution** of 1789.

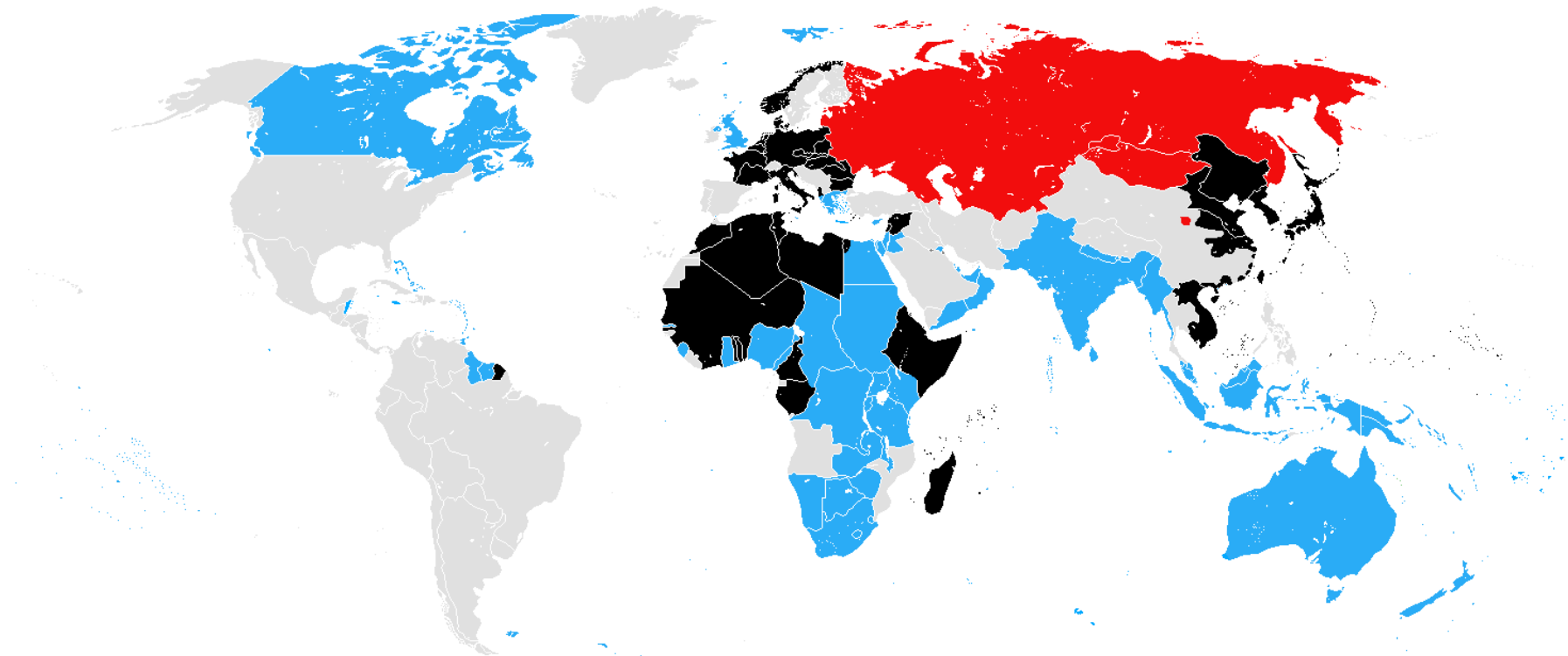
The Constitution is essentially a republican version of the C18 British state. The **Founding Fathers** were anxious about the tendency of the Crown to monopolise power, so the Constitution insists on an sharp 'separation of powers' between the Crown (now the Executive Branch, headed by a President) and Parliament (now Congress), with an independent judiciary. In practice, the C20 Presidency has become monarchical, especially **during wars**, including the long Cold War.

The American **party system** is easily misunderstood. It is not ideological. There has been only *one* great national party, the pro-Jacobin pro-slavery aristocratic-demagogic Jeffersonians, who achieved power in 1800.

But the Jeffersonian party expanded into a huge body, later called the **Democratic Party**. It is not a party as Europeans understand parties, but an alliance of city 'machines' with various other groups: often immigrants, sometimes the West, or the South, or 'liberals' (which in America means 'social democrats'), or Catholics. It has promoted at various points the French Revolution, territorial expansion, slavery, free trade, abortion and welfarism. The Democrats' symbol is a donkey; that is the one thing all Democrats agree on.

The Federalists, who opposed the Jeffersonians in the 1790s, and the Whigs, who opposed them from the 1820s until the 1850s, eventually disintegrated; the Democrats' rivals since 1860 have been the **Republicans** (the 'Grand Old Party' or **G.O.P.**) symbolised by an elephant. They began as a regional anti-slavery party, and have often (before the 1890s, after the 1970s) been in favour of small, efficient government. But both donkey and elephant 'parties' are ungainly shifting coalitions – now as in 1941!

4. The end of isolationism and World War II

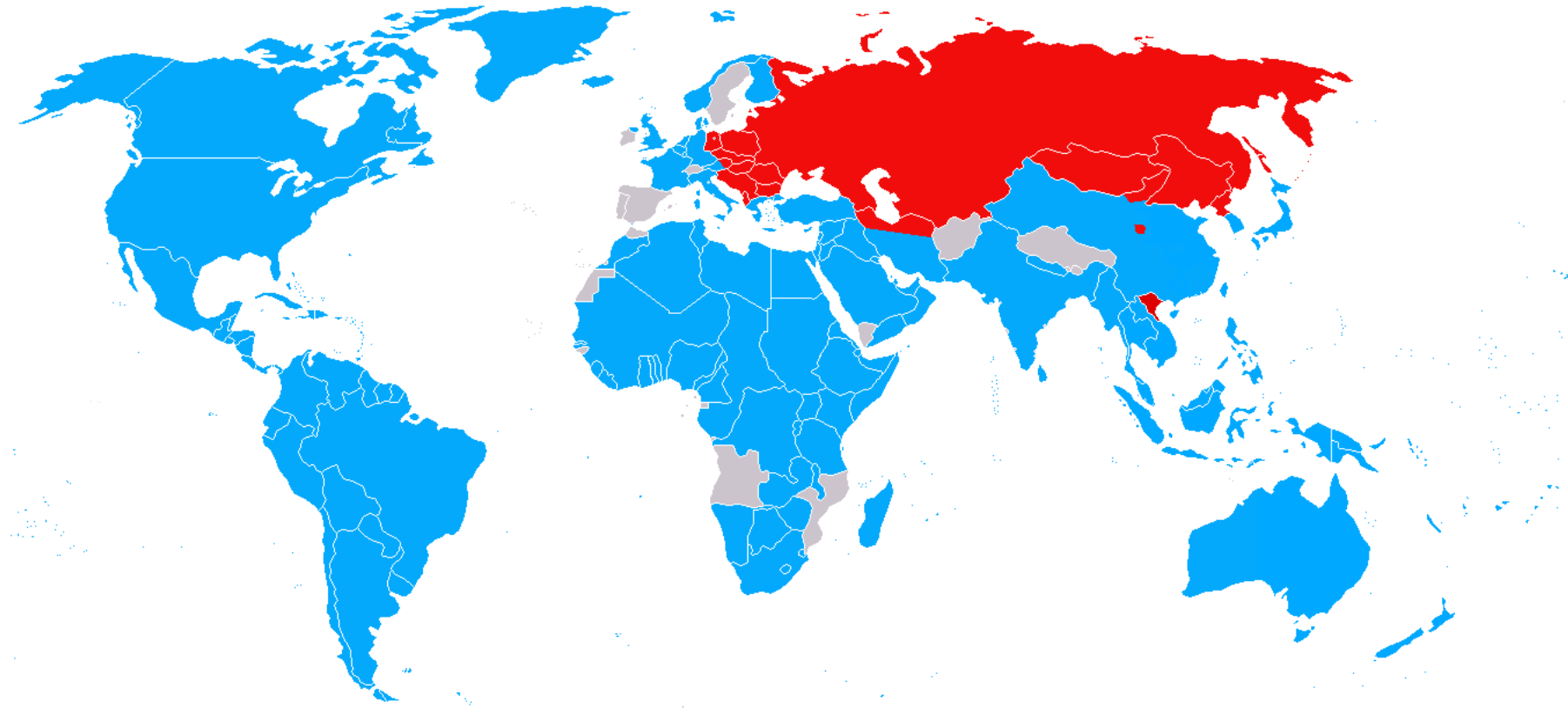


1941: here is the situation on New Year's Day. The Axis is marked in black: Japan holds most of East Asia; Germany, Italy and their partners (Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Vichy France) hold Europe in alliance with the Soviet Union (red). The surviving Allies (blue) are the British Empire, Greece, and certain French and Dutch colonies. The New World is neutral.

This year is the hinge of modern history. The Axis attacks Stalin in June. In autumn a naval war between America and Germany begins in the Atlantic; then on 7 December the Japanese attack the British, Dutch and U.S. colonies in the Pacific. Thus by Christmas America finds herself at **war with the Axis**, in alliance with the British Empire *and* Communist Russia.

1941-45: Allied victory in both Europe and Asia. America has another comparatively cheap win (losing 0.4 million, or a third of a percent of her 1939 population; *cf.* 17% Poland, 14% Soviet Union, 11% Germany, 3% whole world). She enjoys a wartime boom; alone of the great Powers she is unbombed; her armies occupy Western Europe and Japan; she ends the war enormously prosperous. Roosevelt has a rather naïve enthusiasm for Stalin, and for **decolonisation** in the post-war world. But he dies in April 1945, just before Hitler, and history takes a different turn.

5. The American political hegemony and the start of the Cold War



1945: Here is the situation in September, after Japan had surrendered and been occupied. America and the Allies, in blue, hold most of the world, in alliance with Stalin's empire.

1946: George Kennan's 'Long Telegram'; Churchill's '**Iron Curtain**' speech; Byrnes, the Secretary of State, announces that American troops will stay in Europe indefinitely and that Germany will not after all be 'pastoralised'.

1947: The **Truman Doctrine**: active containment of Communism (President Truman promises "to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures"). The **Cold War**. Militarisation of the American economy.

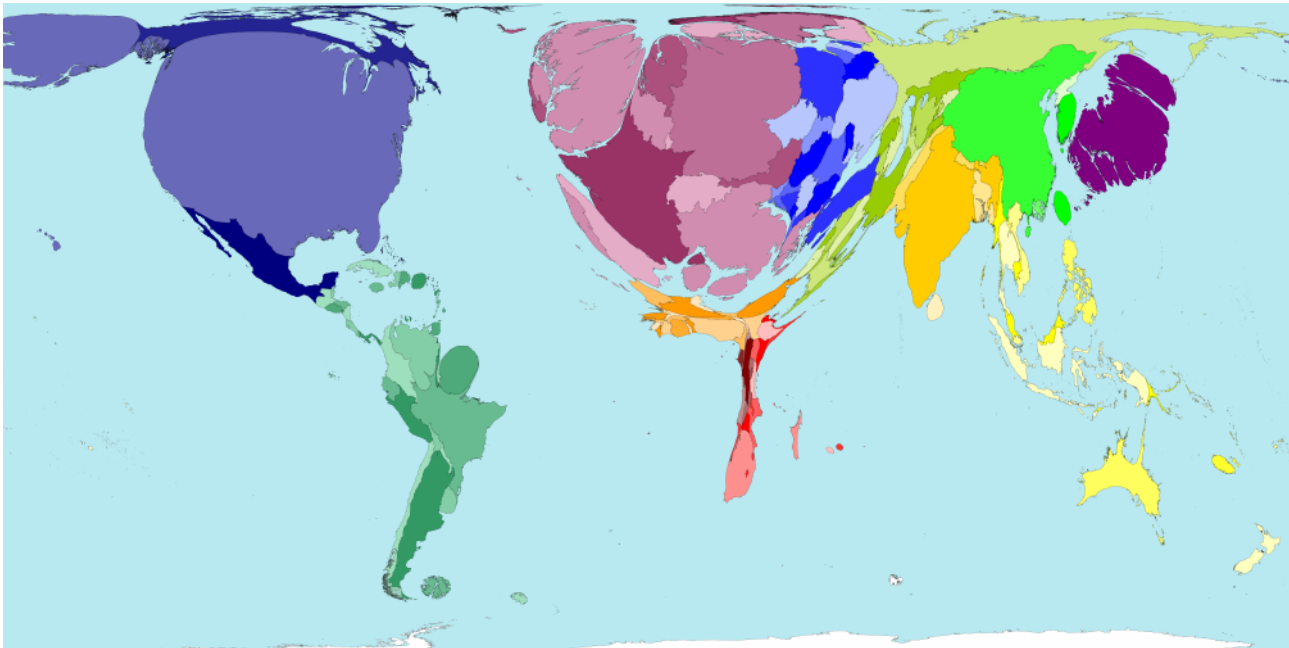
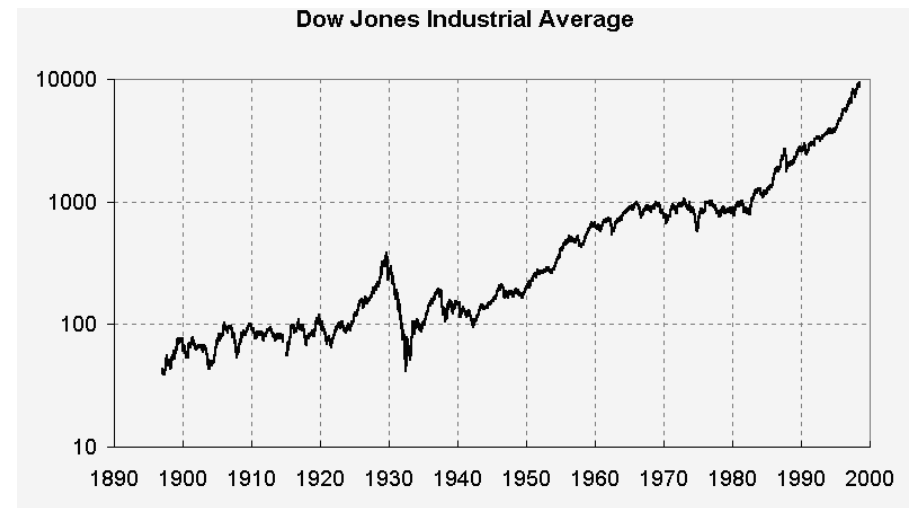
6. The American economic hegemony

1945: For a few heady months, America accounts for *most of the world's GDP*! Everywhere else is in ruins.

1948: the **Marshall Plan**: American-style prosperity is exported to Europe.

1947-1966: **European colonial empires dissolved**. America and the Soviets vie for domination of the newly independent states.

1960: here is how GDP was distributed in 1960. But note the stagnation in the Dow Jones from 1967 onward!



A [history of the global economy](#).

An excellent article by [Arnold Beichman](#) about Roosevelt's *naïveté*, or frivolity, or silliness, about Stalin, and his consequent surrender of Central Europe to Bolshevism (skip to *noblisse oblige*). More of the same by [Dennis Dunn](#). By way of balance, here's an innocent and admiring [television documentary](#) about Roosevelt and the war (begin at 38'15"); this more hardbitten documentary by the [Cold War International History Project](#) has some excellent footage of Yalta and Potsdam (start at 30'13").

CHAPTER II:

The sudden American Empire, 1945-1949

1. Points from last week

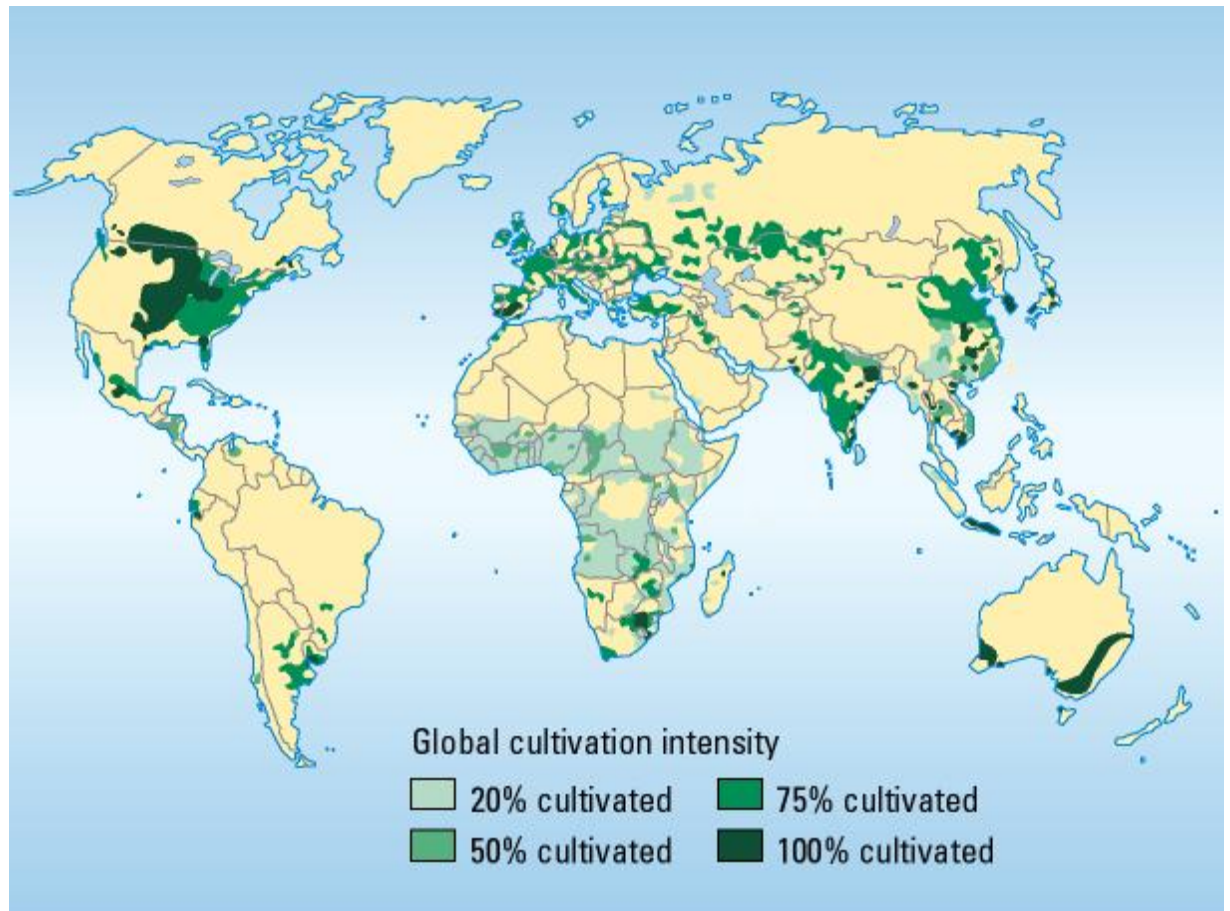
(a) Geography causes wealth

The **incomparable bonanza of North America** (9100 million hectares of arable land in the U.S., cf. 137 in the E.U!), with a light population of natives easily eliminated by European disease and arms, guaranteed that, once discovered, these regions would come in time to dominate the world's economy.

After 1763, **Britain** eliminated the French and Spanish and became the sole Power in North America; in 1775 her ungrateful Thirteen Colonies revolted against the motherland, and (with the help of the French) formed a loose confederation, **the United States**. The future of world history therefore lay with this English-speaking republic.

Alexis de Tocqueville, an extremely prescient young nobleman from France, toured America in 1835. The United States population was only 15 million, but Tocqueville was sure it could reach ten times that (which it did in about 1950; it has since doubled again to more than 300 million).

All the United States needed was **immigration**, and it got it. Until 1924 there were virtually no restrictions on European immigration. There were 1.7 million immigrants in the 1840s; by the early 1880s, the U.S. was receiving a million Germans every year. (It remains, racially, a German country.)





(b) Wealth creates power

The French alliance collapsed in 1794; after that the republic was committed to **isolationism**, as laid out in George Washington's farewell address to the people (1796):

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connexion as possible. ... Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns.... Our detached and distant situation

invites and enables us to pursue a different course. ... we may defy material injury from external annoyance Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humour, or caprice?

Washington's words were immensely influential, and **splendid isolation** became the fixed policy of the United States. Apart from commercial wars with France (1798-1800) and Britain (1812-1815), America avoided European conflict – even when during her own Civil War (1861-1865) the French and British nearly intervened. Even after the larceny of her war with Spain (1898), when she seized the Spanish Empire, she refused all European alliances.

Nonetheless America, as the world's great mercantile power, was inevitably **drawn into the two world wars**, because Britain could only survive by trade (see German cartoon at left) – or in other words, Germany could only prevail by starving Britain, which implied sinking American ships.

Despite what Washington said, America's *commercial relations* did in the end imply *external annoyance* and *frequent controversies*. The oceans are not quite that wide! (Study the American cartoon on the right.)

America's wealth allowed her to afford enormous armaments; she ended both world wars with a huge army in Europe.

In 1919 she abandoned Europe as quickly as she could, and retreated back into isolationism.

In 1945-1947 she nearly did so again. Nearly – but not quite. And that 'not quite' is the hinge of modern history.





(c) Power stabilises as empire

Wealth creates power; incomparable wealth creates world power; and world power grows to world empire unless it is deliberately abdicated. This **logic trumps American's sincere impulse to isolationism.**

After 1945 America decided not to abdicate her preeminent role – for a very interesting reason. Back in 1835 Alexis de Tocqueville had made this prediction: *Today there are two great peoples on earth who, starting from different points, seem to advance toward the same goal: these are the **Russians** and the Anglo-Americans. All other peoples seem to have almost reached the limits drawn by nature.... Their point of departure is different, their paths are varied; nonetheless, each one of them seems called by a secret design of Providence to hold in its hands one day the destinies of half the world.*

Tocqueville stresses that there is an ideological difference: Anglo-America is naturally democratic, Russia naturally autocratic – power there is normally wielded by one tyrant, the Tsar (and latterly Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Putin).

Nonetheless, there is a facet of mere geopolitical rivalry between these two nations on the periphery of European sphere, growing westward and eastward over almost infinite space until they become imperial. Whether reactionary and monarchist (to 1917), revolutionary and socialist (1917-1991), or reactionary and nationalist (since 1999), Russia is **Anglo-America's natural enemy.**

Franklin Roosevelt, almost a

great man, didn't see this, and was recklessly compliant with Stalin's demands. He died (April 1945) in the nick of time, and his successor, **Harry S. [for nothing] Truman**, a trivial man, a failed haberdasher, happened to be right where FDR was wrong Under Truman, the American victory was not abdicated, and stabilised as a military and political empire, the great obstacle to Russian domination of the world.

A lightweight documentary on [Truman](#) (stop at 8'25").



Honoré Daumier, *The Northern Bear, the most disagreeable of all the known bears*, from 'Chargeons les Russes' (Let's Make Caricatures of the Russians), *Le Charivari*, April 1854. Leslie Gilbert Illingworth, cartoon in *Punch*, June 1947

3. The empire conceived

(a) Kennan's 'Long Telegram'

On 22 February 1946, George Kennan, Deputy at the U.S. embassy in Moscow, sent his famous (and very well-timed) 'Long Telegram' to Washington, laying out "undoubtedly the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably the greatest it will ever have to face": confronting the victorious Soviet Union.

The 'Long Telegram' lays down the **theory of the Cold War**:

- ☞ the Soviet Union perceived itself at perpetual war with capitalism;
- ☞ it did not acknowledge the possibility of long-term peaceful coexistence with the capitalist world
- ☞ it would use Marxists in the capitalist world as its allies,
- ☞ but viewed left-wing but non-communist groups in other countries as a worse enemy than the capitalist ones.
- ☞ The Soviet government's structure made it impossible to form pictures of internal and external reality.
- ☞ Nonetheless, the specific patterns of Soviet aggression arose, not from economic reality, nor even from Marxism, but from historic Russian nationalism and neurosis:



Russian rulers have invariably sensed that their rule was relatively archaic in form fragile and artificial in its psychological foundation, unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of Western countries. For this reason they have always feared foreign penetration, feared direct contact between Western world and their own, feared what would happen if Russians learned truth about world without or if foreigners learned truth about world within.

It was no coincidence that Marxism, which had smoldered ineffectively for half a century in Western Europe, caught hold and blazed for first time in Russia. Only in this land which had never known a friendly neighbor or indeed any tolerant equilibrium of separate powers, either internal or international, could a doctrine thrive which viewed economic conflicts of society as insoluble by peaceful means. After establishment of Bolshevik regime, Marxist dogma, rendered even more truculent and intolerant by Lenin's interpretation, became a perfect vehicle for sense of insecurity with which Bolsheviks, even more than previous Russian rulers, were afflicted.

Here is the full text of George Kennan's [Long Telegram](#) (1946).

(b) Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech

Churchill had lost the election of July 1945 to the socialists, but he still had tremendous moral prestige in America, and at a speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946, with Truman sitting behind him:



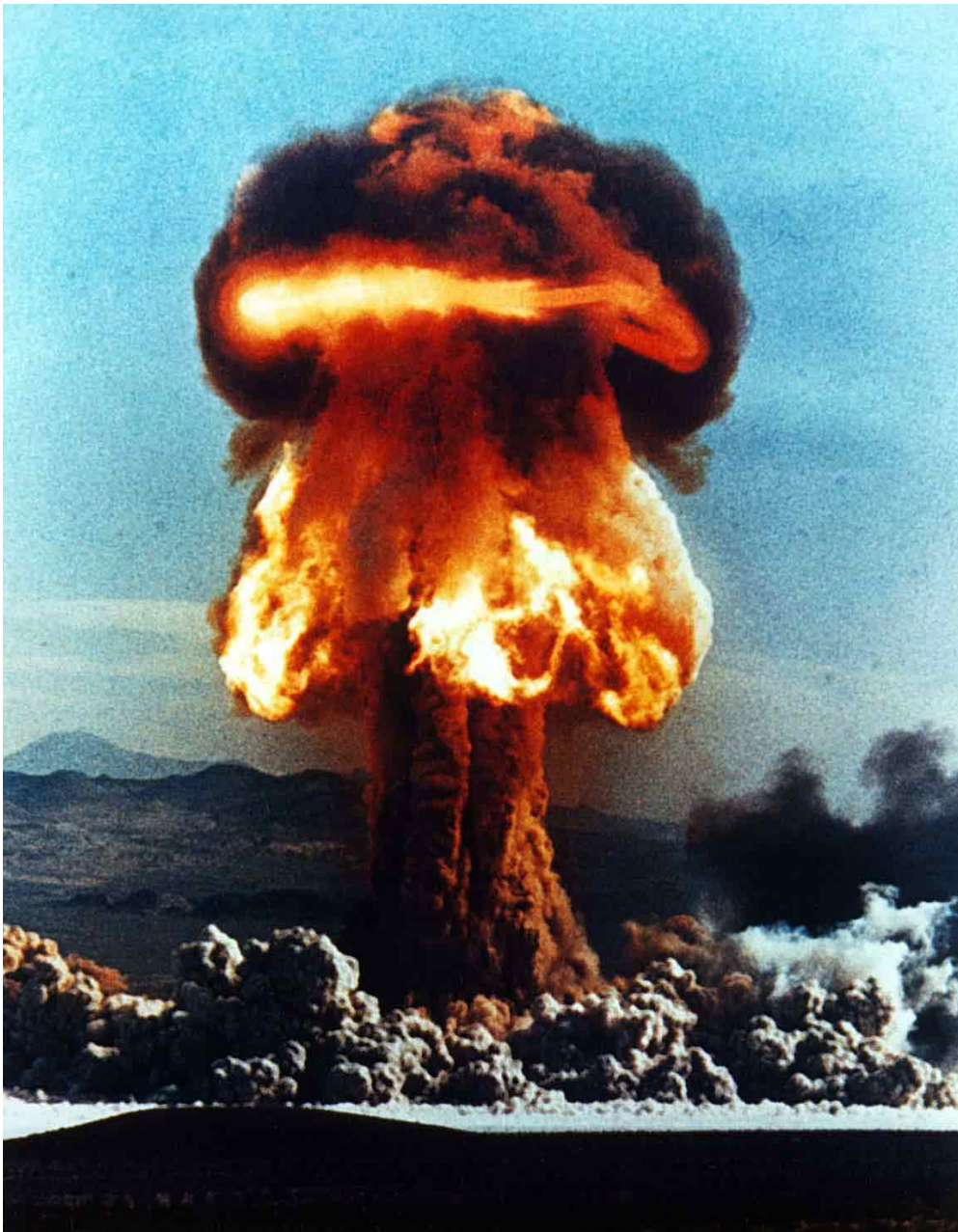
A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately light by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies. ...

It is my duty to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow. Athens alone – Greece with its immortal glories – is free to decide its future at an election under British, American and French observation. The Russian-dominated Polish Government has been encouraged to make enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany, and mass expulsions of millions of Germans on a scale grievous and undreamed-of are now taking place. The Communist parties, which were very small in all these Eastern States of Europe, have been raised to pre-eminence

and power far beyond their numbers and are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control. Police governments are prevailing in nearly every case, and so far, except in Czechoslovakia, there is no true democracy.....

Up till the year 1933 or even 1935, Germany might have been saved from the awful fate which has overtaken here and we might all have been spared the miseries Hitler let loose upon mankind. there never was a war in history easier to prevent by timely action than the one which has just desolated such great areas of the globe. It could have been prevented in my belief without the firing of a single shot, and Germany might be powerful, prosperous and honored today; but no one would listen and one by one we were all sucked into the awful whirlpool. We surely, ladies and gentlemen, I put it to you, surely, we must not let it happen again.



(c) Kennan's 'X Article'

In anonymous article in *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947) Kennan laid down a strategy for fighting a long Cold War with the Soviets (which went on 35 years long than he expected!):

- ☞ the Soviets, even once they acquired atomic weapons, would never desire outright world war
- ☞ they would rather wait for opportunities to take advantage of “diseased tissue” anywhere in the world.
- ☞ It followed that the West must undertake a long-term policy of positive containment, defying the Soviets wherever they sought to advance: for if the Soviet Union is *impervious to the logic of reason*, it is *highly sensitive to the logic of force*.

Kennan cast the confrontation in theological terms:

The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.

Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.

Here is the full text of George Kennan's [X Article](#) (1947).

(d) NSC-68

The National Security Council's plan, adopted in April 1950, fixed the lines of American policy for a generation.

Full text of [NSC-68](#).

☞ NSC-68 renounced and reversed a century and a half of American isolationism, arguing that withdrawal from Europe, and

consequent Soviet conquest of Europe, would *not* be the safe course, but rather, would be apocalyptic:

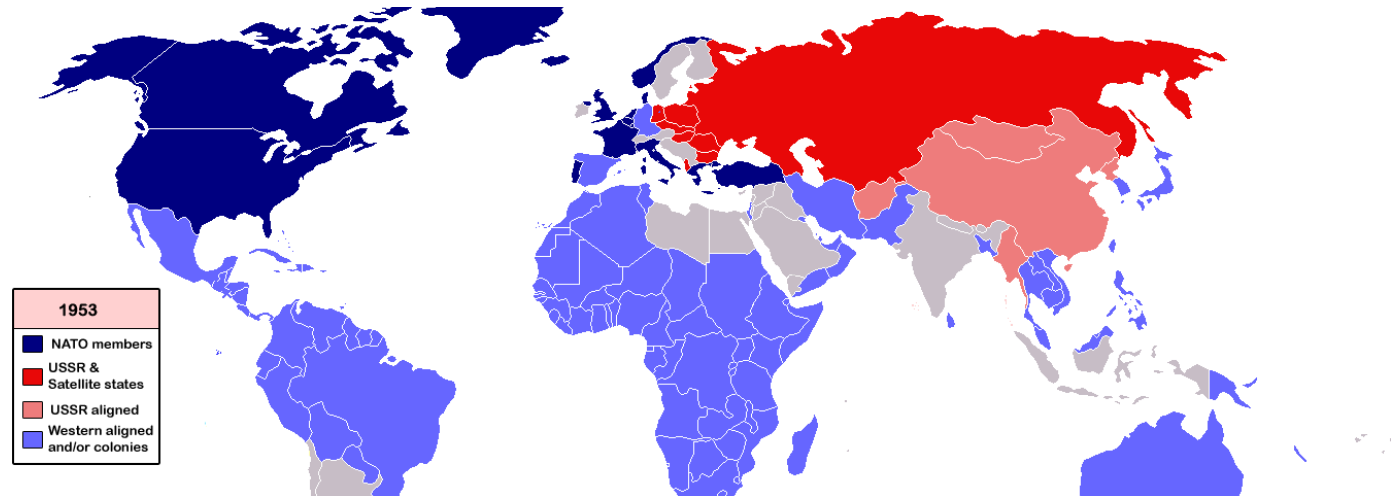
At some point in the course of isolation, many Americans would come to favor a surprise attack on the Soviet Union and the area under its control, in a desperate attempt to alter decisively the balance of power by an overwhelming blow with modern weapons of mass destruction. It appears unlikely that the Soviet Union would wait for such an attack before launching one of its own.

☞ America, as the greatest constitutional power, had a moral, political and ideological obligation to preserve free institutions everywhere, and therefore to rearm at once:

Time is short, however, and the risks of war attendant upon a decision to build up strength will steadily increase the longer we defer it.

☞ With the end of American's nuclear monopoly, that obligation implied military presence all over the globe, and permanent militarisation of the American economy – defence spending (then only 6%) should go as high as 20%:

A more rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength and thereby of confidence in the free world than is now contemplated is the only course which is consistent with progress toward achieving our fundamental purpose. The frustration of the Kremlin design requires the free world to develop a successfully functioning political and economic system and a vigorous political offensive against the Soviet Union. These, in turn, require an adequate military shield under which they can develop. It is necessary to have the military power to deter....



US military bases world wide 2001-2003

In this period the United States has over 730 military installations and bases in over 50 countries.



The new policy produced 675 overseas bases;

a million troops stationed abroad;

military commitments by the United States to 47 countries (see map);

And that is what we mean by world empire. RJCM 01iii14

2. The American system was predicated on American prosperity

¶ the war ended with Americans, 2% of the world population, earning more than 50% of the world's income.

Everywhere else is in ruins.

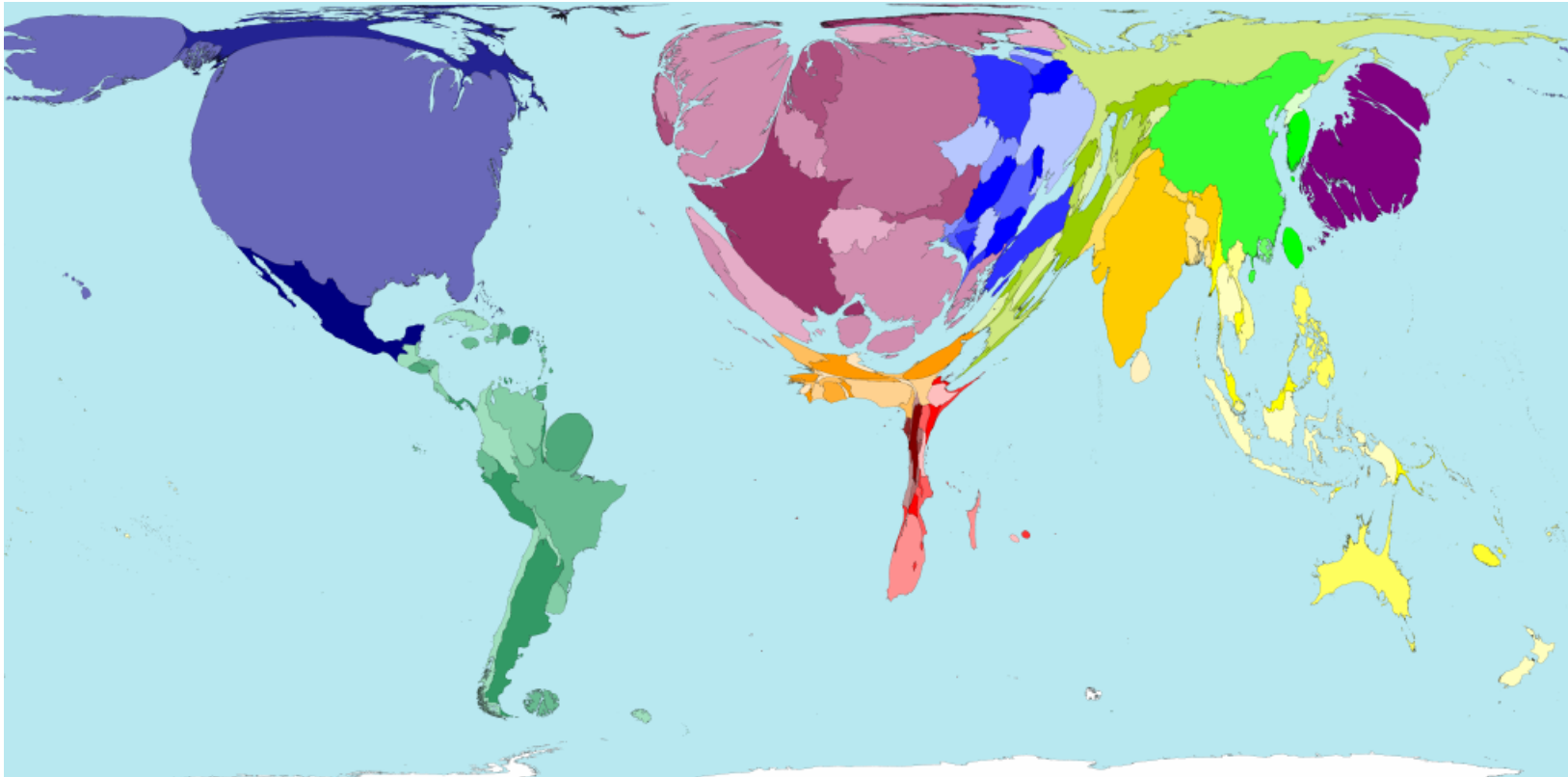
¶ this absolute domination naturally didn't last, but the **Marshall Plan** (the European Recovery Programme) 'exported' American-style prosperity to Europe

¶ until 1973 the world economy underwent unprecedented stable growth, driven by the American economy

¶ American economic hegemony was unchallenged

¶ the economic crises of the 1970s soon became a political crisis as American system nearly broke down

Here is GDP in 1960:



3. Bretton Woods and the gold standard

¶ There is no such science as economics, only hunches which are elaborated into whole systems of guesses

¶ Politicians decide which set of hunches it suits them to adopt

¶ Until the 1930s, Western governments were committed to **neoclassical thinking**:

- free markets would automatically correct recessions if workers were prepared to endure dips in wages
- governments must not risk inflation by getting into serious debt (except during war)

¶ The shock of the Great Depression shock these assumptions, and John Maynard Keynes (Lord Keynes from 1942; died 1946), an arrogant, and rather sinister and frivolous figure, argued instead that

- ‘**aggregate demand**’ is what fixes the total level of economic activity
- if aggregate demand falls, there will be **long periods of high unemployment**
- therefore **the state should regulate** ‘boom and bust’ cycles, damping down

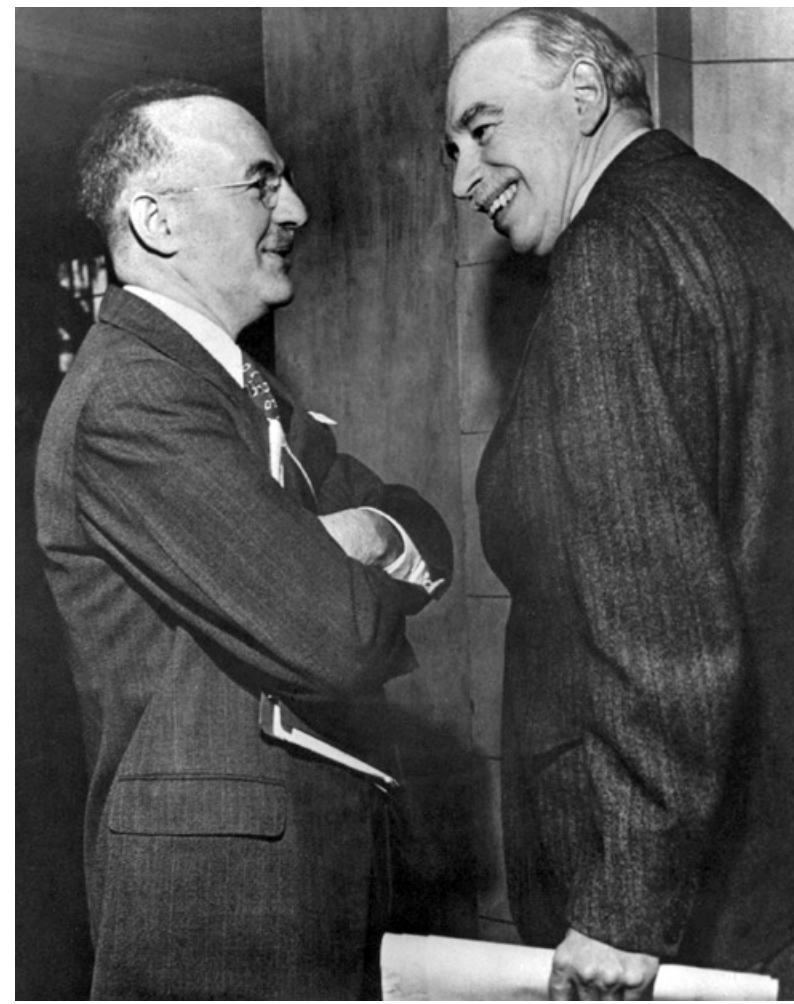
demand (through fiscal control or price regulation) when it thinks the economy is ‘overheating’, and spending money it doesn’t have when the economy slows

¶ After the war (and until the late Seventies) **Keynesianism** was the economic orthodoxy of America, and of the West

¶ in the Eighties he went entirely out of fashion (although he has had a certain revival since the disasters of 2007-2008)

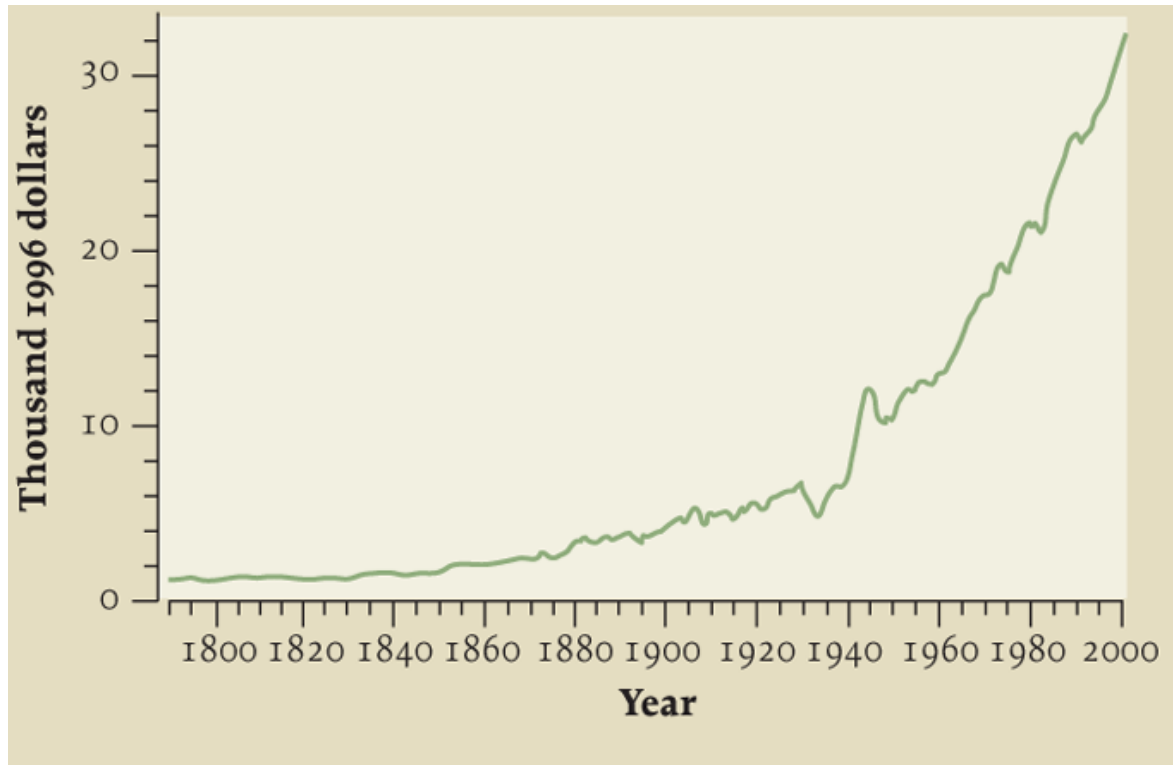
¶ The shape of international finance was fixed at **Bretton Woods** (a resort in New Hampshire) in 1944 by Keynes and a senior Treasury official, Harry **Dexter White**, who was, alas, a Soviet spy:

- all countries must adopt a monetary policy that maintained a fixed exchange rate **pegged** to the U.S. dollar
- which, uniquely, was backed by gold (the **gold standard**) and fixed at \$35 per ounce
- an International Monetary Found (**IMF**) that would smooth out temporary imbalances of payments.
- **devaluation** had to be approved by the IMF, and defaulters were punished



4. The great prosperity

Here is America's GDP (real Gross Domestic Product) per capita from the founding of the republic to the end of the twentieth century.



It represents an **astounding** age.

The period from 1945 to 1973 was the “**golden age**” of capitalism: a period of economic expansion, stable prices, low unemployment, and rising standards of living. Between 1946 and 1960, the American gross national product more than doubled and much of the benefit flowed to ordinary citizens in rising wages. In every measurable way—diet, housing, income, education, recreation—most Americans lived better than their parents and grandparents had. By 1960, an estimated 60 percent of Americans enjoyed what the government defined as a middle-class standard of living. The official poverty rate, 30 percent of all families in 1950, had declined to 22 percent a decade later (still, to be sure, representing more than one in five Americans).

Luxury. Numerous innovations came into widespread use in these years, transforming Americans' daily lives. They included television, home air-conditioning, automatic dishwashers, inexpensive long-

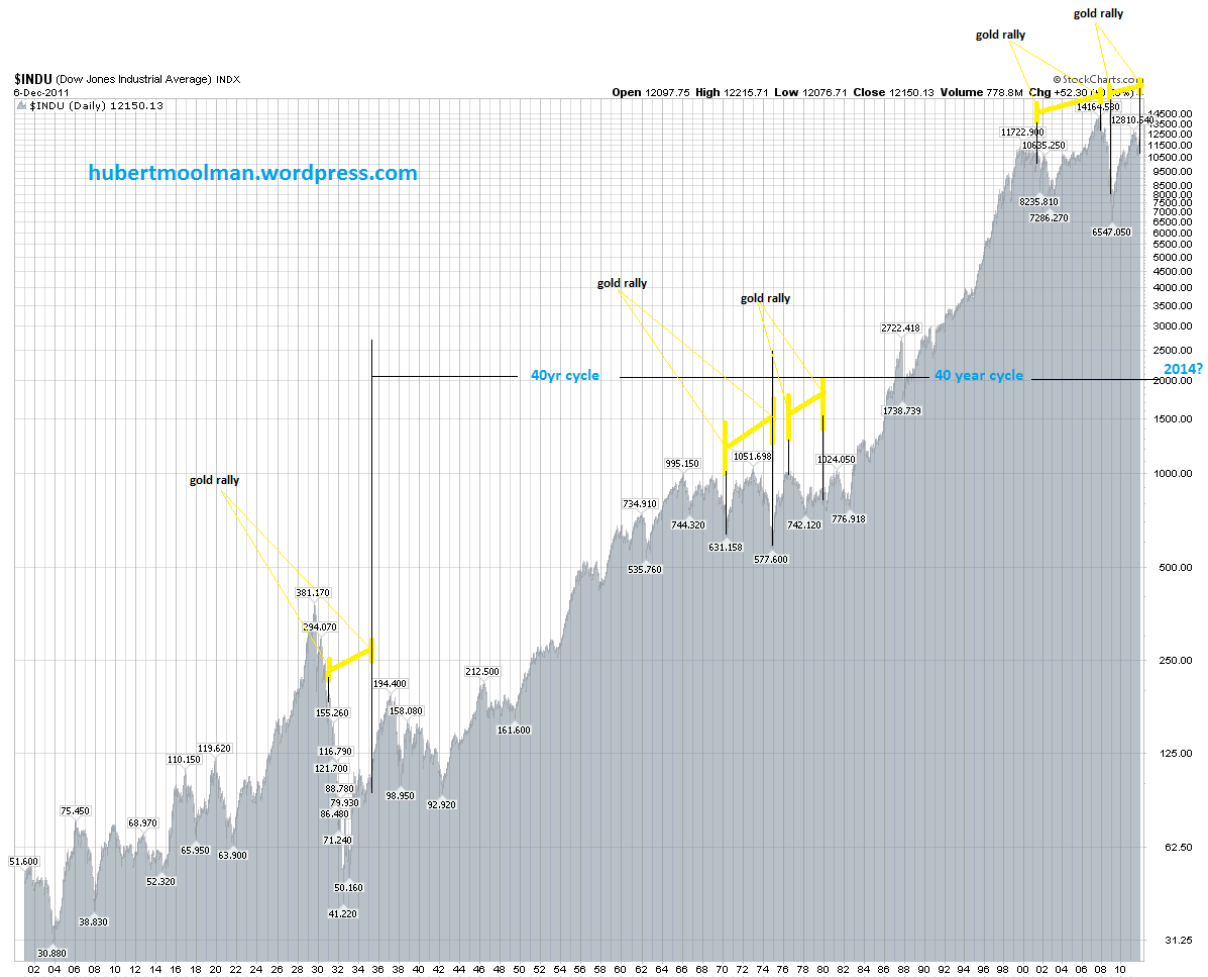
distance telephone calls, and jet air travel. Services like electricity, central heating, and indoor plumbing that within living memory had been enjoyed only by the rich and solidly middle class now became features of common life, especially in the new sprawling **suburbs** (made possible by cheap cars and easy commutes).

Despite the economic recovery of western Europe and Japan after World War II, the United States remained the world's **predominant industrial power**. Major industries like steel, automobiles, and aircraft dominated the domestic and world markets for their products. Like other wars, the Cold War fueled industrial production and promoted a redistribution of the nation's population and economic resources. The West, especially the Seattle area, southern California, and the Rocky Mountain states, benefited enormously from government contracts for aircraft, guided missiles, and radar systems. The South became the home of numerous military bases and government-funded shipyards. Growth in the construction of aircraft engines and submarines counterbalanced the decline of New England's old textile and machinery industries, many of which relocated in the South to take advantage of low-cost non-union labor.

In retrospect, the 1950s appear as the **last decade of the industrial age** in the United States. Since then, the American economy

has shifted rapidly toward services, education, information, finance, and entertainment, while employment in manufacturing has declined. Even during the 1950s, the number of factory laborers fell slightly while clerical workers grew by nearly 25 percent and salaried employees in large corporate enterprises rose by 60 percent. Unions' very success in raising wages inspired employers to mechanize more and more elements of manufacturing in order to reduce labor costs. In 1956, for the first time in American history, white-collar workers outnumbered blue-collar factory and manual laborers.

The long-term trend toward fewer and larger farms continued. During the 1950s, the farm population fell from 23 million to 15 million, yet **agricultural production rose** by 50 percent, thanks to more efficient machinery, the application of chemical fertilizers and insecticides, increased use of irrigation to land to cultivation in the West, and the development of new crop strains. The witnessed an acceleration of the transformation of southern life that had during World War II. New tractors and harvesting machinery and a continuing from cotton production to less labor-intensive soybean and poultry raising reduced the need for farm workers. More million black and white hired hands and sharecroppers migrated out of the region. center of gravity of American farming decisively to Texas, Arizona, and especially California. The large corporate farms of California, worked by Latino and Filipino **migrant laborers**, poured forth an endless of fruits and vegetables for the domestic world markets. Items like oranges and juice, once luxuries, became an essential the American diet.



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5. Post-industrial capitalism

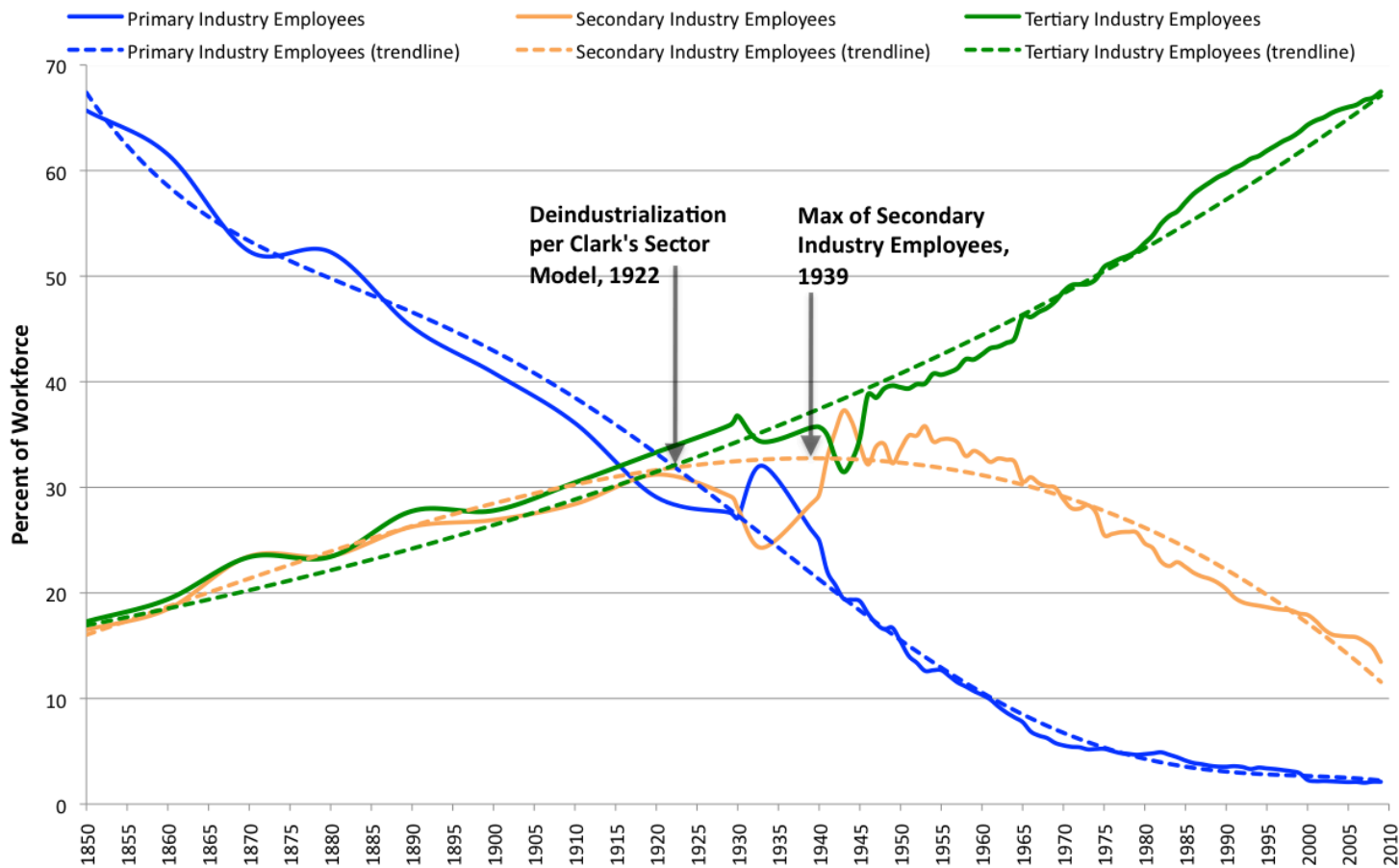
¶ What sort of prosperity was it?

¶ **Industrialisation**, which seemed so obviously the way of the future, ceased to expand in the 1950s;

¶ instead, the American economy underwent a transition from the production of **goods** to the provision of **services**

¶ because of **globalization** and **automation**, the value and importance to the economy of **labour dwindles** (especially blue-collar, unionized, manual labour)

Clark's Sector Model, US



6. The end of the old order and the crisis of the Seventies

¶ the Bretton Woods system began to creak badly in the late Sixties:

- the U.S. was constantly running a negative balance of payments
- her public debt (the Vietnam War, 'Great Society' programs) was causing the dollar to be overvalued
- there was rampant monetary **inflation**

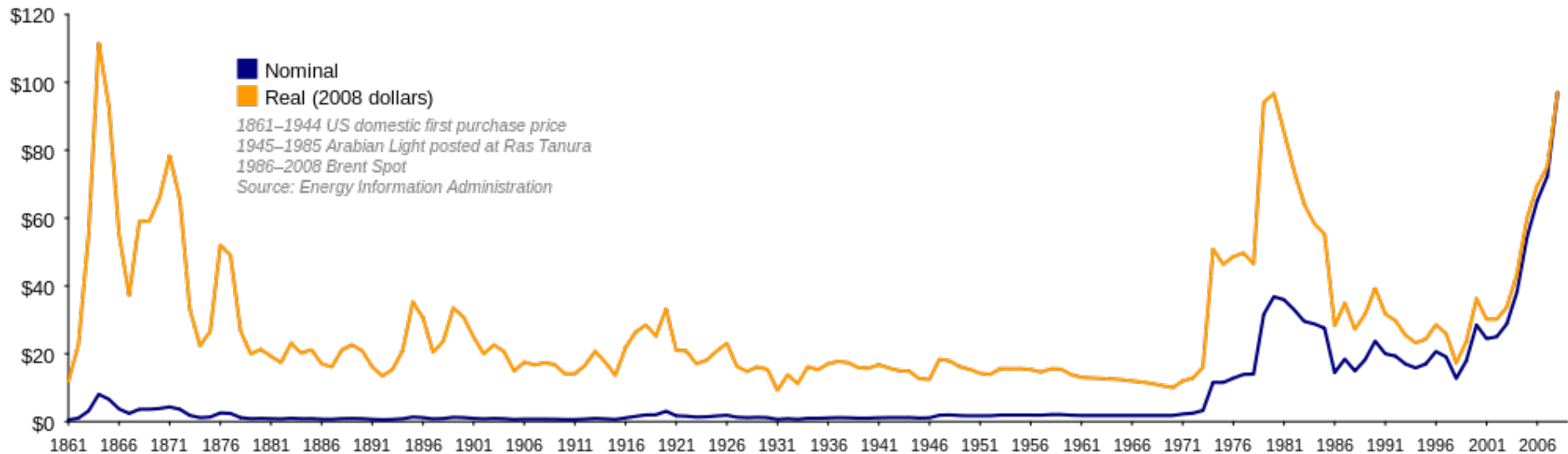
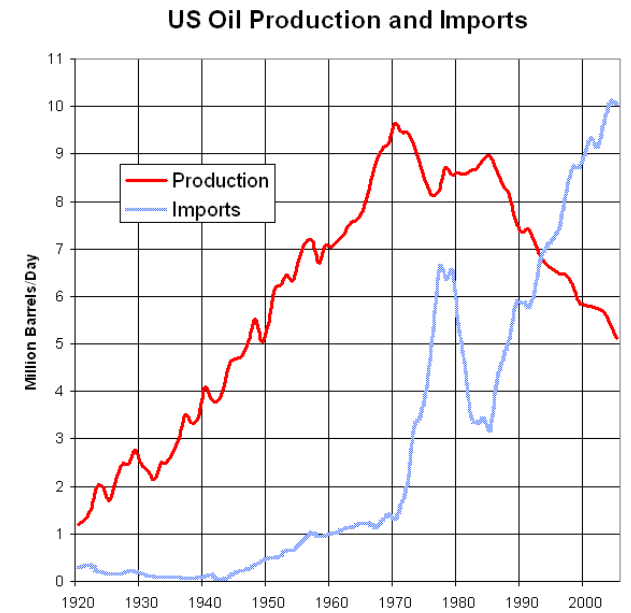
¶ August 1971: America unilaterally exited the system (**the Nixon Shock**): the dollar allowed to float and was no longer fixed to the gold standard. All other currencies were soon allowed to float too. Collapsing global monetary system.

¶ January 1973 to December 1974: the U.S. **stock market crashed**, very slowly but very brutally

Oil is the one necessary commodity in the modern world; unfortunately, it comes from only certain places, especially in the Arab world; the Zionist issue complicated economics!

¶ October 1973: OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) imposed **the Oil Shock** after the Yom Kippur War: embargo; crude oil prices quadruple in a year: "one of the pivotal events in the history of the century" (Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State).

¶ **stagflation** in the West; poverty, malnutrition and epidemics in the Third World; a global crisis



CHAPTER IV: American film as the self-portrait of society

What are the best social documents of post-war America?

There is only one American art-form, the commercial moving-picture, traditionally named from the suburb of Los Angeles where the movie business was centred: **Hollywood**.

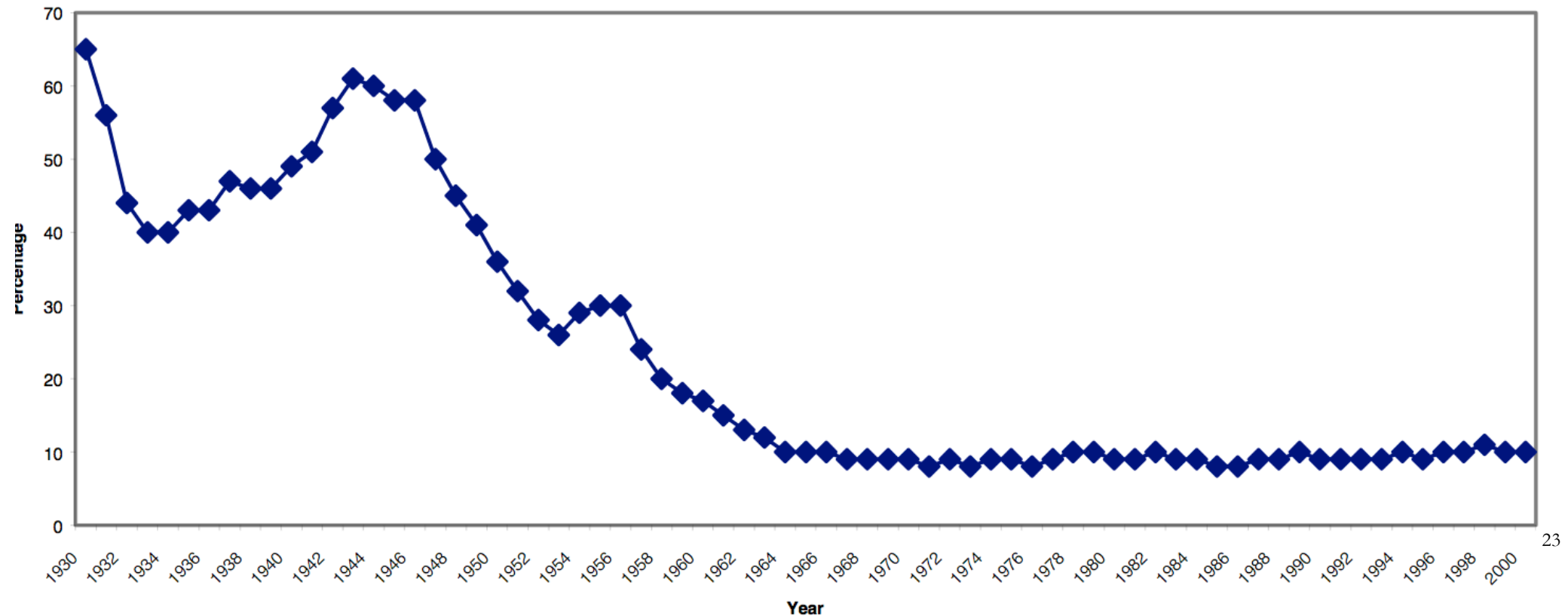
Hollywood was at the peak of its influence in the Forties and Fifties, not just in the United States, but all over the world.

Its products are documents as central to American history as paintings are for Renaissance Italy.

Television ended its particular importance.

But we cannot understand American history from the Forties to the Sixties unless we consider seriously the witness of the movies.

Percentage of the US Population that Went to the Cinema on Average Weekly





Film and politics

America is almost too big for ideas: its politics are often about images instead; and the images produced in Hollywood are so overwhelming that they necessarily reach the political plane.

The movie industry likes to say that “politics is just show-business for ugly people”; but the gap between the two always tends to close.

Why elect ugly people? Kennedy, whose family money was Hollywood money, and Reagan, whose career was a Hollywood career, brought the two world together. Eventually the two are likely to fuse.

To the right is a still from the 2013 Academy Awards: the First Lady suddenly appeared on the screens of 78 million people, live from the White House, surrounded by her military staff in dress uniform, to open the envelope and declare *Argo*, a travesty about the Iranian hostage crisis, deserved the Oscar for best film.



To the left is Michelle Obama’s predecessor, Caracalla’s empress, keeping Rome happy. The final stage will be the President appearing in films to slay monsters. Caracalla did actually descend from to the sand of the arena and fought the lions, naked; so we can be sure this will come too.

Here is a still from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), a Hollywood fantasy about politics and its corruption – and, implicitly, about the purity of the people and of the popular art-form, film.

Some examples for you to watch

I have put various clips up on these pages:

HOLLYWOOD AND THE 'FIFTIES – a bacchanal of self-praise.

But film also reflected the other side of post-war American history: global rivalry with Communism and the atomic peril. Here are

CINEMA OF THE COLD WAR

including *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), a stylish and nightmarish piece – here, at right, the evil presidential candidate is assassinated by the hero.

Hollywood also expressed themes of social and sexual discontent.

Here is the self-consciously rancid *The Graduate* (1967); *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959) – here is the trailer - and *The Night of the Iguana* (1964), both glorious camp horrors (*They were down there to film The Night of the Iguana, somebody sang at the Oscars that year, With a star-studded cast and a technical crew. / They did things at night midst the flora and fauna / That no self-respecting iguana would do.*)



CHAPTER V:

Americans *vs.* Soviets: Cold War and space race

1. Science changes the nature of war, and thus changes human nature

Two inventions popped up in the 1940s: missiles and nuclear bombs

¶ How to destroy your enemy, when the balance after 1941 tipped toward air defence (radar) over bombers?

¶ The Germans led the way, developing the cheap and effective **V1** or flying bomb (*right*):

this delivered a ton of high explosive and damaged 20,000 houses in London *every day* in July 1944.

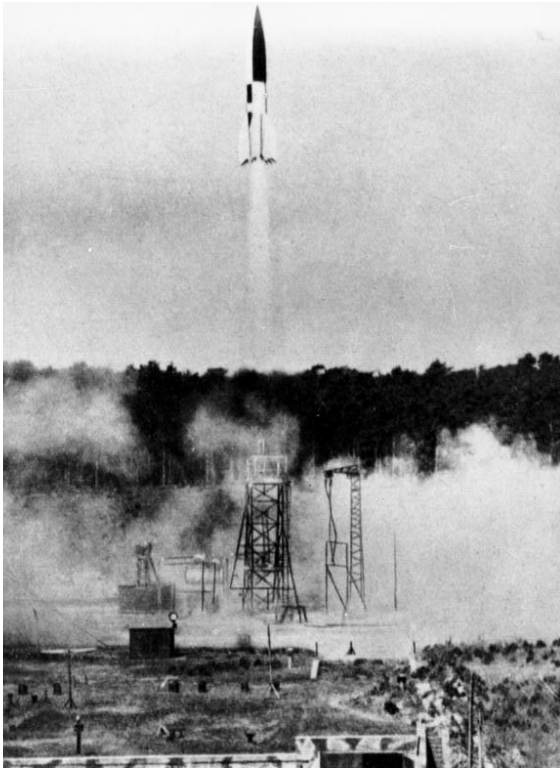
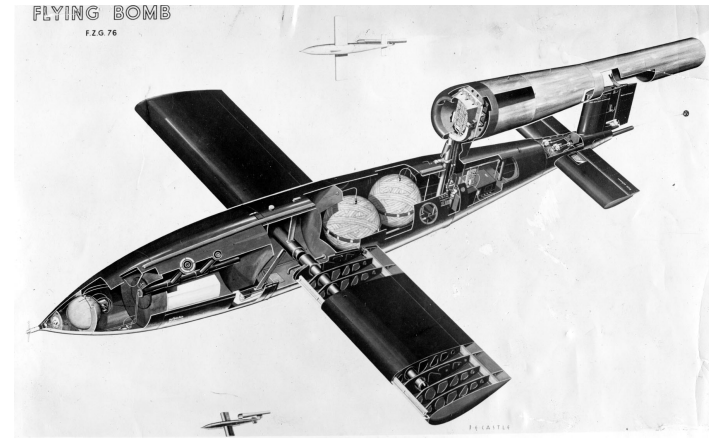
¶ Then came the large, expensive, spectacular and **V2** (*left*), the world's first long-distance ballistic missile, which could reach space (it went 128 miles up) and deliver 12,000lbs of explosive (creating a crater 20m wide, 8m deep, throwing up 3,000 tons of material).

¶ But the V2 was hopelessly inaccurate, not worth what it cost. What was needed was a more destructive payload, and this duly came along, *almost* in time to win the war for the Germans.

¶ In 1932 an **atom was split**, releasing 2 million electron volts. In 1939 a **chain reaction** was achieved – one split atom produced many more. The race was on, led by Hahn in Germany. But it was won by Jewish refugees. They made the A-bomb for the Americans (1945) lest Hitler get it; then they (Fermi of Italy, Edward Teller and Leó Szilárd of Hungary) made the H-bomb for the Americans (1952), lest Stalin get one first

¶ But it was the same **community of scientists** who betrayed the A-bomb (1949) and then the thermonuclear or H-bomb (1953) to the Soviets!

¶ From 1957, **ICBMs** (intercontinental ballistic missiles): America's huge predominance in planes and warheads was cancelled out.



American [military spending](#); the [BBC Cold War archives](#). For some lovely footage about the last years of Stalinism, Alger Hiss and the Hollywood Ten, see episode II of the [Cold War International History Project](#) (to 10'02") - you have to take show business very very seriously to care about scriptwriters not getting work, or Paul Robeson solacing Stalin with *Ole Man River*, but if you do, you do. The hollow pumpkins and the jowls of Nixon are zany, too.



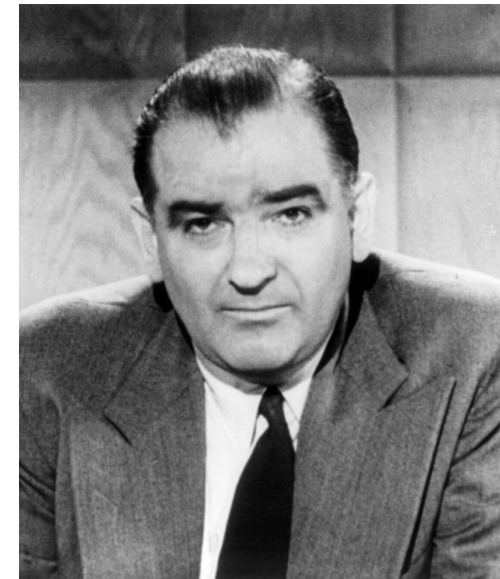
2. The nature of nuclear confrontation

- ¶ The Americans and the Soviets [stockpiled](#) nuclear weapons: the Americans built over 70,000 warheads.
- ¶ [Smaller powers](#) got the Bomb: UK (1952), France ('60), China ('64), India ('74), Israel ('79?), Pakistan ('98), North Korea (2006)
- ¶ For most of our period, nuclear war was impractical, because a country that suffered a massive nuclear attack (the **first strike**) could, although ruined, still destroy its attacker (in a **second strike**). Thus there was **Mutually Assured Destruction** (MAD).
- ¶ Nuclear instability sets in only when it seems possible to destroy a foe so utterly there can be no second strike. Nuclear war could thus be *won*; and might therefore happen. **Submarine-based missiles** caused this problem and eventually solved it.
- ¶ Thus nuclear war has hardly ever made military sense; and has not happened
- ¶ Nonetheless, the possibility of **inadvertent war** is appalling. Here's FEMA's map of [what a Russian attack would do](#) to the U.S.
- ¶ In the background of postwar American prosperity and self-congratulation was **naked terror**. [Hiroshima](#) (2'01" to 3'03") had changed the nature of human existence. Nuclear weapons meant that national destruction, and perhaps the annihilation of the human race, were constant possibilities. Watch this chilling and beautiful installation by [Isao Hashimoto](#), tracking nuclear explosions since 1945; a video of the [first Soviet H-bomb](#) in 1953; and of the [Tsar Bomba](#). I find Tsar Bomba a particularly beautiful thing to contemplate: see [these maps](#).

3. The alternative to thermonuclear war: the Cold War, or war by proxy

In the background of America's tremendous [prosperity](#) she waged a long subdued war with the Soviets:

- ¶ The resumed **Chinese Civil War** (January 1946-October 1949) ended with Mao's victory: a quarter of the human race passed into the Communist camp. The Nationalist Chinese establish themselves on Taiwan
- ¶ October 1949: the West wins the **Greek Civil War**
- ¶ June 1950: North Koreans invades the South. The 'U.N.' – America and her allies – drives them back almost to the Chinese frontier; Mao intervenes. **Korean War** ends in July 1953 in a draw.
- ¶ March 1953: **Stalin dies** horribly; a power struggle ends with Khrushchev in control and 'de-Stalinization', and eventually the **split with China**. The [kitchen debate](#) (July 1959; 0'52").
- ¶ 1950-1956 the **Second Red Scare** in America (the first was in 1919). Congressional investigation, sometimes rational, often hysterical and unjust, for hidden Communist agents. Associated with Senator **Joseph McCarthy**, until he was condemned by the Senate (December 1954) for "conduct that tends to bring the Senate into dishonour and disrepute". Hollywood was a particular [target](#) (to 10'02").
- ¶ 1955: Americans take over from French in **Indochina**
- ¶ August 1961: **Berlin Wall** suddenly built. Half Europe becomes a prison camp.
- ¶ October 1962: **Cuban Missile Crisis**: a serious brush with world war
- ¶ 1966-1968: the **Vietnam War** escalates until Johnson is rejected by the war-weary electorate
- ¶ From the mid-Sixties, the Soviets begin sucking up newly 'independent' Third World 'states'
- ¶ April 1975: Indochina falls. America seems to have **lost the Cold War globally**.

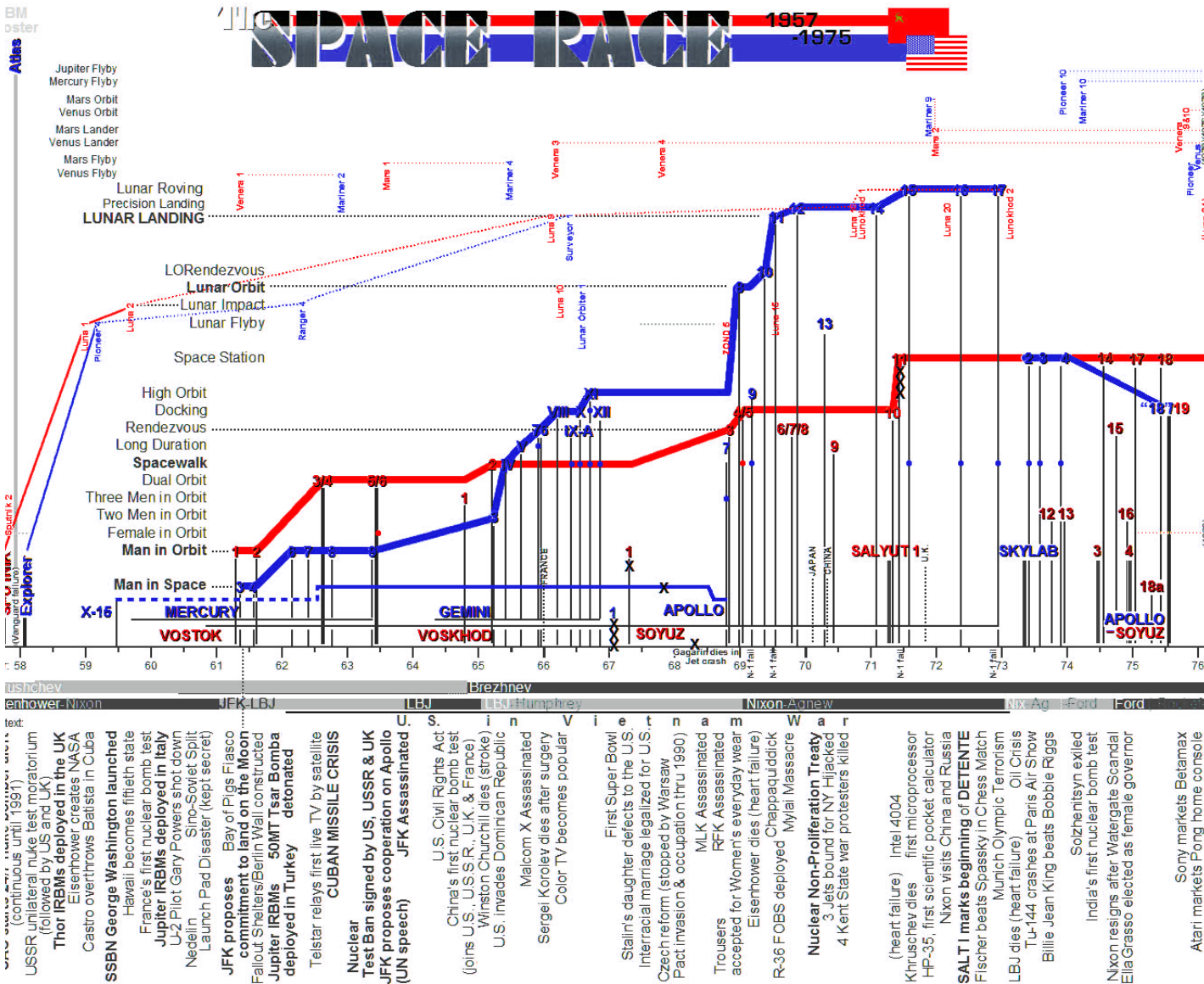


4. The other thing to do with rockets

Here's President Kennedy, who made the Moon an American Cold War ambition, with Wernher, Freiherr von Braun, Prussian aristocrat, scientist, member of the Nazi Party and the S.S., outer space enthusiast and inventor of the V2 ("The rocket worked perfectly except for landing on the wrong planet"). Von Braun taken back to America after the war as loot, and ran NASA.



And here's one of Von Braun's little helpers, in succession to the slave labour used for the Nazi V2: **Albert II**, a rhesus monkey who was the first primate in space in 1949, flying on a V2 and dying after a parachute failure.



CHAPTER VI: The turmoil of the 'Sixties, the *malaise* of the 'Seventies

1. Cinema of the Cold War

Two weeks ago we look at how Hollywood pictured the golden age of capitalism.

But film also reflected the other side of post-war American history:
global rivalry with Communism and the atomic peril.

Here are [some of those films](#).

2. America's "suicide attempt"?

Paul Johnson: 'a decade of illusions'?

Bizarre optimism, too brittle to survive:
on the Right (Vietnam) and on the Left (impossible welfarism),
amongst the young (the Age of Aquarius)
and the old (drug paranoia),
for whites (flight, flagellation) and blacks (riots, separatism)



America's [share of the global economy](#);
a historical graph of [American recessions](#);
the [history of inflation](#) in America;
[oil prices](#) since 1861.



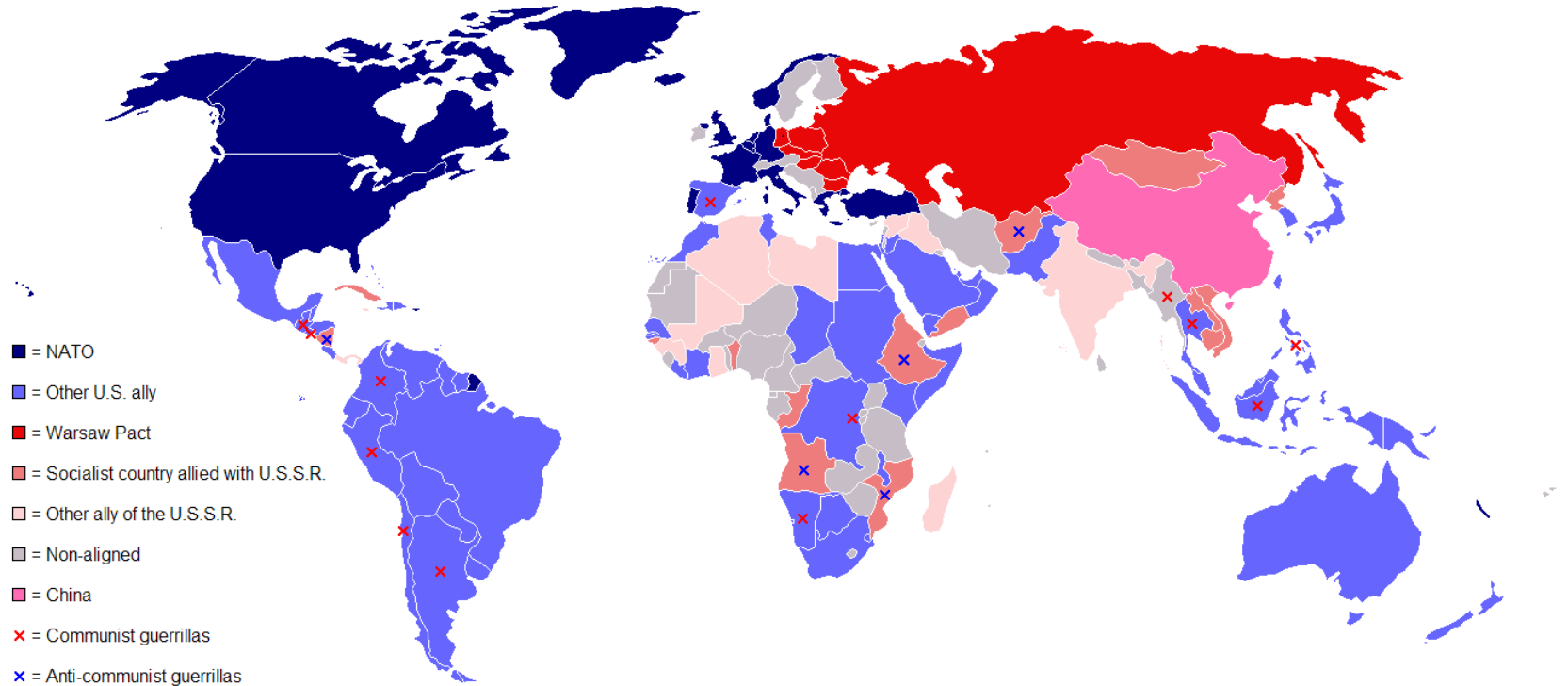
3. *Malaise*

Much of the horror of these years was about feeling: the melancholy brought on by [assassinations](#) (here are photos of the deaths of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King); Vietnam (here is the fall of Saigon); [riots](#), scandals (the ‘[smoking gun](#)’ is



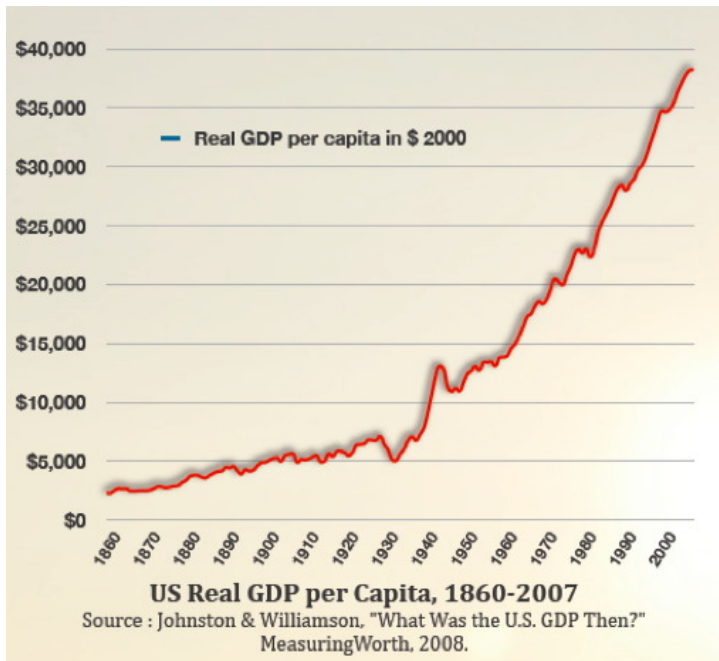
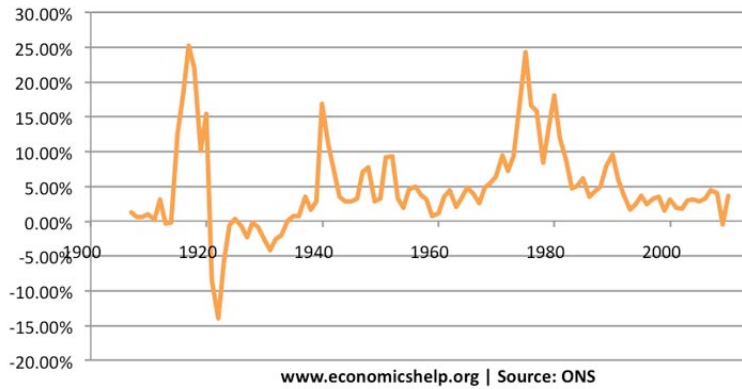
at 5’10”), the [Nixon’s resignation](#) (see 2’50”), the Iran hostage crisis (this is the trailer for the scandalously inaccurate 2012 film [Argo](#)), and the general silliness ([trailer](#) for the film version of *Hair*).

But there was a larger story: the apparent defeat of capitalism by socialism in the Cold War. Here is the world in 1980:



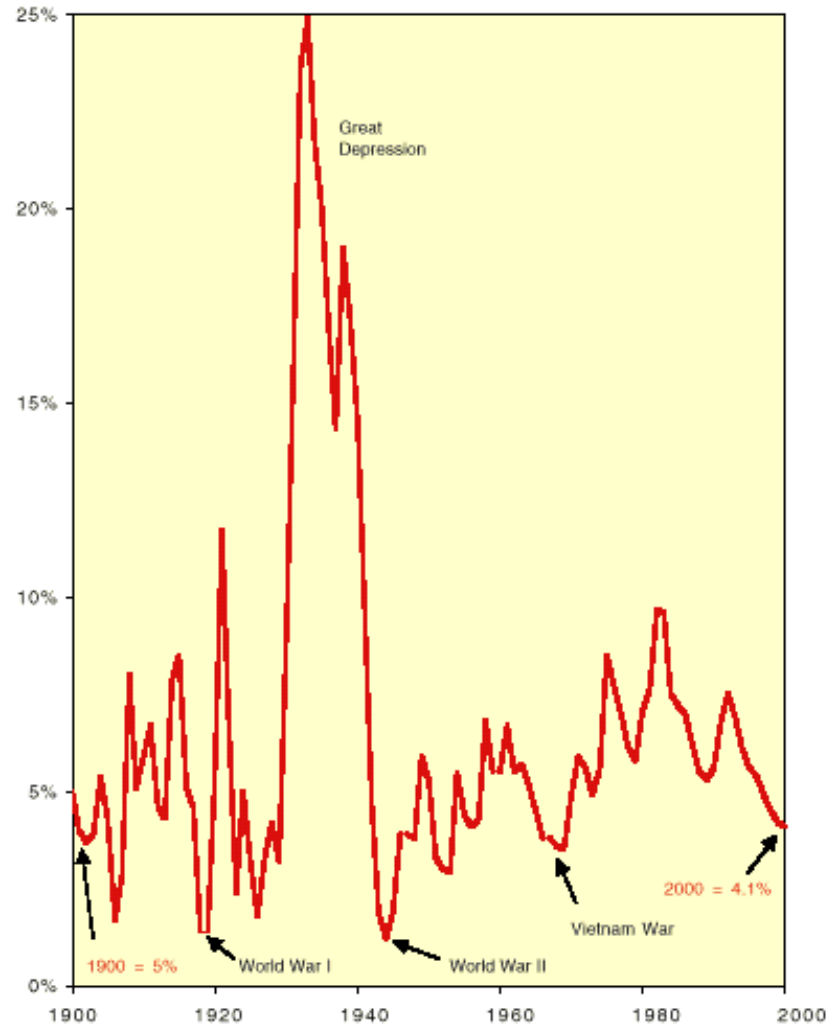
4. Inflation

Inflation 1910 - 2010


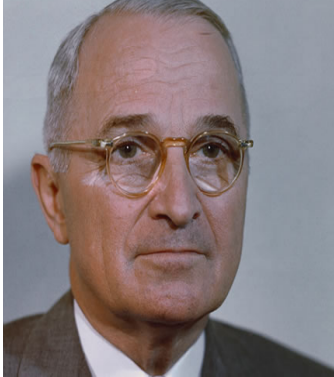






Unemployment Rate

Unemployed persons as percentage of the civilian labor force



CHAPTER VII: The American Presidency, 1945-1980

<p>XXXII Franklin Delano ROOSEVELT</p>		<p>Democrat of New York 1933-1945 <i>(died in office)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ frivolous New York aristocrat ¶ elected in depths of the Great Depression ¶ introduced the New Deal, a programme of Federal activism which possibly prolonged the Depression, but remained immensely popular until the '80s ¶ personally very popular: elected four times (uniquely in American history) ¶ enormously expanded the power of the Presidency ¶ aided the Allies when war began in 1939 ¶ pushed his Isolationist country toward war with Germany and Japan ¶ which led a Japanese attack and German declaration of war (December 1941) ¶ increasingly pushed Churchill aside as war leader, deferred to Stalin ¶ died suddenly, and deeply disillusioned with the Soviets, just before the end of the European war.
<p>XXXIII Harry S. TRUMAN</p>		<p>Democrat of Missouri 1945-1953</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ an obscure Southerner, a bankrupt haberdasher; 'S' for nothing ¶ went into politics and achieved some fame in the Senate ¶ chosen as Vice-President instead of the left-wing Wallace ¶ succeeded after 82 days ¶ at once authorised the use of the atom bomb (of which he had not heard!) ¶ broke with Soviets in March 1946: the Truman Doctrine, Berlin Airlift, the Marshall Plan, NATO ¶ narrowly reelected in 1948 ¶ oversaw the loss of China to the Communist (October 1949) ¶ failed to win or end the Korean War (June 1950); sacked General MacArthur
<p>XXXIV Dwight EISENHOWER</p>		<p>Republican of Kansas 1953-1961</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ an elderly general (born 1890) who had conquered Europe in 1944-1945 and then served as Supreme Allied Commander Europe ¶ drafted by Republicans to thwart isolationists within the party; landslide win ¶ a moderate; continued and expanded the New Deal, wary of military, helped destroy Senator McCarthy ¶ ended Korean War ¶ publicised 'domino theory' of Communist expansion ¶ organised coups in Persia and Guatemala ¶ introduced the first Civil Rights legislation

<p>XXXV John F. KENNEDY</p>		<p>Democrat of Massachusetts 1961-1963 <i>(assassinated)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ born to a newly-rich family of Boston ‘machine’ politicians ¶ nominated because young (born 1917) and telegenic, despite Addison’s Disease, inexperience and promiscuity ¶ narrowly defeated Eisenhower’s Vice-President, Richard Nixon ¶ approved abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba ¶ committed America to the Vietnam War ¶ avoided world war during the Cuban Missile Crisis ¶ initiated Project Apollo (leading to the moon landing in 1969) ¶ the Berlin Wall ¶ supported, not very successfully, the Civil Rights movement ¶ assassinated in Dallas, Texas
<p>XXXVI Lyndon JOHNSON</p>		<p>Democrat of Texas 1963-1969</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ a cunning and tyrannical Senate leader; personally monstrous ¶ nominated as Vice-President to ‘balance the ticket’ ¶ initiated the ‘Great Society’ programmes: the ‘War on Poverty’ ¶ responsible for broad Civil Rights Acts legislation ¶ escalated American involvement in Indochina: the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave him power to wage war there, and eventually he had an American army of over half a million fighting and not winning the war there ¶ 1968 saw the ‘student rebellion’, the assassination of Martin Luther King (April) and Robert Kennedy (June); Johnson, having done badly in primary elections, withdrew (March); the Democratic Convention (August) was chaotic and violent, and led to the nomination of Johnson’s Vice-President, Hubert H. Humphrey, who lost to Nixon in November
<p>XXXVII Richard M. NIXON</p>		<p>Republican of California 1969-1974 <i>(resigned)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ a strange paranoid little man, a working-class Quaker from California ¶ escalated and then ended American involvement in Indochina; the anti-Communist governments were then allowed to fall ¶ ‘opened China’ in 1972 ¶ <i>détente</i> with the Soviets; SALT ¶ a moderate: enforced desegregation, expanded social welfare, drug reform ¶ reelected by a landslide in 1972, in which, quite unnecessarily, his campaign committed various illegalities, leading to ‘Watergate’ ¶ ‘Nixon Shock’ ¶ Yom Kippur War (October 1973) and first oil crisis ¶ complicated Watergate scandal; Vice-President Agnew resigns over separate tax evasion scandal; Nixon’s support collapses; resigns to avoid impeachment

<p>XXXVIII Gerald FORD</p>		<p>Republican of Michigan 1974-1977 <i>(voted out of office)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ rather effective as Minority Leader in the House (Democrat 1955-95) ¶ chosen as Vice-President after Nixon's VP, Spiro Agnew, forced to resign for personal corruption ¶ Nixon, too, resigned; Ford became the only unelected President. Hapless. ¶ signed shameful Helsinki Accords ¶ presidency weakened; Congressional authority grows ¶ presided, helplessly, over the Communist conquest of Indochina ¶ worst economy Great Depression: inflation and recession ¶ narrowly defeated Reagan for nomination; narrowly lost general election
<p>XXXIX James CARTER</p>		<p>Democrat of Georgia 1977-1981 <i>(voted out of office)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¶ a naval officer and landowner from the Deep South ¶ perceived as 'well-meaning'; even more hapless than Ford in office ¶ pessimistic and penitent: the <i>malaise</i> speech ("The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will.") ¶ inflation, stagnation and the energy crisis ticked on, unabated ¶ the Camp David Accords: Egypt makes peace with Israel ¶ Panama Canal Treaties, SALT II ¶ Iranian Revolution in January 1979 causes the second oil shock and ¶ the 1979–1981 Iran hostage crisis ¶ the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) ended <i>détente</i> ¶ authority of America, and of the American presidency, at its nadir ¶ narrowly wins renomination over Ted Kennedy; lost in a landslide to Reagan and the Republicans (who take Senate for first time since 1952)

CHAPTER VIII: The reversal of the 'Eighties: a social counter-revolution



As the Seventies waned, the **intellectual** energy passed from Left to Right as well.

Neo-conservatives were intellectuals who made the journey from Communism (usually of the Trotskyite variety) to advocacy of “assertive” promotion of democracy and “American national interest” by means of military force.

Supply-side economics: government should lower barriers (tax and regulations) to the supply of goods and services; supply will create demand – a contradiction of the Keynesian idea that supply is caused by demand creates, which can be manipulated.

These tendencies found their champion in **Ronald Reagan**, a Hollywood [actor](#) ‘run’ by right-wing Republicans in California. He was Governor (1967-1975); nearly took the presidential nomination from Ford in 1976; was nominated in 1980, despite his age (born 1911), and won a landslide, taking 44 states, taking back the Senate after quarter of a century. In 1984 he was reelected, carrying 49 states.

Before we discuss the political counter-revolution that triumphed in the 'Eighties, we have to understand the social forces that, even before the 'Seventies ended, reversed the social direction of America. For in countries too prosperous and stable for political revolution or civil war, a lot of history turns on **social factors**: wages, marriage, housing and religion.

For instance, the sexual and feminist revolution of the Sixties was being undone. In 1972 Congress overwhelmingly passed **the Equal Rights Amendment** (*Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex*); it was immediately endorsed by Nixon; but it ran into trouble from the nascent New Right. Congress extended the deadline for ratification in 1978, but the Republican Party rejected E.R.A. in 1980, and it died in 1982.

Households were becoming [more solitary](#); unionism was in [drastic decline](#).

More generally, there was a **reaction in culture**, even among the young: here's what 1980s bands looked like (Spandau Ballet).

Other social issues that caused the American counter-revolution are **evolution, abortion, race and penal measures**.



Evolution

The United States has a curious, and strongly politicised, debate over biological evolution.

A [Pew Research Center poll](#) of 2013 shows that 60% of Americans, including 68% of white Catholics, believe *humans and other living things have evolved over time*.

But the contrary view, that *humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time*, is extremely strong in certain groups: it is held by 64% of white evangelical Protestants, 50% of black Protestants – and by the Republican Party. Since 2009, Democrats have moved slightly toward evolution (64% to 67%), Republicans strongly the other way (54% to 43%). There's now a 24% gap between the two parties, and it is necessary for ex-moderates like Romney (see cartoon).



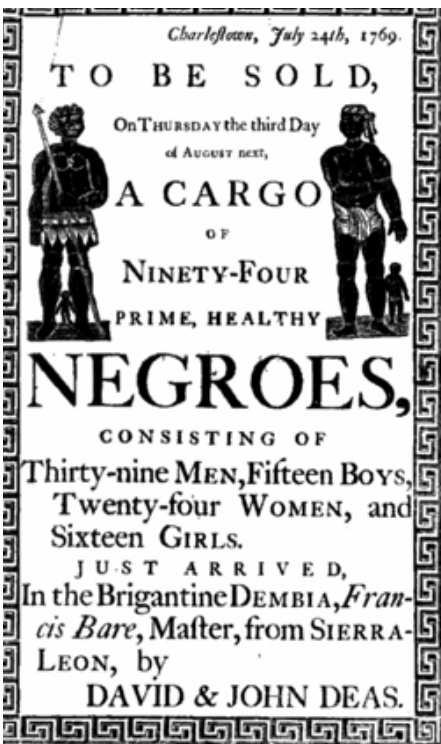
Abortion

The United States inherited a broad common law prohibition from the English (“human life, from its commencement to its close, is protected by the common law,” insisted James Wilson, who helped write the Constitution. “In the contemplation of law, life begins when the infant is first able to stir in the womb”).

In 1973, in *Roe vs. Wade*, the Supreme Court read a right to abortion on demand into the Constitution. About 50 million legal abortions have been performed in America since then. The rate peaked in 1990, and is in decline, at least among whites: the rate is 11 per 1,000 white women, 28 among Hispanics, and perhaps 60 among blacks.

The Democrats were traditionally more anti-abortion (being the party of Catholics), but by 2012 the two parties' platforms were in binary opposition. *The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports Roe v. Wade. We oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right.* The Republicans: *We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children.* It is a [long-term](#) vote-loser for the Left.





Race

The United States is an [ex-slave country](#). More generally, it has historically relied, not on free labour as in Western Europe, but on cheap unfree or semi-free labour (enslaved Natives, then indentured immigrants, then blacks, then indentured Chinese, and now ‘illegals’).

The most important pool of labour were the slaves, exported by warrior kingdoms in West Africa and imported to British America and the United States (until the [trade](#) was banned in 1808); and their descendants. By 1860 there were four million of them in the [Slave States of the South](#).

After the **Civil War**, which ended slavery, the blacks [remained in the South](#) until the Great Migration of the C20, reaching its climax in the 1960s. Black Americans, although still [concentrated in the South](#), have become urban, and dominate many American cities.

Despite the Civil War, the South remained a **strict racial hierarchy** from 1877 until the 1960s: blacks were disenfranchised by various semi-legal or illegal means. The Democratic Party machine made sure there was no outside interference.

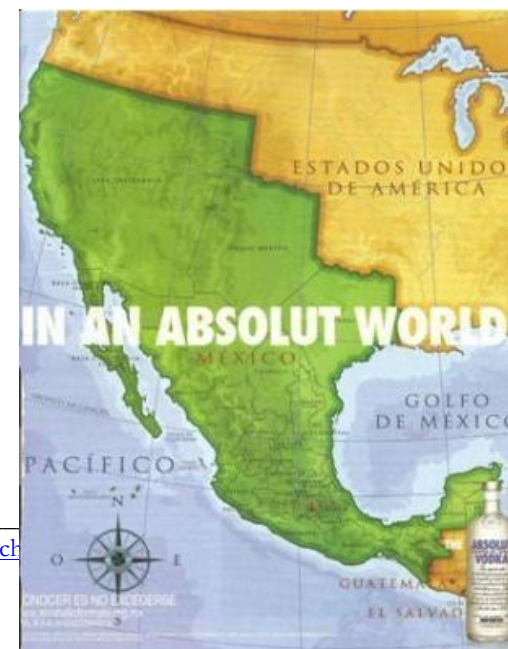
The **Civil Rights movement** was both a popular protest, and a sequence of legislation by Congress: Civil Rights Acts of 1957 (establishing the Civil Rights Commission), 1960 (Federal inspection of local voter registration polls) and 1964 (prohibiting racial discrimination by Federal and State governments); Voting

Rights Act of 1965 (Federal oversight of elections in the South; largely struck down by Supreme Court in 2013); Fair Housing Act of 1968 (prohibiting racial discrimination in housing sale and rental); Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (recipients of Federal funds selected by racial policy; overrode a veto by Reagan); Civil Rights Act of 1991 (trial by jury on discrimination, damages for ‘emotional distress’).

Political results of Civil Rights: blacks enfranchised in South, and become solid Democratic voters; Southern whites turn to the Republicans, and the South, hitherto a one-party Democratic area, becomes almost one-party Republican (here is the 2008 electoral map) – there are now *one* white Democratic Congressman from the Deep South! More generally, race is an implicit issue in most political debates, and works, broadly speaking, for the Right.

Demographics. America remains a country that is [predominantly](#) ‘white’, that is, inhabited by people of European descent. Race is a tense part of politics because since the end of the [baby boom](#) reproduction levels have been low; blacks have more babies than white, three-quarters born to [single mothers](#); young people are much more [racially diverse](#) than old; ‘**Hispanics**’ – Spanish-speaking emigrants from south of the frontier, overwhelmingly of pre-Columbian descent – are slowly retaking the [Southwest](#) (*right: vodka ad, 2008*); and the long-term future in the United States is a [white minority](#).

Meanwhile black income remains stubbornly [below white](#); various factors, especially black illegitimacy, indicate it will stay like that.





Penal

America is a Western democracy with a legal system that is unusual, or, if you like, bizarre, in three ways:

- (a) **judges are elected** in [many states](#), and their rulings and sentences are therefore liable to direct popular pressure.
- (b) The **Second Amendment** of the Constitution guarantees the right to bear arms as a way of protecting the right of insurrection. Revolts have been out of favour since 1865, but the Second Amendment makes gun-control difficult, especially over the last thirty years. America has highly unusual patterns of gun [ownership](#) and [homicide](#).
- (c) A combination of (a) and (b) means that there's unusual political zeal for **judicial severity**: capital punishment and [mass imprisonment](#), often

under very harsh conditions: here is a contemporary chain gang.

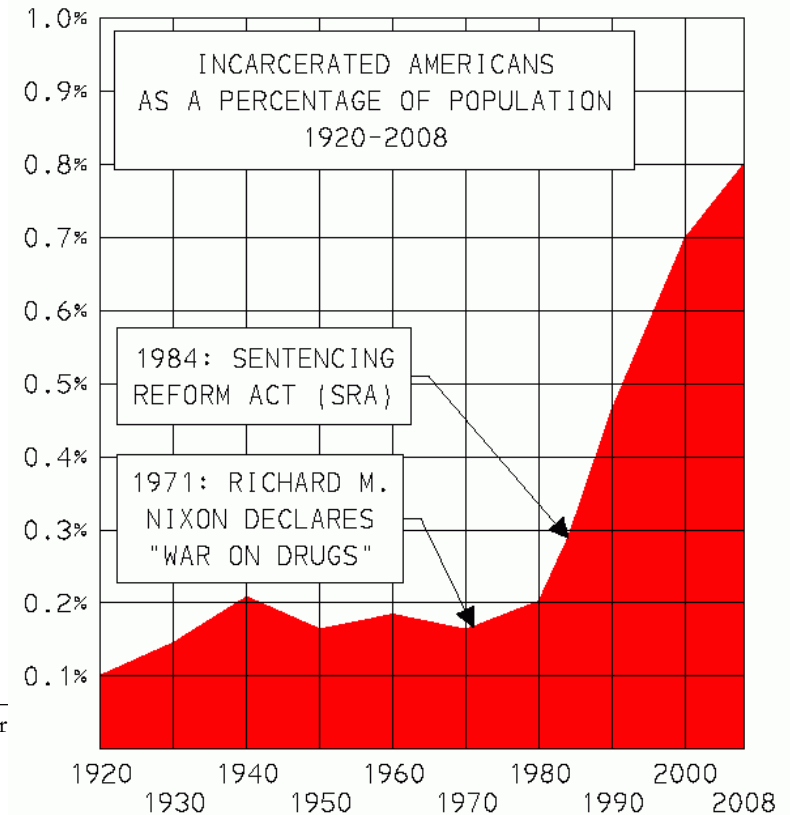
This has especially been the case since 'law and order' was discovered, in the 1970s, to be sound electoral strategy (appealing as it does to poor whites, classic swing voters).

The Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984, for instance, established a United States Sentencing Commission, which tends to drive up severity, expanded the Secret Service's jurisdiction, and re-instituted the Federal death penalty. This remains popular legislation, even though the rate of incarceration in America is [bizarrely high](#) by international standards: seven million adults are 'under correctional supervision' (probation, parole, jail, or prison), almost 3% of the population.

As with most political issues in America, race is significant: rates of imprisonment falls heavily on [non-whites](#):

(<http://www.richardmajor.com/teaching/Corvinus/graphs/penal/byrace.jpg>)

However in general the police are much more aggressive than elsewhere in the West: by the time he reaches 23, an American male has a 38% of having been arrested even if white (44% if Hispanic, 49% if black).

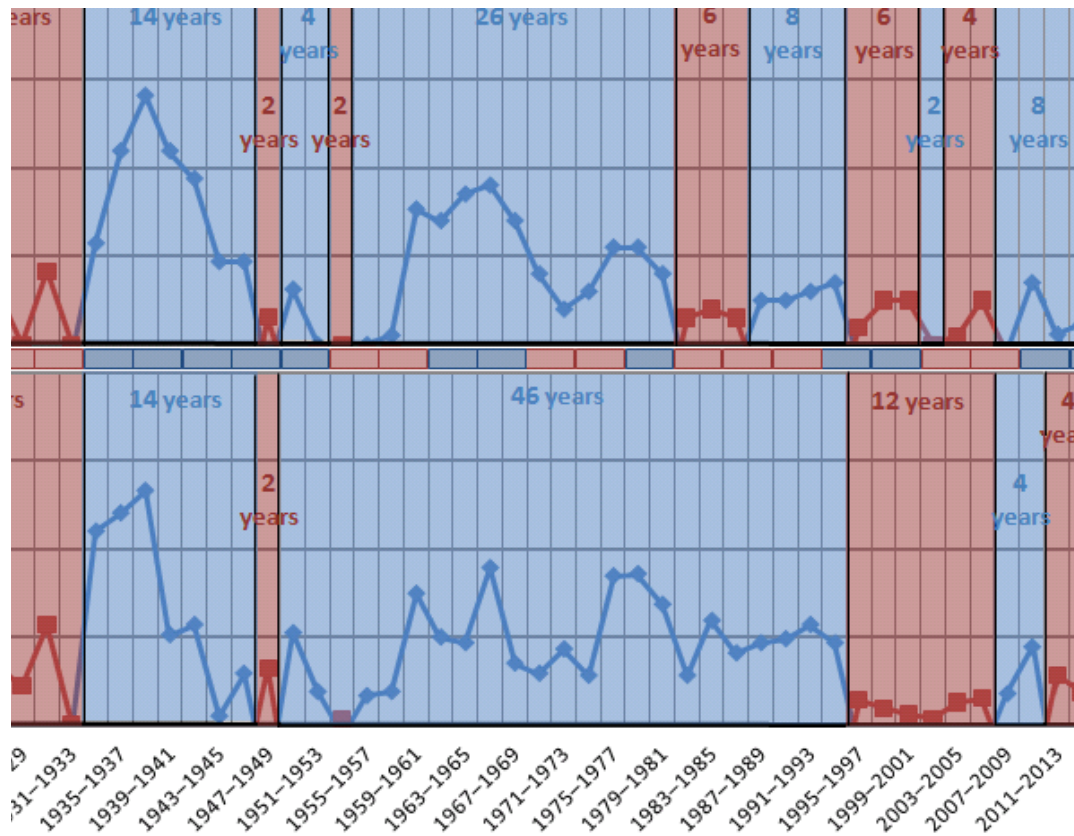


CHAPTER IX: The Reagan Revolution

The end of the postwar consensus.

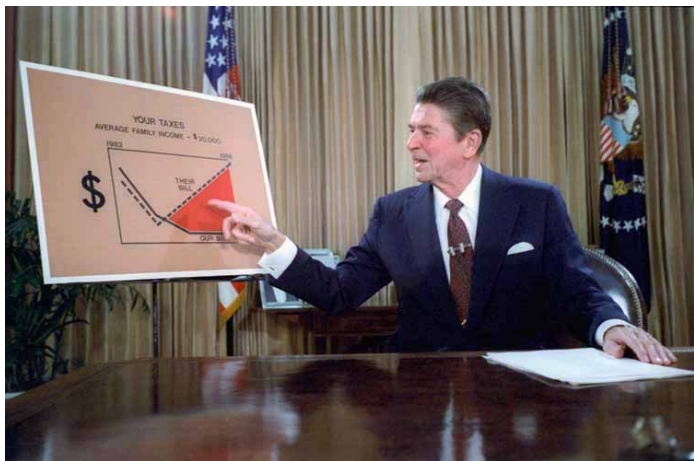
Throughout the Western world, mainstream parties had accepted collectivism, a mixed economy, a welfare state, Keynesian economic policy, a commitment to full, and (after the 1960s) a desire for permanent *détente* with the Soviet Union.

That consensus ended with the election of Margaret Thatcher in Britain (May 1979) and Reagan in America (November 1980). There was a permanent ideological shift, which has yet to be reversed.



In 1980, Congress had been a Democratic preserve since the Great Depression: this diagram shows the Donkey's control (in blue) of the Senate, above, and the House (the line indicates the scale of the majority). Now, with Reagan, the Elephant took the Federal legislature back.

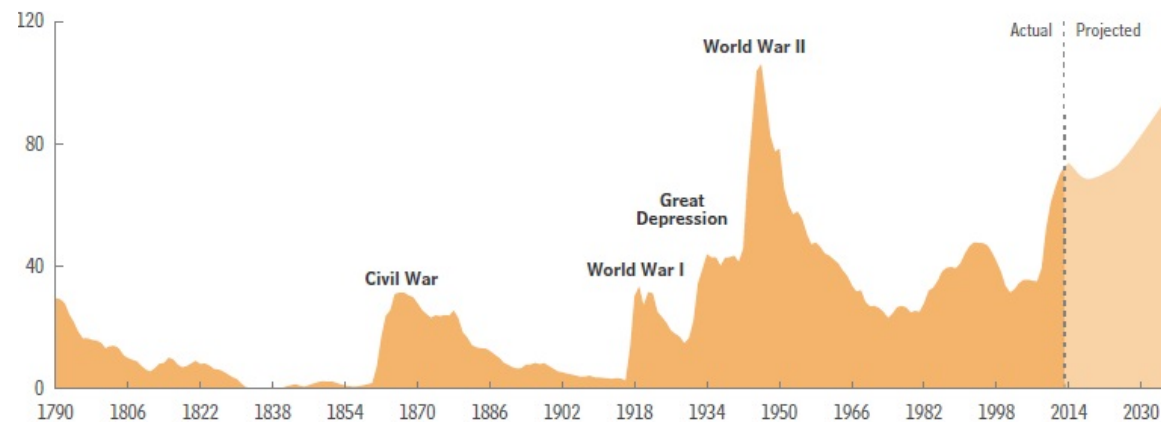
Reagan's was a great presidency and Reagan was a ninth-rate man. Back in the 'Thirties, the witty Mencken had prophesied: *On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.* Worse was to come; but this was strange enough.



Tax-cuts and a permanent deficit. Reagan, especially after surviving an assassination attempt in March 1981, had remarkable sway over Congress and the public. He pushed through the Tax Reduction Act (July 1981: see photo, and note the genial vagueness of that pointing finger). The top marginal tax bracket dropped from 70% to 50%; the Tax Reform Act of 1986 reduced it to 28%. This also represented a permanent counter-revolution: America is now hostile to redistributive taxation, and has settled into permanent deficit, partly because of the Reagan's rearmament (a 40% real increase in defense spending from 1981 to 1985), and partly, perhaps, because the Right believes that horror of the deficit will make a revival of welfarism permanently impossible.

Reaganomics: supply-side theory: a *laissez-faire* philosophy, free-market fiscal policy, stimulation through large, across-the-board tax cuts, enough, it was hoped, to expand the tax base, offsetting the loss of revenue.

Right or wrong, he had the advantage of a very sunny economy, the **Reagan boom**. During his administration inflation dropped from 12.5% (average in 1980) to 4.4% (1988); unemployment fell from 7.5% to 5.4%; GDP grew 7.9% on average, and reached a tremendous 12.2% in 1982.



The return of aristocracy. The Gini coefficient (after Corrado Gini, 1912) measures the income inequality among values of a frequency distribution, with 1 perfect inequality in a society – one man earns everything – and 0 perfect equality. Since World War II there had been, [broadly speaking, increased income equality](#); pre-tax income [grew less](#) amongst the rich. From the end of the '70s that was reversed, and now America is unusual globally in the scale of its [hereditary wealth](#). CEOs, for instance, have earned [more and more](#), and a larger and larger percentage of wealth lies with the [richest families](#). This changes the nature of Western society.

CHAPTER X: The New World Order, 1989-2001

The object of human existence, according to the American Constitution, is *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*.

So far in this course, we have seen the United States since 1945 committed to the following role in history:

life

‘active containment’ and then (from 1980) ‘roll-back’ of Communism; permanent militarisation; nuclear strategy of MAD; NATO

liberty

ideological commitment to constitutional and liberal government in the post-colonial world

the pursuit of happiness

mixed and (after 1980) almost pure capitalist expansion at home

Francis Fukuyama

THE END
OF HISTORY
AND
THE
LAST
MAN

Until 1989 these goals were not always achieved;
but after 1989 a brief golden age opened, when victory was easy;
hence Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 essay *The End of History?*
Since 2001, history has resumed!

The [American share](#) of world economy;
an [impressionistic cartoon](#) of the course of the Cold War;
the [Federal Debt](#).

LIFE: America's Soviet enemy implodes

☞ In 'the kitchen debate' of 1959, Khrushchev had promised to 'bury' the West by overcoming it economically;. By 1982 Soviet economic stagnation was apparent, especially in industry (although agriculture was ruined too: the regime survived by importing grain from its American foe). Yet Communism seemed too entrenched to change – not least because it was becoming hereditary.

☞ **Brezhnev** (*left*) died in November 1982. His successor, after a struggle, was the appalling **Andropov** (*right*), a sterile reactionary afflicted with a 'Hungary syndrome' – an obsession with crushing dissent by military force – who raged against Reagan's "bellicose, lunatic anti-Communism" but died after 14 months without doing much harm. The aged **Konstantin Chernenko** (*left*) lasted just over a year; then power passed to young (born 1931) **Mikhail Gorbachev**.

☞ who introduced (1986) *perestroika*, or restructuring of the system; and (1988) *glasnost*, or openness, including some civil liberties, culminating in a new constitution, with Gorbachev as President, and semi-free elections in 1989.

☞ But Communism couldn't be reformed. Economically, Gorbachev hastened its collapse: by the end of the 1980s, there were severe shortages of meat and sugar, despite rationing; a massive deficit; a big internal debt; and Afghanistan.

☞ Nationalist turmoil reached the point of full-scale racial war in the Caucasus; the Baltic republics tried to break away; **Boris Yeltsin** (*bottom left*) became president of Russia, and set himself up as Gorbachev's rival.

☞ An attempt by hardliners to prevent a loosening of the USSR into a 'Union of Sovereign States' – **the August coup** of 1991 – overthrew Gorbachev; but the *coup* was run by fools and drunks – note the [shaking hands](#) of Gennady Yanayev, the Acting President, in this infamous press conference (10') – and it collapsed after a few days. But Gorbachev was finished; power passed to Yeltsin (also a drunk; on a 1995 visit to Washington he was found on Pennsylvania Avenue in his underwear, trying to hail a cab to find pizza); the Soviet Union was dissolved.

☞ Yeltsin presided over decline and chaos in the new Russia; on 31 December 1999 he suddenly despaired, asked forgiveness, and resigned. **Vladimir Putin** (*right*), a KGB general with steely eyes and an obsession with recovering the glories of Tsarist Russia, took over, and has been dictator ever since.



LIBERTY: **Becoming the sole super-power**

- ☞ Once the Vietnam War turned into a disaster in the mid-'Sixties, Americans lost their taste for foreign adventures;
- ☞ after the fall of Indochina in April 1975, America became entirely quiescent. Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, advanced Vance's Rule of Two and a Half: "Any military project will take twice as long as planned, cost twice as much, and produce only half of what is wanted."
- ☞ Only under Reagan did foreign wars resume: it was at first a mixed bag.

August 1982-February 1984: unsuccessful intervention in endless civil wars in **Lebanon**

October 1983: invasion of **Grenada**, after one Communist faction overthrown by another

April 1986: bombing of **Libya** in revenge for terrorist attacks

April 1988: Operation Praying Mantis: one-day naval war with **Iran**

December 1989: invasion of **Panama** to get rid of the dictator Noriega

January-February 1991: Operation Desert Storm, **THE FIRST GULF WAR** against Iraq

December 1992-May 1993: unsuccessful intervention in endless civil wars in **Somalia**:

[*Black Hawk Down*](#) (2001)

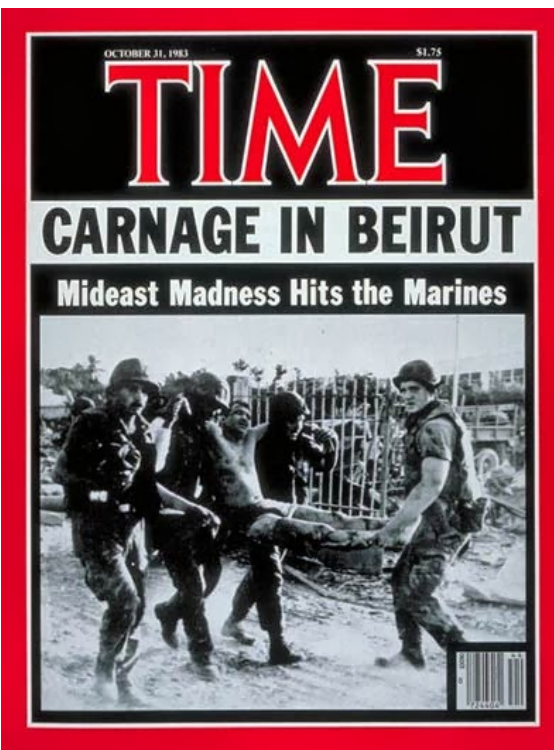
September 1994: Operation Uphold Democracy: invasion of **Haiti** to restore President Aristide (whom the U.S. then helped overthrow in 2004)

August-September 1995: Operation Deliberate Force: NATO air force intervention in the **Bosnian War** (100,000 killed, perhaps 50,000 raped, 2.2 million homeless: much the worst war in Europe since 1945). Dayton Agreement in December ends the war.

March-June 1999: NATO air force intervention in **Kosovo War**: Serbia, after bombing, caves in and withdraws. Here's some [maudlin Serb propaganda](#).

Only some had U.N. approval; not all were victorious.

- ☞ But the one that matters was the **First Gulf War**, which reversed the whole tendency of the twentieth century: nationalist socialism, military aggression, the failure of collective security, Western appeasement. After 1991 America possessed, and was prepared to exercise, hegemonic jurisdiction over the planet: this was the New World Order proposed by Bush in 1990.





THE FIRST GULF WAR

1914-1918 British (who have held Kuwait since 1890) conquer Mesopotamia from the Turks and 1920-1922 establish the Kingdom of Iraq. 1958 Monarchy overthrown by nationalist-socialist dictatorship; from 1968, a Ba'athist state led (after [purges](#)) by the amazingly bloody **Saddam Hussein**. Alliance with the Soviets. 1979 February: **Iranian Revolution**: Shah overthrown; Shi'ite priestly dictatorship under the Ayatollah Khomeini. Army purged.

1979 November – 1981 January: **hostage crisis**: American diplomats seized by mob and held by regime

1980 September: Iraq invades Iran. The **Iran-Iraq War** (confusingly known as also known as the First Persian Gulf War) settled down to a reenactment of World War One: large-scale trench warfare, barbed wire, gas (especially by the Iraqis, against Kurdish villages), manned [machine-gun posts](#), bayonet charges, human wave attacks across no-man's land: a million dead. Iraqis funded by the Sunni world and armed by the West. The war ends in a draw in 1988.

1990 August 2: Saddam, who now has the fourth biggest army in the world, **overruns Kuwait** and annexes it.

August 7: Bush orders “wholly defensive” **Operation Desert Shield** to prevent Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia

November 29: UN Security Council passed Resolution 678, authorising members “to use all necessary means” to evict Iraq from Kuwait.

The U.S. (despite a close Senate vote for the war 52-47) assembles a large

Coalition (blue on map).

1991 January 17: Operation Desert Storm: [air war](#) begins. It made, or rather *was made as*, great television. Here's the [luckiest man in Iraq](#);

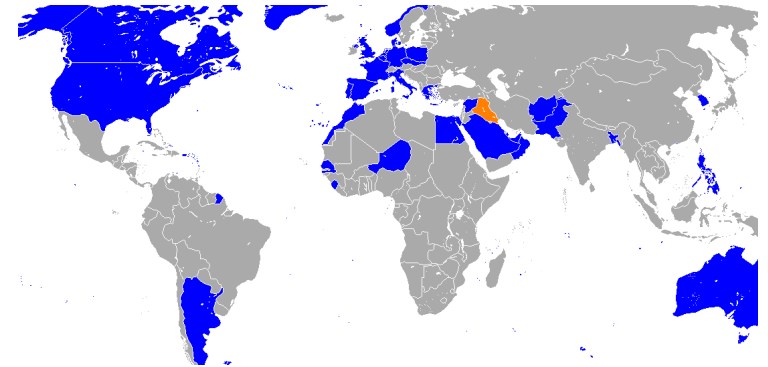
February 24: massive Coalition invasion of Iraq and Kuwait. Rapid and total

victory. [BBC documentary](#)

February 26: about 10,000 retreating Iraqi troops killed on the [highway of death](#) (*left*).

February 28: unilateral ceasefire.

March-April: Saddam crushes risings in the south ([Three Kings](#) (1999)); in the north, Coalition intervention effectively saves the Kurds.



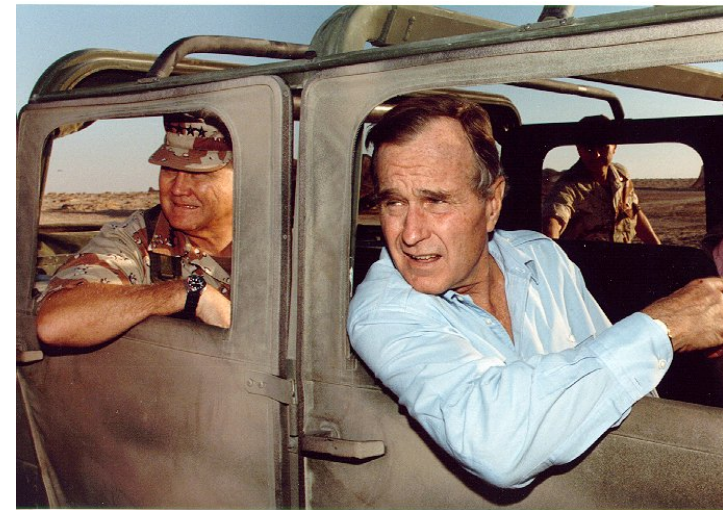
THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS: **the Clintonian idyll**

George H.W. Bush's Job Approval Ratings Trend



☞ George Bush was fantastically popular after the Gulf War (here he is in the desert for Thanksgiving 1990), and no prominent Democrat dared challenge him for reelection.

☞ But his own curious detachment, lingering doubts about whether the



Coalition should have gone on to Baghdad, and a sharp recession, undermined him.

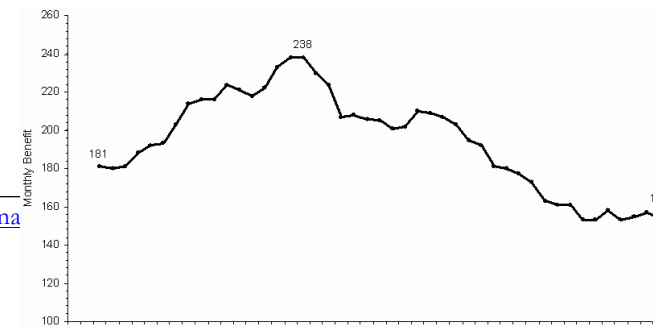
☞ Bush faced a young, curiously irresistible Democrat from Arkansas, Clinton, and a bizarre Texan billionaire gnome, Ross Perot. Here is one of their [debates](#) (beginning and from 9'30"). In November 1992 the election (Clinton 43%, Bush 38%, Perot 19%)



William Jefferson Clinton (*left*) is a remarkable politician. The mood in America remained very right-wing; in the midterm elections of 1994 the **'Republican Revolution'** brought the Republicans, especially the populist Right led by **Newt Gingrich**, control of the Senate and (for the first time in 46 years) the House; it was a landslide comparable to 1980, a permanent shift. Nonetheless, Clinton had no difficulty in winning reelection in 1996 against the charmless Robert Dole, and left office in January 2001 still very popular.

These were peaceful days, comparatively uneventful, so 'events' were often **frivolous**.

Clinton was responsible for one great domestic reform. The Right's 'Contract with America' echoed his own 1992 promise to "end welfare as we have come to know it", and the result was **'welfare reform'**: the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (1996). This graph shows what the average welfare recipient received in 2006 dollars; obviously the welfare state was dwindling before Clinton; but he was responsible for formally ending the experiment in social planning begun by Roosevelt and Johnson.



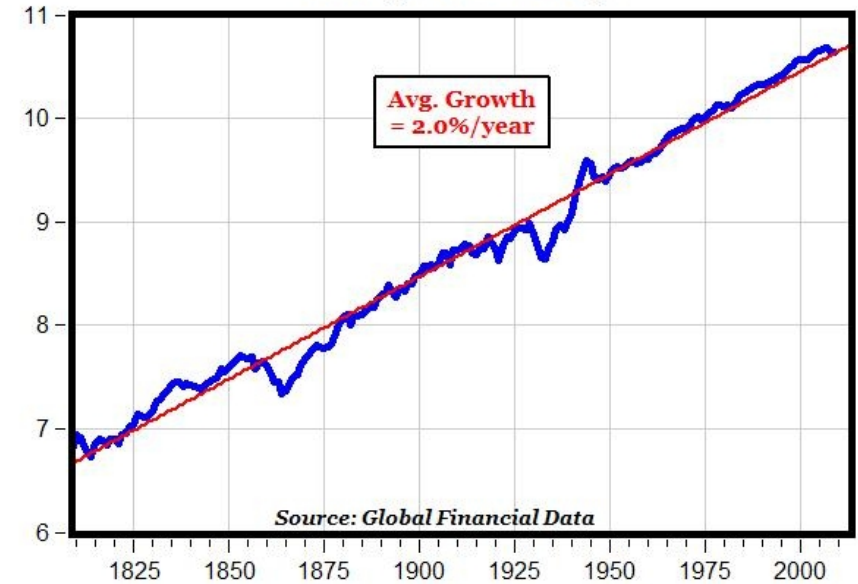
The Clinton boom

America is always on the verge of booming.

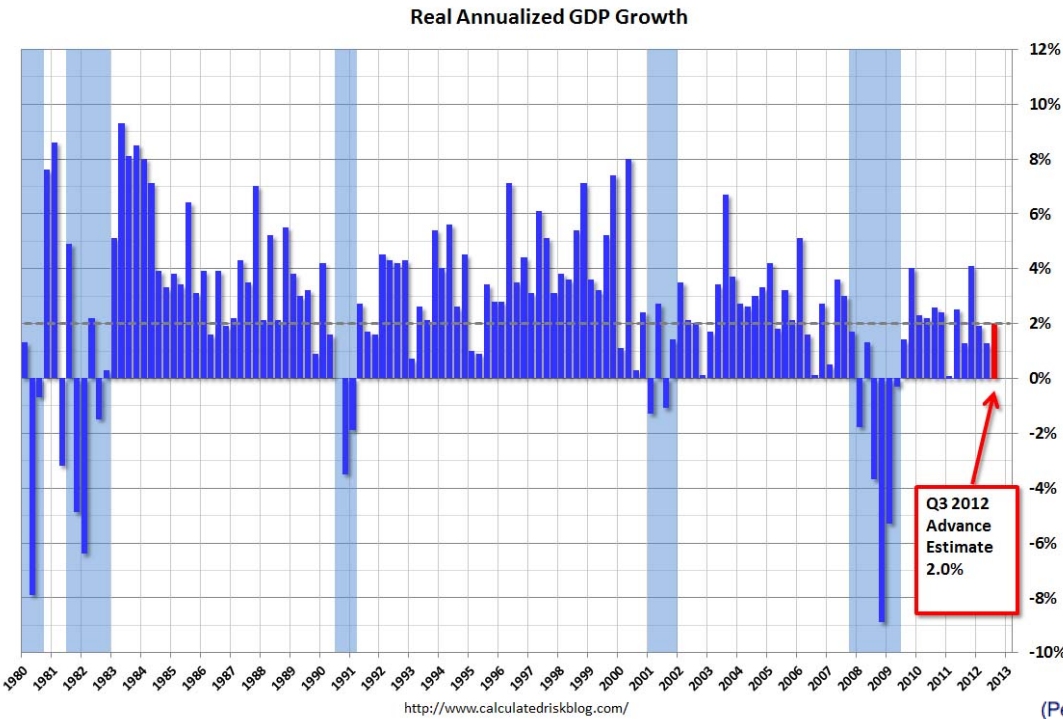
It historically tends to get richer at about 2% a year: ponder this logarithmic table.

The brief recessions of 1980-1983, 1991-1992, 2000-2002 and 2008-2009 all caused a change of party in the White House.

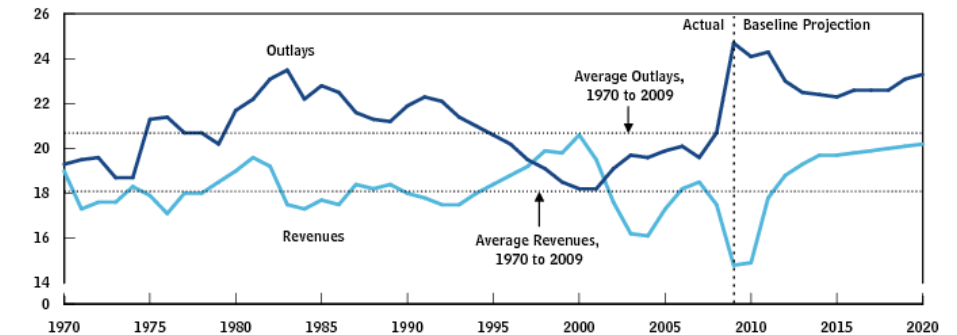
U.S. Real GDP (log) per Capita 1809 to 2009



Of the three great long booms in-between – the 'Eighties, the 'Nineties and the 'Naughties – it was the Clinton boom which lasted longest' so the Clinton presidency was sunniest. Even that appalling long-term crisis, the Federal debt, eased:



(Percentage of gross domestic product)



Source: Congressional Budget Office.



The pornographisation of politics in an age of parties

Instead of serious politics, there was a comic attempted *coup d'état* by the Republican Congress, a convoluted affair beginning with **Whitewater** (a property deal in Arkansas way back, in which the Clintons *lost* money), and then moving on via the **Starr Report** to **Zippergate**, involving an intern named Monica Lewinsky. Popular condemnation of the Republicans at the polls (midterm election 1988) did not deter them; Clinton was impeached, tried before the Senate, acquitted on a party-line vote. Gingrich fell (he was having an affair); so did his successor, Bob Livingston (ditto); so did the House manager, Bob Barr (ditto).

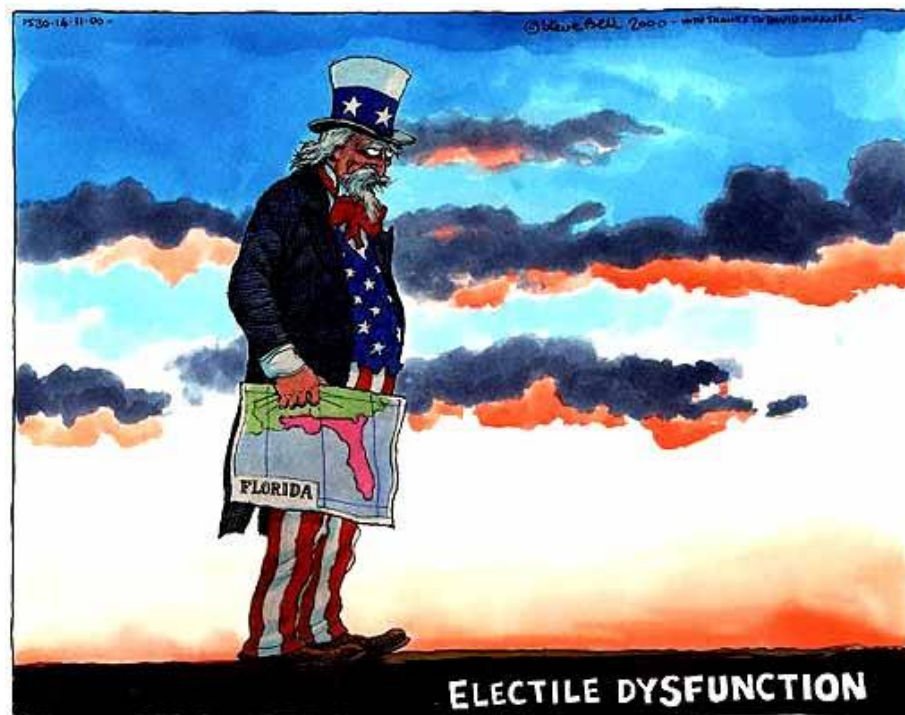
Good dirty fun all round: [I did not have sex with that woman](#) (6'17''); confessing to the [Grand Jury](#) (from 11'20'') that he had; [his televised address](#) (to 1'05); [her](#) testimony (39'50); [his remarks afterward](#).

Silly elections

In 2000 the Democratic nomination went to the wooden Vice-President, Al Gore; the Republicans nominated the elder Bush's curious smirking Texanised son; the issue-free **2000 election** was a farce and produced a disputed result, resolved by the *fiat* of Supreme Court (voting on party lines).

The twentieth century ended without dignity, but in a haze of prosperity and comfort, with a \$237 billion Federal surplus.

George W. Bush was sworn in as XLIIIrd President in January; he disposed of the surplus with a tax cut in June; on the morning of 11 September, the twelfth year of post-history, he was in Florida, listening to children [read about a pet goat](#) (1'00'').



CHAPTER XI: Duelling civilisations: 622-2001

I. THE THEME OF OLD WORLD HISTORY

Americans think of 1492 as virtually the beginning of history, when it was in fact the climax.

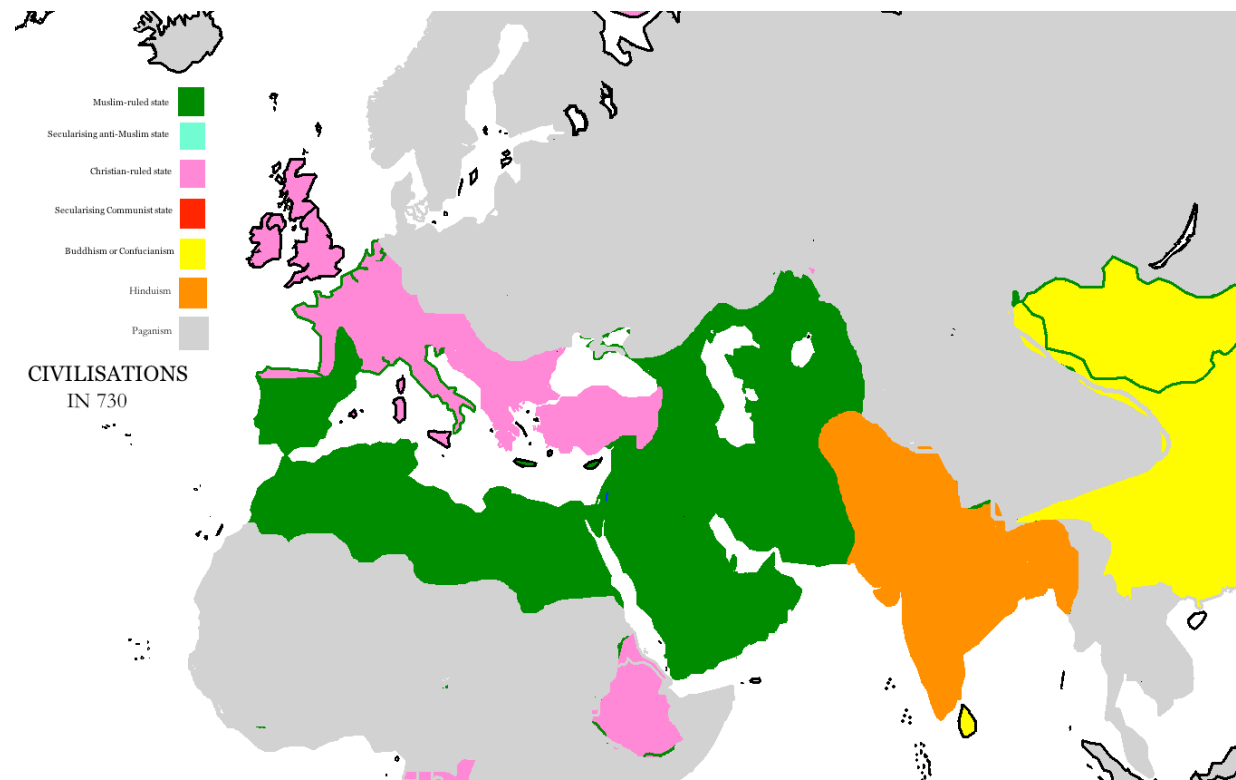
On 2 January **Granada**, the last Muslim kingdom in Western Europe, fell. The *Reconquista* of Iberia was consummated after 780 years of warfare. Christopher Columbus watched the last Emir, Muhammed XII, emerge from the city to kiss the hands of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in surrender. The result was Spain – not an ancient kingdom but a **nationalist** state, based on an official ideology and historiography, bureaucratic, centralist, intolerant of minorities.

On 3 August Columbus sailed for Japan, which he had persuaded Isabella lay only a few days west of Portugal – an eccentric opinion. He made landfall on 12 October. For the rest of his life he maintained he'd got to the East Indies. In fact, Japan is as far off as everyone thought; he had, instead, bumped into the New World.

Thus European America came into existence a few months after Western Europe freed itself of Asia. The greatest theme of European civilisation for over a millennium – the long war between Christian and Islamic civilisation – was to make no direct impression on the history of the Americas.

The long war had begun in the early seventh century, when newly-invented Islam poured out of Arabia to overrun the traditionally Christian lands of the Levant and Africa, and to besiege European Christendom from the south and the east.

Islam was checked at the Battle of Tours (732), which saved France. My first map shows the situation: the West is recovering; the *Reconquista* is beginning.



II. THE ECLIPSE OF ISLAM

The Crusades of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries were counter-attacks in the east; they failed, and although, pushing south, Christianity reconquered Iberia by the end of the fifteenth, Islam, having wiped out Byzantium, launched a fresh assault in Central Europe.

In 1683 the Turks nearly took Vienna and nearly broke into Germany. My second map shows that moment, with the Ottoman and Mogul empires (and Morocco and the Asian khanates) dominating most of the civilised world.

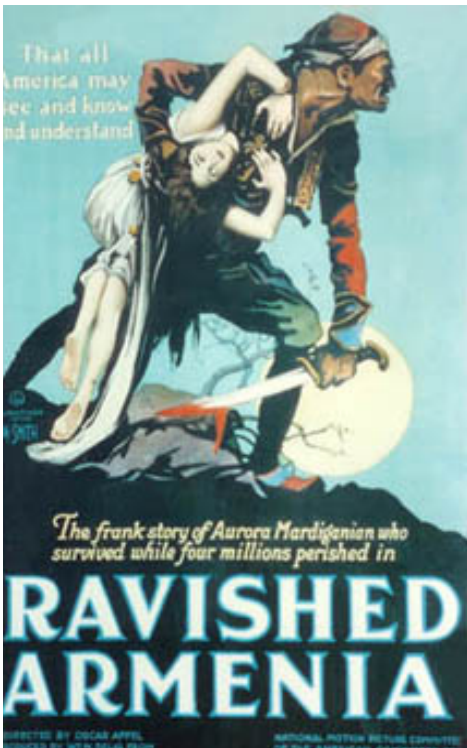
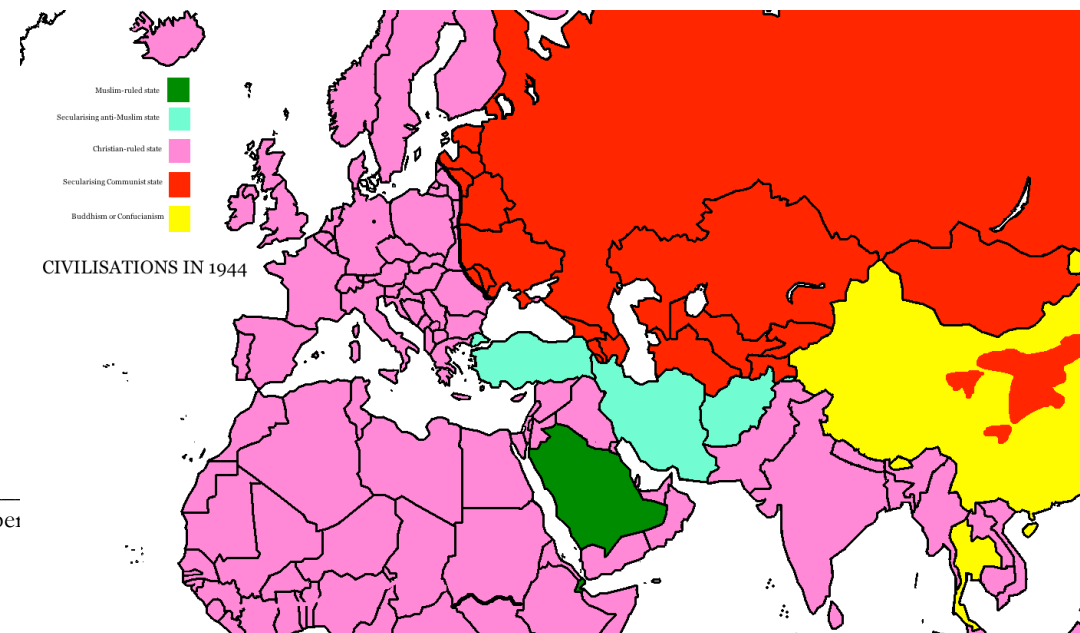
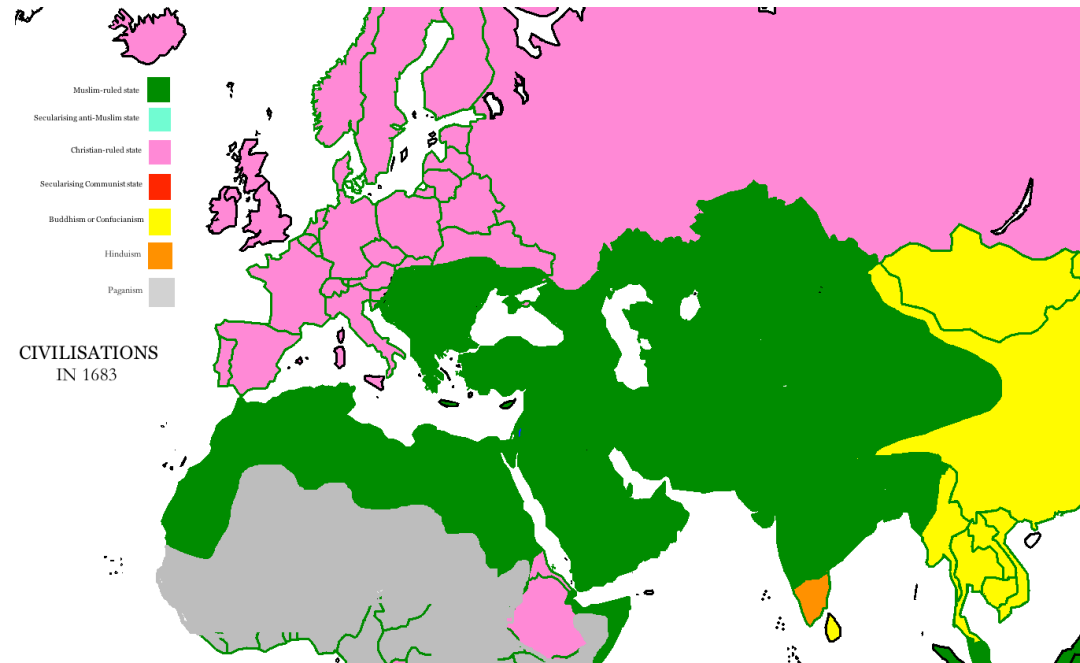
The Turks failed at the gates of Vienna, and three centuries of political decline began for the Islamic powers.

The Ottoman Sultanate was destroyed in the First World War – see the poster below, which is trying to inflame Americans about the wickedness of these remote peoples. The caliphate, or religious leadership of all Islam, had been vested in the Ottoman Sultan, and it was suppressed soon afterward. The French and British and Italians were now colonial masters of most of the Muslim world, and even where they were resisted, the rulers of Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan were enemies of the ‘backward’ Islamic faith.

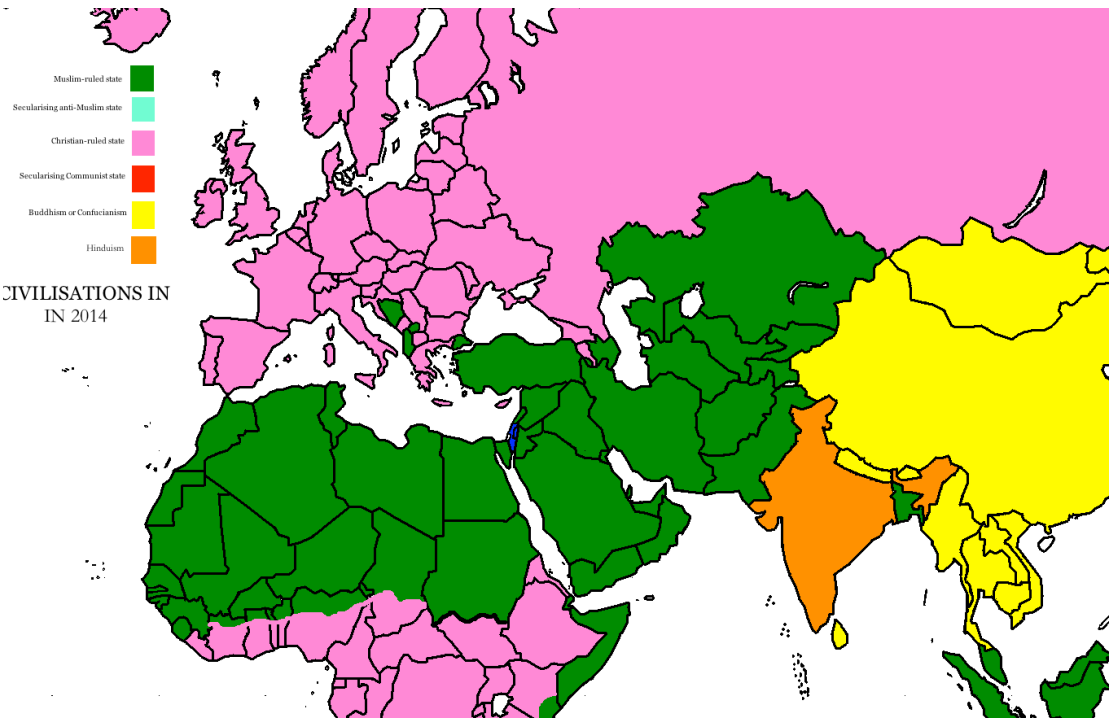
My third map shows the apparent irrelevance of Islam at the start of our period.

The revival of Islam, beginning in the 1970s, was partly a function of decolonisation: as the European powers withdrew, small Islamic came into existence, first kingdoms, then republics, then, on the whole, military dictatorships.

But it was also part of the general revival of faith, Christian and Hindu as well as Muslim, that was a theme of world history from the ‘Seventies onward.



Corvinus University, Budapest, October-December



III. THE ISLAMIC REVIVAL

My fourth map shows the present situation.

Now, as in the eighth century, Islamic states block in Europe to the east and south.

There are three big differences in the global situation, though.

One is that European exploration, going round the Islamic Maghreb, has almost finished Christianising Africa. It is now not Christendom but **Islam that feels besieged**. The Christian impetus, going north, is colliding with Islamic conversion, pushing south. The last pagan territory is being wiped out. There is a violent religious front between Islam and Christianity: the wars going on now in Mali, Chad, the Central African Republic and the two Sudans are all essentially religious wars.

in no military danger, it is in profound **demographic** danger. Europeans are very slowly dying out because the birthrate is so low; cheap Muslim labour has to be imported, from ex-French North Africa, ex-British South Asia, and the Near East. These immigrants do not convert, and are not always socially assimilated.

The third complication is **Zionism**, the movement to migrate to Palestine and revive the Jewish state that vanished in A.D. 70. The British at first encouraged (1917), then try to halt, Jewish migration to Palestine, which they ruled until 1948. When the British left, a Jewish-Arab war led to the creation of Israel, in the heart of Islam. After 1967 Israel occupied the Old City of Jerusalem, sacred to Islam and Christianity. It was nuclear-armed from about 1970. It was viable only because of the enthusiastic financial, political and military support of the United States.

Since 1948 there has been almost constant violence in the region: big wars in 1967 (Israeli conquest of the Occupied Territories) and 1973 (a brush with World War III); invasions of Lebanon in 1982 and 2006; *Intifada* risings in the Occupied Territories 1987-1993 and 2000-2005; Gaza Wars in 2008–2009 and 2012. The United States has not always supported Zionism’s wars, but actual condemnation of Israel remains taboo in American politics.



IV. THE AGE OF RENEWED RELIGIOUS WAR

The late twentieth century saw religiously-charged wars within Islam, and all round the edge of the Muslim world.



Internally, Islam is divided into two factions, the **Shi'ites** (who rule in Iran and Iraq, and dominated Syria until the civil war), and **Sunnis** (dominant almost everywhere else). Extreme Sunnis – such as the Wahhabi sect, which rules in Saudi Arabia – and el-Qaeda, do not recognise the Shi'a as Muslims, and sometimes think it right to kill them. Anti-Wahhabis seized the Kaaba in Mecca in 1979, and had to be overcome by French commandoes. There was a Shi'ite rising in Mecca in 1987 that killed 400. And so it goes on. The Iraq-Iran War was represented as a Sunni struggle against resurgent Shi'a.

In the east, the British Raj was partitioned in 1947 on religious lines. **Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan** went to war at once, and have fought in 1965, 1971 and 1999. Both have nuclear bombs. America has traditionally 'tilted' toward supporting Pakistan, partly because India was aligned with the Soviet Union (against China).

In Europe, the dissolution of **Yugoslav** in the 1990s led to wars between the Bosniaks and Albanians – Europeans converted to Islam in Ottoman days – and the Christian Serbs and Croats. NATO, including the U.S., intervened in 1995 and 1999 on the Islamic side. (At left is a desecrated icon from Kosovo.)

Afghanistan, on the edge of what was then the Soviet empire, was invaded in 1979 and finally, with a great deal of American hardware, drove the Russians out in 1988. It then fell into the hands of *jihadists*, Muslim fundamentalists (often Arabs from far away) who wanted to create Islamicist states throughout the world. A

particularly radical organisation known as the **Taliban** ruled most of Afghanistan, and gave shelter to an international Islamicist terrorist group known as **el-Qaeda**, run by **Osama bin Laden** (*right*), the Western-educated son of a Saudi billionaire.

That was the situation on 11 September 2001.



V. THE GOLDEN AGE OF TERRORISM



Terrorism means (precisely, and nothing else but) extreme violence used randomly against the public as a political tool of intimidation.

Because terrorism, although effective, defies all law and all rules of war, it has tended to be the preserve of extremist groups, or of ‘rogue’ regimes.

There was a wave of Anarchist terrorism around the *fin de siècle*: the Barcelona opera-house, for instance, was bombed in 1893 (*left*). But the golden age only began in July 1946, when the Zionist terrorist organisation Irgun (later renamed Likud; it came to power in 1977 and has dominated Israeli politics ever since) blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91.

The practice increased throughout the 1970s, when hijacking was at its peak. Sometimes the perpetrators were secular nationalists (Sikh, Tamil, Fenian, Palestinian, Basque). But because the most effective means is suicide bombing, with the murderer triggering the bomb at zero range, it is commonest with religious groups, most of all Islamicists, who are promised eternal rewards (and enormous social honour).

Above is a video from 2004 of a smiling affluent Palestinian, Reem al-Reyashi, the mother of two small

children. She is saying: “I always wanted to be the first woman to carry out a martyrdom operation, where parts of my body can fly all over ... God has given me two children. I love them with a kind of love that only God knows, but my love to meet God is stronger still.” A few days later she blew herself up at a border crossing, killing four Israelis.

In September 2001 al-Qaeda, blaming the “tyranny of the American-Israeli alliance against our people in Palestine and Lebanon” for the suffering of Islam, and the carnage of

1982 especially, hijacked four planes. On one plane the passengers resisted; it crashed in a field.

Another was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, headquarters of the Department of Defense; the other two hit the Twin Towers, the tallest buildings in New York. Almost 3000 people were killed, and the United States found itself unwillingly folded into the huge, thirteen-century-old story I have tried to sketch in these notes.

RJCM 31iii14



CHAPTER XII:

America joins the *Reconquista*: 2001-2015

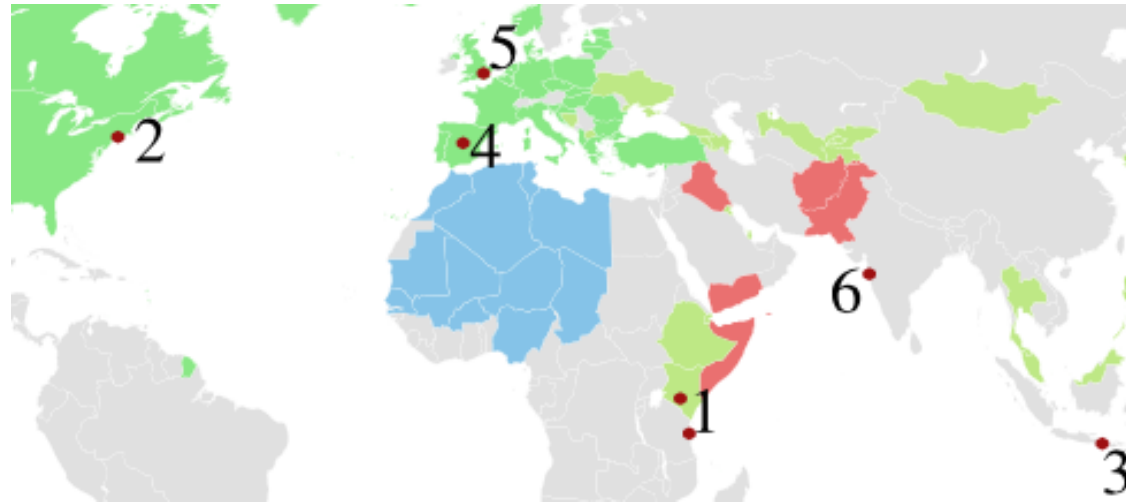
OVERVIEW FROM LAST CHAPTER

- The Americas were discovered a few months after Western Europe crushed its last Muslim state;
 - since 1492, Europe has generally been on the offensive against Islam
 - but this long war did not much affect the New World
- until in September 2001 America found itself folded back into the great Islamic theme of world history (Muslim *versus* Christian civilisation; Sunni *versus* Shi'a; secular *versus* religious; and Arab *versus* Zionist)

(a) THE WAR ON TERROR

Al-Qaeda was founded in 1989 in Pakistan, an outgrowth of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. Its aim is to war against infidels (non-Muslims and Shi'a) and found a Wahhabi caliphate. It is well-funded, loosely-connected, and astute (62% of members are university educated). Al-Qaeda and its allies have managed a remarkable run of mass murder:

- 1998 August ❶ An affiliate, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, bombs the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam; 224 killed
- 2000 October Al-Qaeda hits U.S.S. *Cole*: 17 dead
- 2001 September 11 ❷ The “9/11” attacks kill 2,996 in D.C., New York and Pennsylvania
- 2002 October 12 ❸ Al-Qaeda kills 202 with a bomb at a tourist spot in Bali
- 2004 March 11 ❹ Al-Qaeda kills 191 with four bombs on commuter trains in Madrid
- 2005 July 7 ❺ Al-Qaeda kills 56 in four suicide bombs on trains and buses in London
- 2008 November ❻ Lashkar-e-Taiba kills 164 in a three day rampage through Bombay



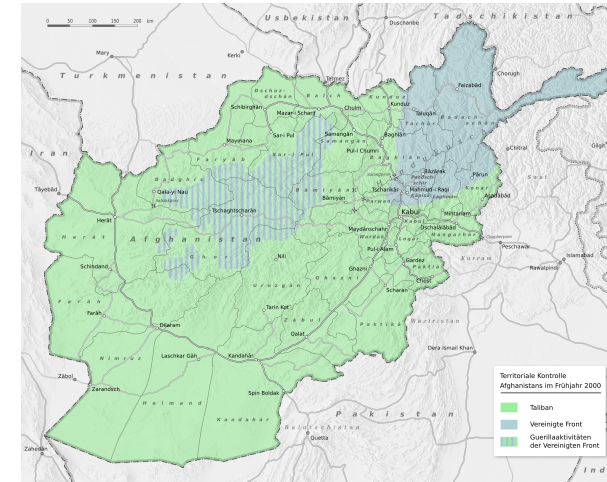
These attacks lead to what Bush proclaimed (20 September 2001) as the **Bush Doctrine** of preventative war, and a **Global War on Terror** (or GWOT; the Obama administration prefers to say “Overseas Contingency Operation”; some people say World War IV, counting the Cold War as World War III). The U.S. military still awards the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal (GWOTSM), *left*. The green and blue areas are active allies in GWOT; the red areas, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia, indicate wars.

At home, this meant, among other things:

2001 September 14 Congress passes (420-1 in House, 98-0 in Senate) The Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (**AUMF**) authorising the President to “use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons *he determines* planned, authorized, committed, or aided” 9/11 “to prevent *any* future acts of international terrorism against the United States”. An open-ended permit!

2001 October The USA **PATRIOT Act** (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism), authorising indefinite detentions of immigrants, widened searches, FBI taps and without a court order, &c. The courts have struck some of this down as unconstitutional.

November 2002 The **Department of Homeland Security** formed, placing the U.S. government in permanent anti-terrorist mode.



(b) THE AFGHAN WAR, 2001-2014

Afghanistan is the demographic centre of the world. It is notoriously unconquerable: Alexander, the British and the Soviets all failed. This I partly due to the terrain, and partly to the notorious (and self-conscious) audacity of its people. See [Buzkashi Boys \(2012\)](#).

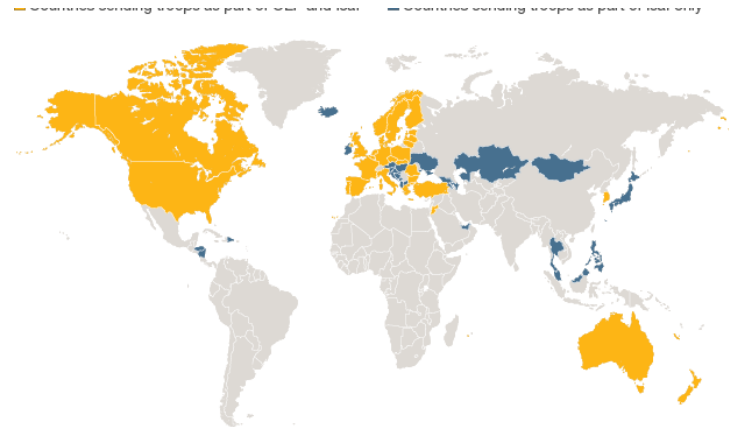
The withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan had led (1989) led to the fall of President Najibullah (1992: hideously killed, 4'58"), a civil war between warlords, Pashtuns or Pathans in the south, Daris in the north; and finally the triumph of the Saudi-funded, Pakistani-aided, Arab-based **Taliban** (1996), which established the **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**, with extremely strict sharia law. They also gave shelter to the Arab al-Qaeda, which had a larger, global strategy, and was prepared to gamble the future of the Islamic Emirate. Local resistance to the Taliban was led by the **Northern Alliance** but by 2001 government forces (perhaps 40% Pakistani!) held 90% of the country (*see map*).

The success of 9/11 pulled down the wrath of the world on the Taliban's head. For the moment mankind, remembering the lessons of 1991, was united: the photo shows American, French, Italian, Dutch and British ships hurrying into the region.

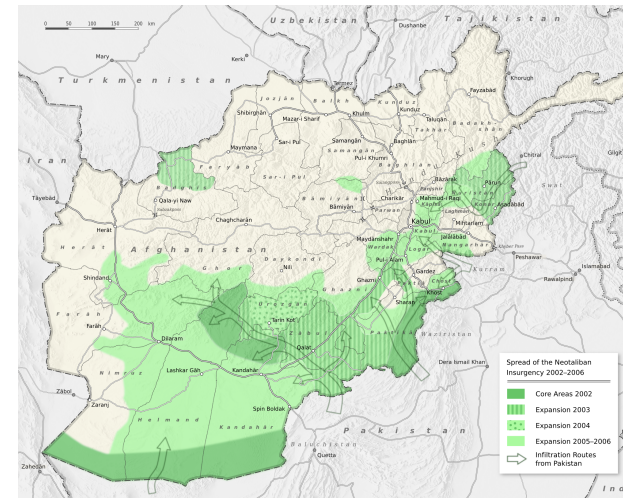
America, NATO and other allies (*yellow on the map*) launched **Operation Enduring Freedom** (no one seemed to notice the unfortunate double meaning). On October 7 bombing began; on 14 November Kabul fell to the Northern Alliance; consequently the U.N. created the International Security Assistance Force, **ISAF**, to hold the country together, and assist the transitional government under Hamad **Karzai** (*left, with Bush*). **Osama bin Laden** retired to a safe-house in Pakistan, where U.S. special forces killed him in 2011.

However, by September 2002 the Taliban had recovered its confidence and launched an insurgency, which continues in the Pashtun south to this day.

Obama was elected promising to escalate and win the war; he partly succeeded; the ISAF was gone by the end of 2014. Some 2,313 U.S. soldiers had died in the longest war in American history (along with 16K on the ISAF side, 40K of the enemy, 17K civilians).



Source: US Defense Department, I



© THE SECOND GULF WAR, 2003-2011

Saddam Hussein had survived the First Gulf War, and continued to defy the West and the U.N. over disarmament: by the cease-fire agreement of 1991, he was forbidden weapons of mass destruction (**WMD**) – biological, chemical and nuclear weapons – but he refused to cooperate with arms inspectors.

From 1998 (**Iraq Liberation Act**) ‘regime change’ him became U.S. official policy. In December 1998, a bombing campaign, **Operation Desert Fox** destroyed much of Saddam’s military infrastructure. In January 2001 Bush *filks* became president; he was committed, in theory, to completing what his father had not completed in February 1991.

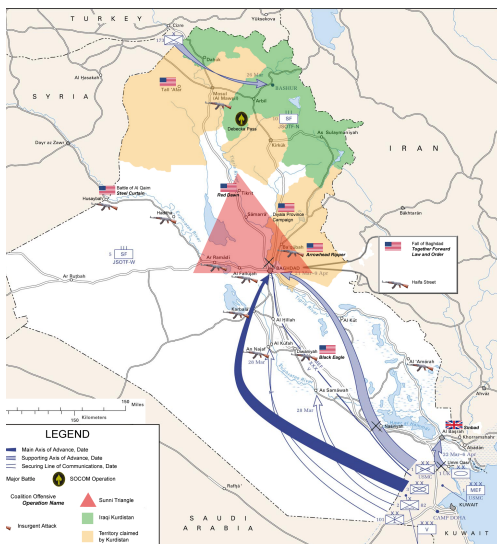
Saddam had nothing to with the 9/11 attacks. His regime was secular (nationalist-socialist); it was exactly the sort of government al-Qaeda existed to destroy. Nonetheless, America’s change if mood was useful to Bush: in September 2002 he proposed invasion to the U.N. Russia and China, but also NATO allies like France and Germany, demurred, and a compromise, UN Security Council Resolution 1441 (passed 15-0), merely restored weapons inspections. But Congress voted for war in October, and there was a massive public relations campaign; by February 2003 63% of the public favoured invasion. A worldwide demonstration on 15 February against the war (between six and ten million protestors) did not sway Bush or his staunch ally, Tony Blair of Britain, and on 20 March 2003, with Afghanistan quiet, the Coalition – overwhelmingly Americans, but with thousands of British, Australian, Danish, Polish, Spanish and Portuguese troops – invaded.

As in 1991, **Operation Iraqi Freedom** was a lopsided victory: in three weeks the government was toppled and all major cities captured, with perhaps 30,000 Iraqis killed *versus* fewer than 200 in the Coalition. No WMD were found. Bush gave an ill-timed well-known “Mission Accomplished” speech (to [1’14”](#)).

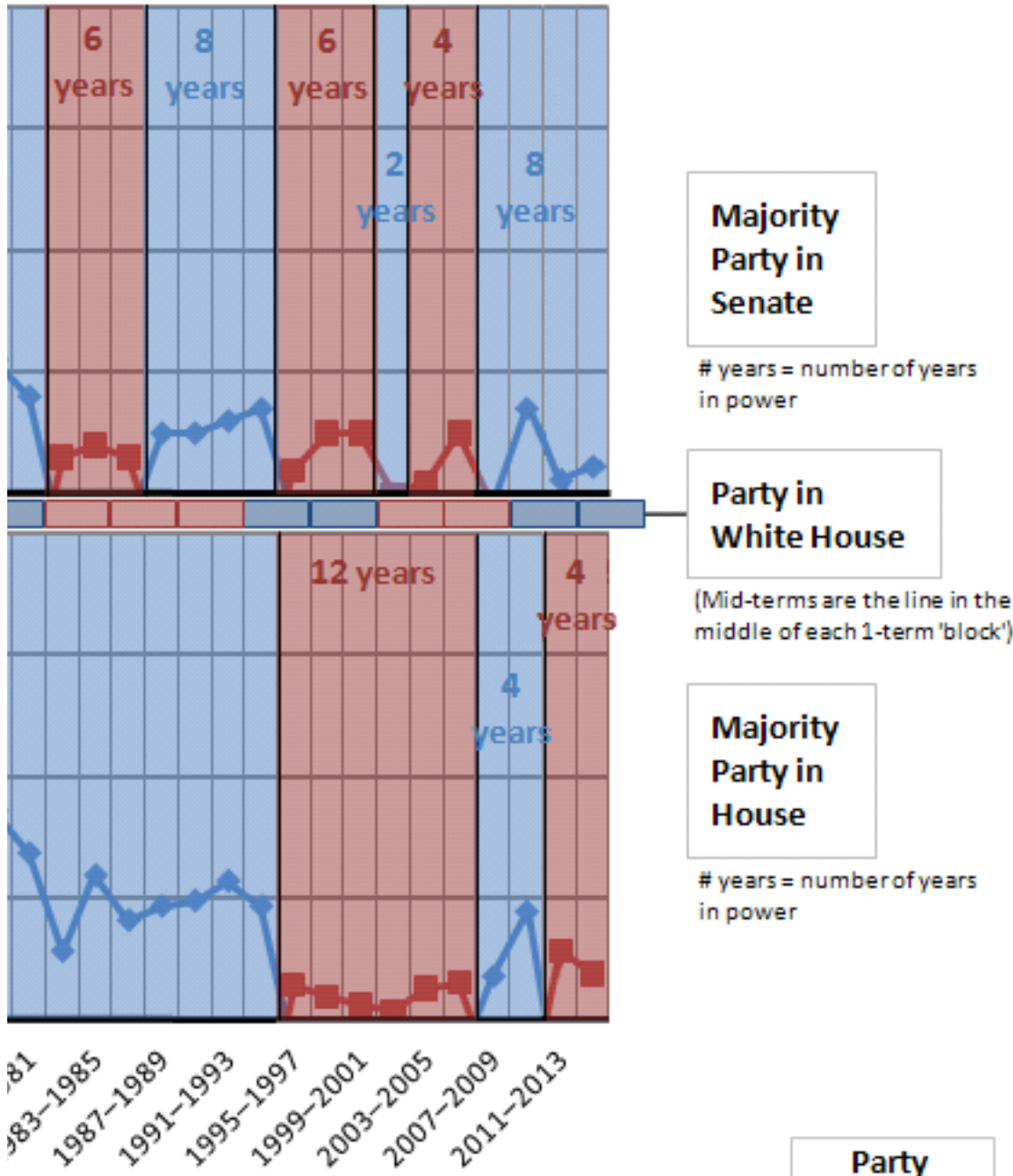
But Iraq is not a natural country. It was put together by the British in the 1920s under a foreign Sunni dynasty. After the 1958 revolution, the Ba’athist dictatorship kept a Sunni clique in power (just as Syrian Ba’athism kept a Shi’ite minority in power). The destruction of the regime, and the dissolution of the army by the occupier, unleashed communal violence, and a complicated war broke out: the Coalition *versus* Ba’athist loyalists; then the Coalition *versus* insurgents, nationalist or Islamicist (often from abroad); conflict between Arabs and the Kurds of the north, virtually independent since 1991; and woeful **sectarian violence** between the Sunnis, dominant only in ‘the Triangle’ but used to ruling the country, and the Shi’ite majority. This reached the pitch of full-scale civil war. The Iraqi adventure became deeply unpopular in America.

In December 2003 Saddam was captured, and hanged by the Iraqi government in December 2006. Al-Zarqawi, the al-Qaeda leader, was killed in June 2006; in January 2007 Bush announced a Surge of troops, which degraded the insurgency enough for withdrawal to begin. By 2011 Coalition soldiers had left Iraq; the Shia-dominated government of Nouri **al-Maliki** has trotted along since then, although there is certainly some potential for renewed civil war, as well as Iranian domination.

Casualties: 4,487 American soldiers; anything from 110,000 to a million violent deaths in all. By 2008 (*ABC/Washington Post*) 64% felt the War not worth fighting.



CHAPTER XIII: Twenty-first century America



(a) ANOTHER BOOM, AN ENORMOUS BUST

2001 January George W. Bush inaugurated as LIIIrd President (son of George H. W. Bush, the LIst)

2005 August Hurricane Katrina strikes the Gulf Coast region: 1,833 killed, \$108 billion damage (in 2005 dollars); Bush condemned

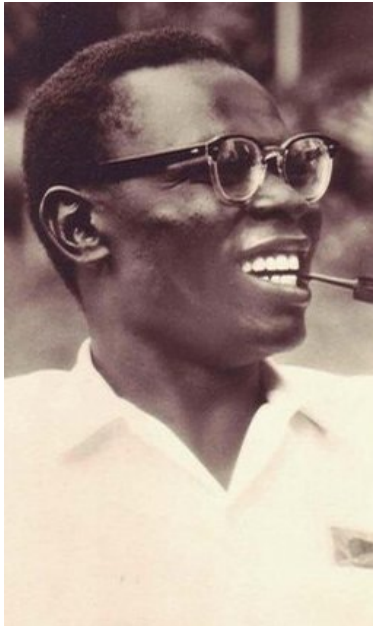
2006 November Democrats regain Congress; Bush becomes increasingly unpopular

2007 summer housing bubble bursts ('subprime mortgages'), leading to the **Global Financial Crisis**

2008 September failure of Lehmann Brothers; "capitalism totters"; the **Great Recession** begins



(b) OBAMA'S AMERICA



2008 November: general election. The Republican candidate is an patrician, **John McCain**, a hero of the Vietnam War, who chooses as his running-mate the extraordinary Sarah Palin.

The Democrats nominate – not Hilary Clinton, who is defeated in a bitter primary battle – but Senator **Barack Obama**, who had voted against the Iraq War, had an unusual background: old white money on his mother's side, but a Kenyan visiting professor; an academic background; upper middle-class manners.

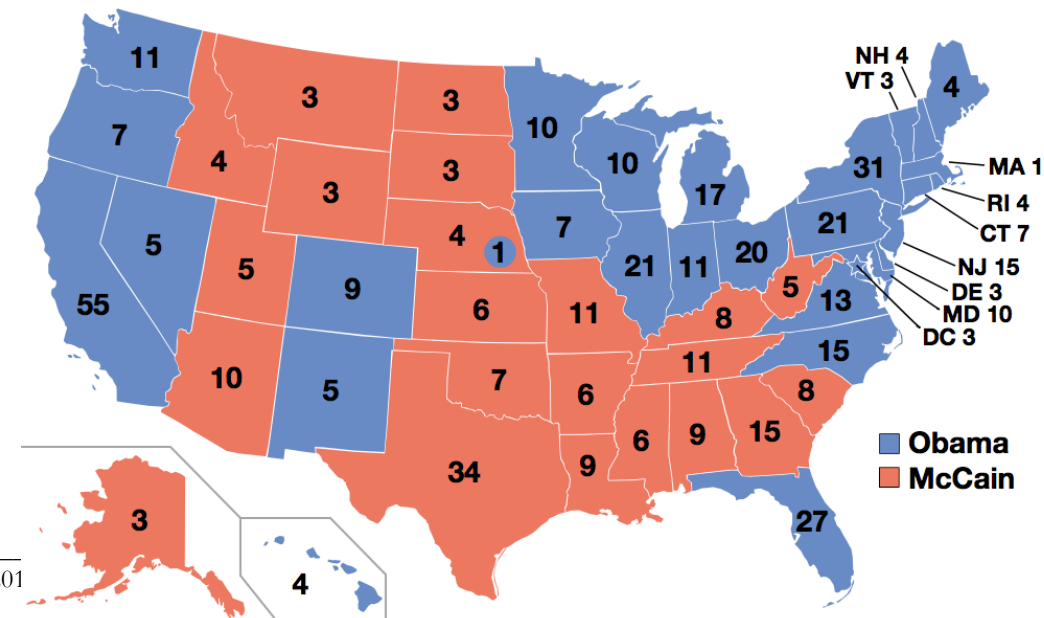
Obama wins 53% of the popular vote and a big majority (365 to 173) in the electoral college: the biggest Democratic share in half a century. The Democrats also increase their majorities in House and Senate. They pass:

2010 March 'Obamacare': **health-care reform**.

Medicine is another bizarre or at least unique social aspect of America, which by 2011 was spending \$8,608 *per capita* on healthcare, 17.2% of its

GDP, more than any other nation (Hungary spent 7.9%, Britain 9.4%). There was no public provision, so the uninsured poor were always one twinge away from penury.

For decades various administrations had tried to reform the situation; the Clintons famously failed; Obama succeeded (here he is signing the bill), with a very moderate package that leaves the actual business of insurance and health-care with private business.



(b) CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

2010 November **midterm landslide**: Republicans regain House, and nearly win control of the Senate

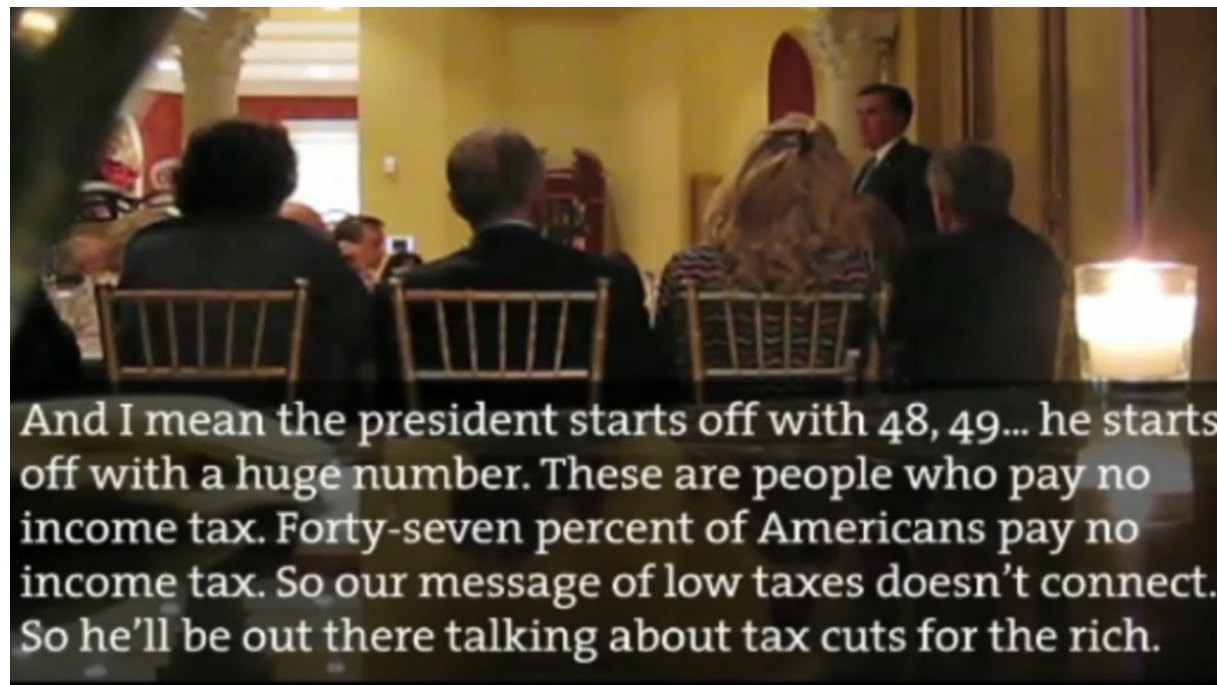
2011 March NATO – the U.S. grudgingly – intervenes in **Libyan Civil War** (under terms of Security Council Resolution 1973)

2012 November **Obama reelected**, after the Republican candidate, an arrogant Mormon billionaire **Mitt Romney**, is secretly taped preaching class-warfare to wealthy donors (right).

2012 December Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre: 27 dead. An epidemic of school massacres and murders by the police don't change the debate on **gun control**.

2013 August Obama flinches from intervening in the **Syrian Civil War** after the Ghouta gas attacks

2013 October Republicans stage a shutdown of the Federal government, the **U.S. nearly defaults** on its debt (and polls show that only 11% of Americans approve of Congress as an institution)



2015 relations with Cuba normalized.

Obama's presidency: "It's a mixed legacy," said Adam Green, head of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee, a Washington-based liberal group. "In some areas, like ending two wars, his presidency has represented a return to some sanity. But on the core issue of corporate power and a government that fights for the little guy, this administration so far has had a lot of missed opportunities."



(c) SOCIAL REVOLUTION AND SOCIAL REACTION

2011 on New political movements: the conservative-libertarian **Tea Party** movement, the leftist **Occupy** movement.

2013 June Supreme Court strikes down (5-4) the Federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which defined marriage for federal purposes as the union of one man and one woman, and allowed states to refuse to recognize **same-sex marriages** granted under the laws of other states (*United States v. Windsor*).

The Court went on to read into the Constitution (in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, June 2015) that a fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples (both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment).
 Obama: *I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I am not in favor of gay marriage. But when you start playing around with constitutions, just to prohibit somebody who cares about another person, it just seems to me that's not what America's about. Usually, our constitutions expand liberties, they don't contract them.*

2014 November Republicanas ('the GOP' increases its majority in the House to its largest level

since 1928 and gains a majority in the Senate

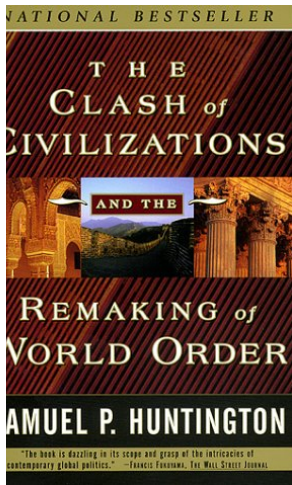
(d) THE 2016 ELECTION

Democrats: Hillary Clinton vs Bernie Sanders, a socialist. Republicans: an enormous field, with Jeb Bush as the obvious candidate and Donald Trump as the entertaining (or not) freak.



CHAPTER XIV:

An exception to human history?



(a) THE FUTURE OF WORLD HISTORY

Samuel P. Huntington is a right-wing political scientist at Harvard and Columbia, a former teacher of **Francis Fukuyama** who in 1992 had suggested that the destruction of Communism had brought about the ‘end of history’.

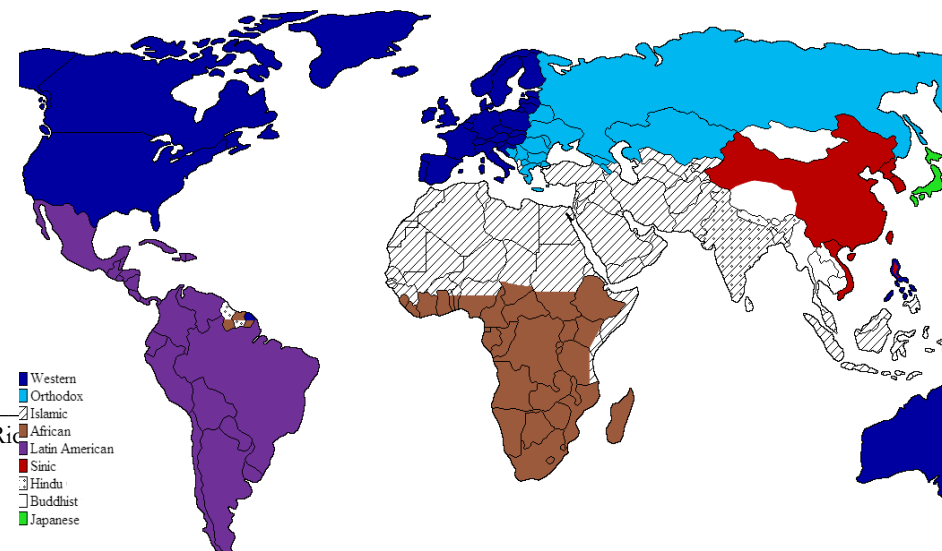
In 1993 Huntington riposted with an article, “The Clash of Civilizations?” (note the ?!), expanded in 1996 to a book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Huntington argues that with the end of the age of ideology (1789-1989), history did not end, but reverted to its normal state of affairs: **cultural conflict**. “This is not to advocate the desirability of conflicts between civilizations. It is to set forth descriptive hypothesis as to what the future may be like.” The future will see tension, not between ideological blocs, as in the Cold War, nor between sovereign nation states, but between the world’s major civilizations: Western, Latin American, Islamic, Chinese, Hindu, Orthodox, Japanese, and, perhaps, African.

One of those rivalries is far more intense than the others:

*In Eurasia the great historic fault lines between civilizations are once more aflame. This is particularly true along the boundaries of the crescent-shaped Islamic bloc of nations, from the bulge of Africa to central Asia. Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines. **Islam has bloody borders.***

Huntington became extremely influential, and even more controversial, after 9/11. From [the very start](#) of the “War on Terror”, Bush went out of his way to insist the enemy was not Islam but “a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics; a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.” But after all, terrorism is merely a political technique: anyone can use it, anyone desist. Would Islam and the West be at ease if suicide bombing stopped?

No, says Huntington: differences among civilisations are too basic, and these differences – especially in religion – will not soon disappear. Rather, they become more intense: especially as economic modernisation separates people from longstanding local identities (religion fills the gap, providing identity and commitment transcending national boundaries), confronting them with very different cultures. The West is at the height of its power, but that very dominance exacerbates resentment, and enthusiasm for non-Western civilisations.



Huntingdon has been much condemned by academics and politicians. Edward Said, the Anglo-Palestinian thinker: the very idea of fixed “civilizations” is false, and that the Huntingdon theory is “the purest invidious racism, a sort of parody of Hitlerian science directed today against Arabs and Muslims” (wrote “The Clash of Ignorance”). Mohammad Khatami, Iranian ex-president, got the U.N. to name 2001 as the **Year of Dialogue among Civilizations**. The Spanish Prime Minister, Zapatero, and the semi-Islamicist Turkish Prime Minister, Erdoğan, proposed an **Alliance of Civilizations** initiative to the U.N. in 2005.

But whether the theme of C21 history is the clash or the reconciliation of civilisations, what becomes of **Exceptionalism**?

(b) AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM



is the idea of the U.S. as qualitatively different from other nation states: whether the old immigrant-producing realms of Europe, or the ancient empires of Asia, or the unfortunate banana republics of Latin America. The United States is “the first new nation”, different in kind from the others. The usual rules of history do not apply; she is indifferent to the old hatred, immune from the old quarrels. She embodies – so well that other nations ought merely to imitate her – liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, populism and *laissez-faire*.

Here is Domenico Tojetti’s *Progress of America*: a cherub offers the laurels of victory to America; she, in her Phrygian cap of liberty, careers forward, pausing to point out to the other continents, without quite looking at them, the proper direction (which is natural for her, but must be laboriously learned by them). In the background ancient Greece and Rome look on enviously: “*Quam triste non cogitare*: What a shame we didn’t think of that”



(c) EXCEPTIONALISM CAN DO A LOT OF POLITICAL WORK

It can be the basis for **isolationism**, as it was during the century (1815-1917) when America stood aloof. “Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course,” said Washington in his farewell address, as you will remember. The outside world “has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation”, and “must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns.... Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation?”

But Exceptionalism can also form the basis for fervent interventionism. It was also a useful feeling during the **Cold War**, not least because Russia really *is* an exceptional nation – or rather, Muscovy is an exceptional empire, the extension in time of the Mongol hordes, immune from the usual European concerns about constitutionalism, the rule of the law, and harmony between nations; uniquely constructed on principles of conquest and deportation.

Confronted with Mr Hyde, Dr Jekyll naturally feels himself to be a special case.

During the Cold War, Exceptionalism was a concept that suited the militant American Right: since the United States was uniquely well-constituted, then there was a positive duty to intervene in lesser, erring lands. It suited the idealistic American Left: the United States was a unique good example. Kennedy had the poet laureate, Robert Frost, read a little something at his inauguration, to usher in *A golden age of poetry and power/ Of which this noonday's the beginning hour*. What Frost meant to recite (he was too blinded by sun and snow to see his text) was a paean to the *glory of a next Augustan age*. The Founding Fathers were *global* revolutionaries:

*They must have seen ahead what now appears:
They would bring empires down about our ears
And by the example of our Declaration
Make everybody want to be a nation*

and that left America, *a power leading from its strength and pride,*

*Firm in our free beliefs without dismay,
In any game the nations want to play.*

‘Play’ is good. So is the idea of Spain or Persia or Japan suddenly wanting to be nations because of a manifesto composed in the Plantations. *Quam triste non cogitare*. You can feel the Indochinese imbroglio opening up beneath the Capitol steps.



Finally, Exceptionalism is a fine theoretical basis for the daze of smugness that overcame the United States during the truancy of the 'Twenties and the idyll of 1989-2001: America was simply on a luckier plane than anywhere else. *God looks after drunks, little children and the United States of America* (a saying often attributed, [wrongly](#), to Bismarck). It's *always* morning in America.

America [still dominating](#) the world economy; on to [2050](#); but this is what [Chinese submarines](#) can do about it.

(d) BUT WHAT IF HISTORY TURNS BACK?

What if history is taking us back behind 1789 and 1776, **back behind 1492** – behind nationalism, Enlightenment and political revolution, behind the inviolability of Western Europe?

Will perennially-young America be able to set the terms in such a hoary debate?

If the theme of the C21 is to be the ancient controversy between mosque and church, will America still be able to say, blithely, with Washington, “the causes ... are essentially foreign to our concerns”?

If the C20 was the American Century, the century of the New World, might not the C21 prove that – whatever the U.S.’ continuing military and economic power, whatever its continuing domination of popular culture – the centre of the world, and the engine of history, lies back in the Old?

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Dr Richard Major
richard@richardmajor.com