Chapter 30
A Global Nation for the New Millennium

Learning Objectives:

After reading Chapter 30, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the place of the United States in the new global economy.
2. Detail how technological changes sped up the process of globalization.
3. Understand how the ideology of free trade was the basis for the new world economy.
4. Discuss who benefits from globalization and why.
5. Analyze the significance of the growing gap between rich and poor Americans.
6. Explain the reasons behind the ecological transformations of the twentieth century.
7. Detail the ways pollution increased as the population grew.
8. Discuss the strength and limitations of the environmentalist response to ecological threats.
10. Comprehend the motivations of those who opposed the spread of American popular culture.
11. Explain how Americans negotiate their multiple identities.
12. Discuss the ways in which the United States continues to be an immigrant society.

Time Line

1975
First personal computer offered as a kit

1977
Apple I personal computer

1984
Macintosh personal computer

1989
Slow Food Manifesto

1991
Dissolution of the Soviet Union

1999
Protests at WTO meeting in Seattle
U.S. women’s soccer team won World Cup

201
2000
Wal-Mart passed General Motors to become largest U.S. company

2001
U.S. spy plane crashed into Chinese fighter jet
Terrorist attack on World Trade Center killed some 3000 people

I. The George W. Bush Administration

A. The President and the War on Terrorism

Although he lacked a solid record of achievement before being elected Governor of Texas in 1994, George W. Bush had the opportunities that come from being the son of a U.S. President. Avoiding service in Vietnam, having a mixed career in business and known for his love of partying, at age 40 Bush gave up drinking and became a born-again Christian. His warm “regular guy” personality appealed to many working class Americans. September 11th shocked Americans and gave the president a new focus. By concentrating on fighting the war on terror, Bush gained renewed respect and support despite his failure to capture Osama bin Laden or destroy Al Qaeda.

B. Security and Politics at Home

Like the red scare of the 1950s, the war on terror meant a search for domestic traitors. Like the Cold War, the war on terror was framed as a long range fight against evil. The USA Patriot Act of 2001 increased the federal government’s power to spy and detain citizens and non-citizens alike.

Domestically Bush fashioned himself as a “compassionate conservative” and promoted private efforts to help the needy. Meanwhile, he cut taxes for the rich and ran up the largest deficit in American history. His compassion did not extend to the environment, which he saw as overprotected; he loosened federal regulation on industrial air pollution, war pollution, and a range of ecological measures. Sexual issues stayed at the forefront as conflicts over gay marriage allowed Bush to appear as the defender of traditional values.
C. The War in Iraq

In the spring of 2003, President Bush invaded Iraq although the country had neither threatened nor attacked the U.S. Unlike the war in Afghanistan, this war divided the country. Some say Bush was driven by personal desires to finish what his father had started in the Gulf War of 1991. A deeper reason may have been the administration’s view that 9/11 gave them the chance to reshape the Middle East into a place less hostile to the U.S. and Israel. The war went well at first but after the occupation began, the U.S. and their allies (mainly Great Britain) suffered ever-increasing losses.

D. The Election of 2004

With solid support from his party and his conservative base, Bush was able to win a narrow popular vote victory receiving 51 percent of the vote against Democrat John Kerry. Two issues seemed to hand him this victory. First, the war on terrorism and the war in Iraq demanded strong leaders, reasoned Americans who saw Bush as more firm than Kerry. Secondly, moral values were important to many voters who saw Bush as a man of personal integrity.

II. The American Place in a Global Economy

A. The Logic and Technology of Globalization

The purpose of corporations is to make money and, to do this, they want to keep labor and material costs as low as possible while constantly looking for new markets to expand into. At the close of the twentieth century, technological breakthroughs sped up the process of integrating the U.S. into the world economy. The integration of computers into every aspect of life increased the efficiency of business and the productivity of labor. VCRs and cable T.V. provided constant entertainment, while cell phones, beepers, and fax machines resulted from the desire for immediate gratification and efficiency. The Internet was already shaping American life.

B. Free Trade and the Global Assembly Line

The belief in or ideology of free trade supported the integration of Americans’ lives with the world economy. Free trade is the belief that goods should be sold across national borders without tariffs or taxes. Nations that have strong, developed industries always support free trade, while countries whose native industries would be ruined by foreign competition tend to support tariffs. The United States had average tariffs of 30-50 percent before 1945, whereas by 1990, the tariff was approximately 5 percent.

Consumers benefited from lower prices for goods but at the same time, the flight of industry overseas lowered wage levels at home. While the elites argued that free trade would ultimately
benefit all, labor and environmental groups opposed unregulated globalization as a “race to the bottom.” By that, they meant that corporations were re-locating production facilities wherever labor was cheapest and environmental regulations the weakest. Increasingly, corporations and their products became less national, as products were often assembled out of parts made in very diverse parts of the world. The new Boeing 777, for example, is manufactured piece by piece in 12 different countries.

C. Who Benefits from Globalization?

Increasing globalization at the end of the century created tremendous wealth as the stock market skyrocketed, yet the class differences sharpened. More and more of the affluent believed that welfare recipients should be forced to find work and that only the unregulated laws of supply and demand could maintain prosperity.

American consumers enjoyed lower prices in many areas such as computers, airline travel, and gasoline, all of which were less expensive (in real dollars) than in the previous generation. While goods and services may have gotten cheaper, average real wages declined steadily after 1973 and family incomes were maintained only by the addition of second or even third wage earners. Americans, also, spent more than they earned as the average household had 11 credit cards and carried $7000 in debt on them. More than a million citizens filed for bankruptcy every year.

The share of the national income going to the richest 1 percent nearly doubled in the last quarter of the century, while that going to the bottom 80 percent shrank. The political system did little to change the growing gap between rich and poor. For that and other reasons, the fraction of eligible voters who actually voted declined to just half in 2000 and in off-year congressional elections, to a mere third. Meanwhile, many citizens were disillusioned by the way money came to dominate the political process; for example, the average successful Senate race cost $5 million. In this spending contest, business won hands down, outspending labor by 15 to 1.

III. The Stewardship of Natural Resources

A. Ecological Transformation in the Twentieth Century

Ecosystems are always changing, but European settlement and industrialization altered the landscape in the most dramatic manner. The most important changes in the land in the twentieth century came about because of the exploitation of wood, minerals, and water, particularly west of the Mississippi River. Increasing diversions of the Rio Grande left it so dry that by 2001, it no longer reached the Gulf of Mexico, trickling to a halt 50 feet short of the Gulf. American prosperity came at the price of consuming ever-increasing amounts of energy. Although consisting of only 5 percent of the world, Americans used a quarter of the world’s energy.
B. Pollution

The world was consuming five times as much fossil fuel in 2000 as in 1950, resulting in a steady rise in average temperatures. Scientists for the first time found open water at the North Pole in 2000. Although industrial production was still a major part of the problem, internal combustion engines, used by cars and trucks, were the leading cause of pollution. With little public transportation, Americans quietly accepted an annual death toll of 40,000 from traffic accidents and sitting in traffic jams became an everyday part of life. Daily life came to depend on synthetics, with plastic, which is made from petroleum, being the most common. Meanwhile, the U.S. had some 3000 nuclear weapons sites which often caused fatal illness among uranium miners, military workers, and soldiers exposed to fallout.

C. Environmentalism and Its Limitations

Environmental consciousness grew in the 1960s, yet ecological issues remained among the most controversial problems in the U.S. Since 1980, the Republican Party has supported the exploitation of natural resources to produce wealth. Beyond partisan differences and the tendency of even the worst polluters to pretend to be friendly to the environment, Americans were deeply ambivalent about ecology. On the one hand, they claimed to support strong antipollution laws but then turned around and bought vehicles that get terrible gas mileage. Daily, Americans consumed more gasoline, electricity, and water than any other society on the planet.

III. The Expansion of American Popular Culture Abroad

A. A Culture of Diversity and Entertainment

American popular culture proved to be powerfully attractive to people all over the world. Television was the leading source for the culture of entertainment and Hollywood. American music and fashion became symbols of informality and comfort. The idea of individualism and choice pervaded American culture; the U.S. became the largest market in the world, with 40,000 shopping centers by 2000. Advertising grew in importance as the link between popular culture and selling products, while sports became more and more commercial. The National Basketball Association (NBA) went from being an American league to a global sport, as games were telecast to more than 190 countries in 41 languages.

B. U.S. Influence Abroad Since the Cold War

Cultural influence flowed both out of but also into the United States, as immigrants brought with them traditions and perspectives that refreshed the cultural mix. English was the language of international commerce and 80 percent of the listings on the World Wide Web, while the U.S. dollar remained the world’s primary trading currency. McDonald’s appeared across the planet with 23,000 franchises, even including in Mecca, the holiest site in Islam. American religious
missionaries worked in poor countries converting people to their own version of Christianity. The United States retained its military superiority with a arms budget larger than the next ten largest military powers combined.

C. Resistance to American Popular Culture

“Freer” western and particularly, American, behavior offended many traditionalists across the Islamic world. Especially angered by different gender roles, fundamentalists attacked the West for importing immorality into their societies. Like Christian, Jewish, and Hindu fundamentalists, their Muslim counterparts rejected the egalitarianism and pursuit of pleasure so common in American popular culture. American decadence was condemned by the Taliban in Afghanistan and, along with U.S. support for Israel, was one of the major complaints of Osama bin Laden.

With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Western influences flooded into those societies, bringing both opportunities and enhanced inequalities. Even Western Europeans remained unsure about the ever-growing strength of American culture and values. In response to American “fast food,” a “slow food” movement emerged in France as anti-McDonald’s protesters became national celebrities. Other nations often found the United States arrogant and resented its unparalleled military power. Two opposing trends existed: the first was the unifying force of economic internationalism and globalization and the other was the resistance of political and ethnic nationalism.

IV. Identity in Contemporary America

A. Negotiating Multiple Identities

Americans got their sense of identity from many different sources, including nationality, work, class, religion, race, ethnicity, family, gender, region, and sexual orientation. As the civil rights movement sought to end unequal treatment and gain inclusion for all citizens, the reality was that deeply embedded patterns of discrimination remained in place. Racial identity persists at the heart of the controversy over affirmative action. Many still used race as a concept they assumed had important meaning, although scientists point out that the genetic differences between races are miniscule compared with differences between individuals of the same race.

B. Social Change and Abiding Discrimination

Over the last 50 years, it is striking how public life has become more integrated. Latinos and Asians grew more numerous, while African-Americans emerged from the enforced segregation of Jim Crow days. Workplaces were more integrated and interracial marriage rose sharply.

Women’s lives changed dramatically as most worked outside the home and by 2000, women made up a third of all medical students and half of all law students. Anti-homosexual attitudes remained, but gay men and lesbians became more open regarding their orientation on television
and in politics. Violence and the threat of violence against people of color, gays and particularly, women, remained very real. Most prejudice, however, was more subtle, for example, the racial profiling which leads authorities to treat Latinos and African-Americans with more suspicion. Native Americans shared this situation of improving status and continuing discrimination.

3. Still an Immigrant Society

Economic opportunity and individual liberty continued to draw millions to the U.S. Only the most determined made the difficult and even dangerous move to the United States. Some fled political persecution in places like Vietnam and Cuba, making these immigrants fiercely anticommunist. Most immigrants sought economic advantage more than political rights. Native-born Americans reacted with both appreciation and apprehension to the high level of immigration, seeing the newcomers as both a source of strength and yet as possible competition for those already in the U.S.

Identification

Explain the significance of each of the following:

1. Maquiladora:

2. Globalization:

3. “Y2K” problem:

4. Genoa, Italy (2001):


6. Mining Act of 1872:

7. Greenhouse effect:

8. Erin Brockovich:
9. Slow Food Movement:

10. Religious fundamentalism:

11. “Family wage”:

12. “race”:

13. Condoleezza Rice:

14. Mia Hamm:


Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Under the economic system known as capitalism, the purpose of corporations is to
   A. create jobs and good working conditions for employees.
   B. preserve traditional values and morals.
   C. produce a profit for their shareholders.
   D. make long-lasting and quality goods for consumers.
   E. all of the above.

2. The ideology of free trade holds that
   A. tariffs should be reduced.
   B. tariffs should be increased.
   C. taxes on imported or exported goods should remain high.
   D. trade must be heavily regulated by governments.
   E. none of the above.
3. Corporations often move factories overseas because they want
   A. lower wages.
   B. reduced environmental regulation.
   C. more compliant workers.
   D. all of the above.
   E. none of the above.

4. In the last years of the twentieth century, strict dependence on the profit motive proved
   A. unable to pull the 36 million poor Americans out of poverty.
   B. that the market could eliminate poverty.
   C. able to dramatically improve the environment.
   D. helped all sectors of American society.
   E. none of the above.

5. After 1973, average real wages
   A. rose more slowly than in the 1960s.
   B. remained stagnant.
   C. declined steadily.
   D. more than doubled.
   E. none of the above.

6. Making up about 5 percent of the world’s population, Americans consumed
   A. 5 percent of the globe’s energy.
   B. 10 percent of the globe’s energy.
   C. 25 percent of the globe’s energy.
   D. 50 percent of the globe’s energy.
   E. none of the above.

7. Laws that reduced energy consumption passed since the 1970s were
   A. expanded in the 1990s.
   B. reversed by 2000.
   C. left unchanged in the last years of the twentieth century.
   D. proved to be unimportant by 2002.
   E. none of the above.

8. By 2000, freedom of choice came increasingly to mean not religion or politics but rather
   A. freedom itself.
   B. freedom for gays to marry.
   C. options for consumption in the marketplace.
   D. choice of majors in college.
   E. none of the above.
9. The “slow food” movement
   A. celebrated traditional home meals.
   B. supported eating in traditional cafes.
   C. began in France.
   D. was a challenge to the rise of fast food, fast eating restaurants.
   E. all of the above.

10. What type of religious fundamentalism grew prominent at the end of the century?
    A. Muslim
    B. Jewish
    C. Hindu
    D. Christian
    E. all of the above

11. Although immigration boosted the numbers of non-Christians, the U.S. remained
    A. primarily Protestant.
    B. mainly Catholic.
    C. largely Jewish.
    D. mainly non-Christian.
    E. none of the above.

12. A group once excluded but now considered “white” is the
    A. Germans.
    B. English.
    C. Irish.
    D. Swedes.
    E. none of the above.

13. The single most important source for new immigrants in 2000 is
    A. Mexico.
    B. China.
    C. India.
    D. England.
    E. none of the above.

14. By the end of the twentieth century, discrimination against women and people of color
    A. all but disappeared.
    B. remained very real.
    C. ended, as whites became the group most discriminated against.
    D. no longer was an important issue.
    E. none of the above.
15. Most new immigrants to the United States
   A. work hard for low wages.
   B. are leftist radicals from places like Cuba or Poland.
   C. come to get welfare.
   D. all of the above.
   E. none of the above.

MAP QUESTION:

After looking at Map 30.2, analyze the significance of the United States’ trade with other nations. How do you think this influences U.S. foreign policy?

CONNECTING HISTORY

Discuss the impact of the Internet and the World Wide Web on American society. How do you see it changing communications in the future?

INTERPRETING HISTORY

After reading the *Slow Food Manifesto*, explain what are the strengths and weakness of the arguments presented.

Answers to Multiple Choice Questions

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. A
5. C
6. C
7. B
8. C
9. E
10. E
11. A
12. C
13. A
14. B
15. A

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