

Culture & History of the UK & US

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American Civilization

(1) The American context (NK)

Many American self-images often stress the nation's supposed exceptionalism. There have also been internal disagreements about the country's values, institutions, policies and national identity. The US society is divided politically, religiously, socially, economically and ethically, although considerable attempts are made to reconcile differences and to unify the people under common beliefs and structure.

Many factors and historical developments have created six major cultures in the US, which may conflict each other and operate on levels of idealism, pragmatism, and so on.

- The first is a diverse culture found in Native American civilizations, European colonial settlement, African-American slavery and later waves of immigration.
- The second is a multi-faith or pluralist religious culture
- The third is a political legal culture based on individualism, constitutionalism and respect for the law.
- The fourth is an economic and consumer culture driven by individual competition and production, which encourages profit and the consumption of goods and services.
- The fifth consists of media cultures.
- The sixth represents a very varied cultural expression in the arts, sports and leisure, which has traditionally reflected the diversity and inventiveness of US life

National Identity

The above cultures interact amongst themselves; they also condition debates about what it means to be an American. A historical dilemma for the US has been how to balance the need for civic unity against a reality of diversity and to avoid the dangers of fragmentation and conflicts. "Melting pot" → was seen as pressurizing immigrants to move into an Americanized dominant culture, with a possible result in loss of their ethnic identity.

A key feature of American life, therefore, is how individuals managed to combine traditional ideals of the nation with the actual realities of society and how they cope with the resulting tensions. Americans allegedly refused to accept the fixed faith or settled location, but seek new jobs, new horizons and new beginnings in the hunt for self-fulfillment and self-definition.

On the other hand, many Americans seek roots and stability in their lives. Americans may stress their individualism, distrust of big business and big government and their desire to be free. But communalism, voluntary activities, charitable organizations and group endeavors are also a feature of US life.

American attitudes to US society

Americans do have many concerns. They identify in public opinion polls what are for them the major issues facing the country. Items such as the economy, politics, government, crime, ethnicity, religion, morality, healthcare, immigration and racism have regularly appeared in a list of problems.

These problems can be categorized into two categories:

- 1) Economic issues
- 2) Non-economic issues.

In the first category the largest categories were: the economy in general, followed by unemployment and the federal budget deficit.

The top 10 issues in the second Category were the dissatisfaction with government performance, healthcare, education, immigration, and so on.

(2) The country

Natural resources, economic developments and environmental concerns

Approached from the Atlantic Ocean, or the Gulf of Mexico, The country's first land formation is the Atlantic plain, a coastal lowland stretching from New England to the middle of Texas.

Inland from the Atlantic plain, the land rises to the Piedmont, a gently rolling fertile plateau. America's first industrial cities grew up along the northern fall line near the coast. The Piedmont rises to the Appalachians, much-eroded mountains from Canada to Alabama that separate the eastern seaboard from the interior. The coal deposits in Pennsylvania and West Virginia, in the area called Appalachia, are amongst the world's largest and once provided fuel for developing in the street in the North East and the Great Lakes.

West of the Appalachian highlands lies the central low lands, vast area stretching from New York State to central Texas of move to Canada, which resembles a huge, irregular bowl rimmed by the Great Lakes and Highlands.

The central low lands entirely flat. The natural resources of the Central Lowlands, which is often called the nations breadbasket, are its soil and fossil fuels.

From the western edge of the Great Plains to the Pacific coast, a third of the continental United States consists of the Cordillera Mountains chains and the basins and plateaus between them. Near the southern Rocky's we find the Grand Canyon, surrounded by the desert southwest. Valleys and plains rather than mountains occupy much of the middle Rockies.

The Cordillera mountain system goes all the way along the west coast and even reaches up to Alaska. The inland valleys contain much of the West coasts' population and economic activity.

Coastlines and river systems

On the West Coast, limited rainfall and scant mountain run off dry up all but three river systems: the Columbia, the Colorado and the San Joaquin Sacramento, before they reach the sea. However they do not support shipping.

Climate

Arctic and tropical climates are limited to high mountaintops, inland Alaska, Hawaii on the southern tip of Florida. In general, the more distant the place is from an ocean, the more it has temperature extremes in the summer and winter.

Native American cultural regions

During the mid 1500s an estimated 10 million Native Americans lived in cultures with several hundred mutually incomprehensible languages and widely varying social structures. In the woodland eastern half of the country there were many native cultures that depended on hunting, fishing, farming and gathering. These are called maize cultures because maize, or corn as it is called in the US, was the most important staple of the Native Americans diets.

The Native American cultural area in the prairies and Great Plains is known as the plains or bison region. People lived along waterways and depended on the riverbank farming, this means that they also had to transport themselves, they went on the communal buffalo hunts once a year on foot.

Site notes, take a look at the map on page 39 of the handbook.

The Native American cultural region called Southwest was encompassed by a diversity of native cultures, nomadic hunters and gatherers as well as farmers, but most of his people relied on advanced forms of irrigated agriculture. The California Cultural area includes the territory around Colorado and most California, the hunters and gatherers there are often considered materially the poorest of the continents native cultures.

Cultural regions in the contemporary US

Political geography

The Northeast

Americans trace several aspects of the nations traditional core culture to southern New England. The faith that hard work and good morals are rewarded in this world and the next was the so-called Puritan work ethic. The original settlers goal of founding a model religious community that would inspire reform in England was generalized to American exceptionalism; a believe that the nation has a special mission and ability to set an example for the rest of the world. In the 1800s New England Yankees became famous for their economic ingenuity, as traveling peddlers, Clipper-ship captains and mill owners. The fall line near the coast, by providing cheap waterpower close to trade routes, made the region the cradle of American industry. The northern zone is a region with its woodland mountain areas that has developed a lucrative industry providing summer cottages and second homes for people to want to escape the East Coast cities.

The South

The south can be divided in lowland and upland South. The distinctiveness of the southern low lands developed with the earliest settlements along the Atlantic coast. The first colonists, Englishman looking for economic rather than religious or political reasons, didn't find gold and silver that Spanish discoveries made them dream about, but the climates and soil proved suitable for growing and exporting cash crops such as tobacco and cotton, that requires much manual labour but offered huge profits. Soon as states larger than the family farm became common resulted in dispersed settlements. By the late 1600s, planters turned to Africans sold in permanent slavery for labour. In 1830 a proposal to end slavery lost by only one vote in Virginia legislature. Although slavery ended with the Civil War, cotton remained the main cash crop into the 1930s, and most African-Americans remained dependent on their former masters for work and a place to live.

For some boats attracts financial, high tech and media industries to growing population centers from Atlanta, Georgia, Dallas and Texas. The important roles

of African-Americans in public life and their support for the Democratic Party have driven most conservative white Americans to the Republicans, making the South a two-party region for the first time in the century. In response to these changes, African-Americans migration out of the region reversed in the late 1900s.

The Midwest

The Great Lakes states are called the industrial Midwest, although they are also important farm states. The early routes of western migration through the Appalachians met in the Great Lakes states, making them the first place where the cultures of New England, the Mid-Atlantic and the South combined. During the Civil War getting the proud since its identity from having sacrificed men and wealth for the preservation of the union. In recent decades Midwestern industrial cities have made great strides towards economic and environmental recovery. Chicago is one of the most important cities as being an international seaport and the home of widely diversified industry and cultural institutions. It remains the premier city in the area.

While the region has the reputation of being conservative, it was the birthplace of the Republican Party, which opposed the spread of slavery and nominated Lincoln for presidency. Regions population grows increasingly diverse due to the arrivals from Africa Asia and Latin America.

The West

The West is a myth that represents possibility, freedom, self-reliance, the future. It was ceased during the Mexican American war of 1848; this area now has a mixture of old, unusually strong Spanish Mexican and Native American communities. Today cattle and sheep ranching are important for the economy. The federal government is the largest landowner in the southwest and even more clearly dominates economy of the mountain states. The traditional independence of long-time residents is increasingly frustrated by their lack of control over local resources.

Mining the mountains mineral richness provided the basis for migration to the subregion and continues to be an economic mainstay. Besides that, also agriculture is a very important business, Las Vegas was found through the gambling and entertainment industries. The San Francisco area was the first experience rapid development because it was the port of entry for the gold rush. Today the city is the hub of a larger area that includes Berkeley and its famous university, Oakland with its many industries, the Silicon Valley complex of computer firms, Stanford's and the Napa Valley wine districts.

Politically Southern California has reputation of being conservative while the northern part of the state is considered liberal.

Resource and land management are major issues in Hawaii and Alaska, as there aren't continental lists. In the 19th century, settlers from the mainland recruited large numbers of Asians to work on plantations. But after 1900, when the islands became a US territory, these contract labour arrangements became illegal. Today to majorities Asian American with very high low which of the islands attractions and this is good through improved transportation amongst other things.

The federal state and Native American government owns more than 99% of Alaska. Alaska won statehood 1959.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Alaska received a wave of immigrants who wanted to escape the congestion and pollution in the 48 contiguous states. The huge amounts of land and money Native Americans received as compensation for others taking over their land, gave them an entirely new status. Much of Alaska's employment boom was temporary.

(3) The people

Settlement and immigration

Believing in the American dream, many tens of millions of people have come to live in the US. They thus changed their homelands, America and their family's history forever. The view that nature of the nation was and should be a composite of many national backgrounds, races and cultures gained popular acceptance due to all the newcomers entering America. This view continues to face the opposition of those who believe newcomers should leave their homelands cultures behind.

Early encounters between Europeans and Native Americans

When European explorers and settlers encountered Native Americans in the late 1400s, a long history of mutual incomprehension and conflict began. Contact between America and other continents have been so rare that Europeans are made Americans called disease from each other, the Native Americans fared far worse: epidemics annihilated entire native cultures. Native Americans seem lazy to Europeans and wasteful of nature's potential.

The founders

The people who established colonies are considered founders rather than immigrants because they created to customs, laws and institutions to which later arrivals had to adjust. The English established the first permanent settlement of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. Because of the scarcity of plantation labour, in 1619 the first African labourers were imported as indentured servants. In the 1630s Lord Baltimore established Maryland's as a haven for Catholics, England's most persecuted minority.

To escape religious oppression in England, The pilgrims, a small group of radical separatist of the Church of England found the first of the Northern colonies in 1620 at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The earliest European communities in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were Dutch and Swedish. The Dutch maintained the culture and rule New York and New Jersey for more than 200 years. They also said the precedent in the toleration for many ethnic, racial and religious groups in New Amsterdam.

The first wave, colonial immigration, 1680 – 1776

The first Longleaf of European newcomers received a warm welcome only if they were willing to conform to Anglo American culture and supply needs labor. This first wave was possible only because after the Crown opposed emigration from England and Wales but encouraged it from other nations in 1660. Large group of humans were Scottish or Irish, most of the Irish left because of economic discrimination by the English. Most paid their passage across the Atlantic by becoming indentured servants. This meant they had a contract to perform labor without wages for 4 to 7 years in the colonies, after which they would be set free. Next to the Irish in the Scottish there were a lot of German immigrants who aroused more opposition than the others. Germans felt that the children should learn to speak German if their culture and religion were to survive in North America.

The second wave, the “old” immigrants, 1820 – 1890

The dominance of American culture and time weakened the old ethnic communities. Dutch and German areas of influence remained locally strong, but most ethnic groups assimilated. A range of factors, such as persecution or political unrest, pushed Europeans from their homelands. The rapid growth of cities encouraged farmers to switch to large-scale production based on farm machinery and enclosure of common lands. With these changes, such a large population could not make a living in the countryside. Early immigrants left home due to the great amount of land that was available in the US.

During the 1800s, the industrial revolution and the international trade boom spread from Britain to the continent and to US, but it reached different regions at different times. Following these changes in market, people moved to where the jobs were.

Largest immigration groups were Germans, Irish, Britain's, and Scandinavians, but many other people, including French-Canadians, Chinese, Swiss and Dutch also came in large numbers. The main pull factor for these people was the unlimited supply of lands. Few seriously considered the claims of Native Americans. Another pull factor was work.

- Germans were welcome for their knowledge and industry, and for admired for a culture that was Europe's most respected at the time
- The Irish suffered many forms of discrimination and were often stereotyped as dirty, violent drunks.
- White and Protestant Scandinavians had language problems that made them seem slow to comprehend and at times they were ridiculed for their homeland ways

Anti-foreign agitation reached its peak in the 1850s. The Know Nothing or American Party believed that Irish, but also all Non-British immigrants, threatened this precious heritage, and so proposed tripling the time needed to gain US citizenship and restricted immigrants' voting rights.

The third wave, the “new” immigrants, 1890 – 1930

This new immigration marked a change in the origin of most immigrants. Arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe rose. The largest new groups were Italian, Jews, Polish, but also many Mexicans, Russians and Greeks. To most Americans, the change mostly involved the feelings that the typical immigrants had become much less like them. By the late 1800s falling train and steamship ticket prices make migration affordable even for the very poor and young.

A renewed immigration debate and immigration restriction

The size of the new immigration and the altered job market resulted in larger urban immigrant quarters than Americans had ever seen. Americans became convinced that the more exotic foreigners could not be assimilated or even integrated into society. In 1908 an Israeli play called “the melting pot” popularized the idea that the diverse groups in the US would eventually fuse many races and cultures through intermarriage and become a new kind of people. Many natives felt that this was a more radical version of the melting pot than they could accept, and to them this meant that's the immigrants should conform to Anglo-American culture. In 1891, the federal government's took

responsibility for regulating immigration and the next year it opened Ellis Island, the famous screening depot for immigrants in New York Bay. Finally in 1921, Congress passed the first general limitation on immigration, the Emergency Quota Act that drastically reduced the annual number of European newcomers to 385,000.

The immigration act of 1965 provided a new approach, but also has some unforeseen consequences. It replaced national origins quotas with hemispheric limits to annual immigration. This system set principles for selecting immigrants, reuniting families, was the most important principle.

The fourth wave, 1965 to the present

The immigration act ushered the fourth major wave of immigration. At the peak of this wave some 9.5 million newcomers arrived. Between 1960 and 2011 the top 10 largest immigrant groups changed. In 1969 of those 10 immigrant groups 9 were European, in 2011 none of them were European and 30% of them were Mexicans. Although this last wave is predominantly Latino and Asian, it is also the most diverse wave the US has ever seen.

At the socio-economic bottom of this wave are often recently arrived groups of refugees from wars and other disasters. In the 1960s and early 1980s huge groups of people fled in Southeast Asia to the US as a result of America's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Attitudes to immigrants: the contemporary debate

In 1982 a survey stated that the longer a group has been in a country, in this case the US, the more favourable the public responses to the group. This means that Irish Catholics and Jews, earlier suffered from widespread discrimination, have been good influences on the country, according to US citizens.

Asians were rather popular. Large number of Asian immigrants in the fourth wave arrives with a lot of capital and a higher level of education than most Latinos. Besides that, Asian cultures have a strong emphasis on respect for parents, education, and hard work. This led to media commentators calling Asian Americans the "model minority". This however ignores a large majority of Asian Americans that came to the country with no capital or any form of education. The federal government, to put a single category above all Central and South American Spanish-speaking cultures, invented the word 'Hispanic'.

The federal government launched the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). This law attempts to minimize illegal immigration while expressing acceptance and giving rights to the people already inside the US. Through this law, immigrants who had been in the US for over four years received a legal immigrant status, this improves your situation and was one great success of the legislation. The immigration act of 1990 raised the annual total of immigrant visas. It also removed restrictions on the entry of many groups, including homosexuals, communists, people from nations affected by the 1965 law, and additional family members.

By the end of the 1990s the growing Latin American immigration and after the 9/11 terrorist attack polls showed that large majorities of the public favours

restricting border controls against illegal immigration and a decrease of legal immigration.

(4) The people

Women in America

Many women, numerically a majority, remain under-represented in the highest levels of politics and business management. Historically, women's legal status meant that a woman experienced a "civil death" upon marriage, which means she ceased to exist legally except through her spouse.

The 19th century

Between 1818-50 a load of women found its women's colleges or girl schools. The first movement for women's rights was closely related to female reformers' experiences in abolitionist (anti-slavery) campaigns. In 1848 two abolitionists led the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. The "Declaration of sentiments" called for property and divorce rights, educational and employment opportunities, and the vote. These conventions became a regular thing. The Wyoming Territory granted female suffrage in 1869. Several other states gave women voting rights limited to municipal or school issues and elections.

The 20th century

Women voters were defined over issues in much the same way as men. Many women's rights organizations disbanded soon after suffrage was won. Women's economic position improved slowly, partly because of this disagreement with in the movement. Female activists proposed a constitutional change in 1923, the equal rights amendment (ERA), to remove the remaining legal inequalities between men and women. The turning point in women's employment came after World War II. In the 1960s and 1970s new women's rights movements blossomed. Again it was stimulated by African-Americans' demand for civil rights. The women's movement lobbied effectively for the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which was the first such legislation to explicitly ban discrimination based on sex as well as race. In 1973 the Supreme Court allowed for limited abortion-rights through the Roe versus Wade case. Since the 1990s court cases have usually not concerned gender, but efforts to ensure racial and ethnic diversity.

Evaluating the contemporary situation for women

Women continue to indicate that the progress made since the 1970s has been limited. For instance, sex crime remains unabated. Since the end of the 1970s the rate of women engaging bachelors or higher degrees has risen over men's higher education. Into 2010 – nearly half a century after the Equal Pay Act – women's earnings were on average only three-quarters of men's.

Native Americans

Patterns formed in the colonial period

British settlers came in much greater numbers than other Europeans and primarily sought land, rather than trading partners or mineral riches. They brought their old women, own compact settlements and separated themselves from the natives. The relationship between the two of them was marked by distrust.

Anglo-American policies aimed at easing the expansion of settlements while minimizing the “Indian threat”. The natives were moved to distant lands that would be reserved for them permanently. In short, the “Indian reservation” system dates back to the 1630s and 1640s. In the 18th century, Britain and France competed for power in North America. Both saw the natives as allies, which led Native American groups to offer their allegiance to the highest bidder. The French won more support from tribes because they’re trading activity seems less threatening. The proclamation of 1763 made a line west of the Appalachian Mountains the official boundary of British America. Left of the line was “Indian country”, which settlers had to leave.

Conquest and removal, 1783 – 1860

Due to the rapid growth of the white population west of the Appalachians between 1800 and 1810, the Shawnee leader Tecumseh and the Prophet worked to form a grand alliance of tribes east of the Mississippi to limit the US expansion. Tecumseh applied to the British for help when he heard that the two nations might go to war. The difficulty of unifying warring tribes defeated the Native Americans’ lost attempts to take control east of the river. Tecumseh and his allies joined the British against the US in the war of 1812, and Tecumseh was killed in 1813. The loss of leadership and British support let many tribes to move further west after the war.

Tribes who remained east of the Mississippi found themselves forced to accept a revival of the old separation policy. In 1830 Pres. Andrew Jackson signed the “Indian Removal Act”. This required the removal of all remaining tribes to permanent “Indian territory” in today’s Oklahoma. State authorities so terrorized Southern tribes that all but two accepted removal as the only alternative to extermination.

In Georgia the Cherokees had adapted to American culture and even became slaveholders, so they fought the removal plans. By right of first residence, Native Americans had sovereignty over their lands and could lose this only voluntarily and with just compensation, only in Georgia. Pres. Jackson and Georgia ignored the court’s ruling. Federal troops and state militia in the winter of 1838 “escorted” the Cherokees to “Indian Territory”.

War, concentration and forced assimilation, 1860–1934

During the Civil War, several Southern tribes supported the south by supplying Confederate armies with foods, and so, after the war, were all supposed to give up even more land by the north. At the war’s end, removal was replaced with a policy of concentration. Between 1850 and 1890 Native Americans in the west struggled unsuccessfully to keep their land.

The era of open warfare ended with the so-called Battle of Wounded Knee. This bloodbath resulted from clumsy attempts by American authorities to suppress the Ghost Dance religion that promised believers a return to the happy conditions before the appearance of the whites. Accused of promoting the religion, Sitting Bull was arrested and killed by Native American police.

From the 1870s to the 1930s the US was trying to assimilate Native Americans in three different ways:

- The first was the deliberate eroding of tribes' legal authority meaning that they would be granted US citizenship as a way of weakening tribal authority.
- The second major plan was to educate Native American children at boarding schools far away from their reservations. To break all ties with tribal culture, the pupils were forbidden to wear NA clothing, practice native customs or religion or speak native languages.
- Allotment programs (= dissolving reservations into small farms owned by individual native American families) where the keystone of the third method of assimilation. It became US policy for all but a few tribes under the Dawes Act of 1887. Supporters of this act believed that Native Americans would experience the American dream of becoming economically self-reliant and politically independent through allotment.

Tribal restoration and termination, 1934–70

By the 1930s studies had repeatedly blamed allotment for the extreme poor health, poverty and low educational levels of Native Americans. Roosevelt's "Indian New Deal" intended to correct the mistakes of the past. The Indian reorganization act of 1934 was the centrepiece of the reversal of public policy known as tribal restoration.

The situation of Native Americans in recent history

The activism of the 1960s and 1970s bore fruit in many ways in the late 20th and early 21st-centuries. Native American law firms won important victories in US courts. The movement's initial success was confirmed in 1968, when the passage of the Indian Civil Rights Act guaranteed individuals living on reservations all the rights included in the US constitution. As life on the reservation has improved, the flight of Native Americans to US cities has been reversed, only one out of four Native Americans was a reservation Indian. The other three lived in urban areas where jobs were more plentiful and varied. The adjusting to the cities has not been very successful for Native Americans.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans

Not until the 1950s did advocacy organizations represented gay and lesbian Americans as minorities suffering discrimination. Even blue state laws prohibit it's their sexual orientation, categorized as a form of mental illness, and subject it's practicing private between consenting adults to please prosecution, the social taboos resulting seek receipt attached to these groups, as well as to bisexual and transgender people going delete their organization and group consciousness. In 1969 in Greenwich Village, gay men fought back after repeated police raids on the Stonewall Inn, which they considered their local club and bar. These riots served as an inspiration for gays and lesbians, whom all took part and crossed the nation in defence of their rights.

The rights of the LGBT soldiers became a very visible issue in the 1990s and early 2000's. The policy of "don't ask don't tell", enacted in 1993, meant that, as long as it was concealed, LGBT service people's sexual orientation had no effect on their military service or record. The policy finally ended through action by Congress and Pres. Obama at the end of 2010. Open toleration of LBTG in the military went into effect in 2011.

African Americans

The blacks are the country's second largest minority group, after the Latinos. When Africans first arrived in the American South in 1619, they did not come as slaves. By the late 1600s, however, hereditary slavery had become the rule, and African Americans were degraded to status property.

Before the Civil War several compromises were reached in Congress to keep the number of slave states and free states equal. Compromise finally failed, and the Civil War began in 1861. Lincoln freed the slaves in the undefeated parts of the South in early 1863 through the Emancipation Proclamation and, after Union victory; amendments to the Constitution abolished slavery, granted the former slaves free citizenship and gave black men the right to vote. However, with no land or education, most black people had to work as sharecroppers.

In 1909 a group of black and white people founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to fight for African-Americans civil rights in general and to win repeal of the separate-but-equal doctrine (this included segregation (= separation of races by law), also known as *de jure* segregation) in particular. It wasn't until 1954, in the Brown versus Board of Education case, that the separate-but-equal doctrine was reversed. Implementing these changes, made during this case, was difficult. The south offered massive resistance, and the court got no help from the other branches of government. Other forms of *de jure* racial discrimination existed in the south in the 1950s. Black people were also prevented from voting and were kicked out of shop and white facilities. Rosa Parks, the black woman on the bus inspired a young Baptist minister Martin Luther King for his "I have a dream" speech.

Pres. Kennedy addressed the problem of racial injustice for the first time from the White House and called fighting racism a moral issue. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawed discrimination in jobs and public accommodations, the following year the Voting Rights Act led to black voter registration drives that transformed politics in the south. This has been called the non-violent revolution.

The contemporary situation for African-Americans

Passing laws was the easy part. Neither civil rights nor the black power movement of the last century succeeded in achieving racial equality. To make use of the equal opportunity, African-Americans need higher education and the skills to obtain better-paid jobs. The wages remain depressed and the large portion still lacks a high school diploma. Most black people are also still faced with discrimination when they buy or rent housing.

Asian American

Asian Americans became nations largest and fastest-growing foreign-born racial minority. The first large group of Chinese came with the second wave of "old" immigrants, between the late 1840s and 1882. 1/5 settled in Hawaii and the rest on the West Coast. Japanese immigrated between the 1880s and 1908 and settled on the West Coast and in Hawaii, where they composed the largest Asian

group. Most of them were recruited as contract workers on the sugar plantations. Because the Asian Americans were a large majority of the islands workforce in Hawaii, Hawaii has been the only state in which they have played major roles in state politics and represented the state in Congress.

For all Asian American groups apart from Japanese-Americans, the Second World War brought decisive social and economic improvements. Public attitudes became positive to the Chinese, Korean's, Filipinos and East Indians, who's homelands were American allies.

Asian Americans today

Their high median family incomes, unusually high level of academic achievement and low rates of unemployment, crime, mental illness and dependence on welfare made the Asian Americans a model minority. A closer look at the situation shows that, despite their successes, significant numbers of Asian Americans have serious social economic problems and still face considerable discrimination. Asian Americans are twice as organized as white people.

Latinos

This group includes the Central or South American descendants of Native American peoples, African slaves, later immigrants from European and Asian nations and mixtures of these groups. Two thirds of Latinos identify themselves as Mexican Americans, of which many live in Southwestern states. Like Native Americans, and other minorities, Latinos have faced race prejudice and economic discrimination in jobs, housing, education and politics. Between 1942 and 1970, when the US- and Mexican government launched the bracero program, an agreement that legalized the Mexicans temporary status in the US. Legal and illegal immigration sore to new heights. Today many Latino children still go to segregated schools and live in segregated areas.

Attitudes to Latino America: the nations largest immigrant subculture

Public opinion regarding Latinos grew increasingly negative as the immigration of Spanish origin groups skyrocketed at the end of the 20th century. A major point of debate was the fact that the Latinos all spoke the same language, which meant that speaking English wasn't of the order. Latinos won an important victory in 1982 when the Supreme Court decided that the children of illegal immigrants were entitled to public education. Educational levels among foreign-born Latinos were the lowest of any group in the nation. The high number of Latino newcomers, especially illegal immigrants, continued to feed rising concern about Latinos even after their immigration started declining after 2007.

(5) Religious cultures

Religious history

Contemporary US religious life and practices derived from Native American beliefs, colonial history of the waves of later immigrants to the country. This will become clear in the following seven points.

1. There is a distinctive religious diversity or pluralism (many different faiths).
2. Religious activity with even jelly to and from the mentalist characteristics has been important at various times.
3. These factors have also created conflict with the faiths
4. There's been an emphasis on the social aspects of religion and the provision of social welfare by the churches.
5. Religion has been closely linked to a belief in democracy and freedom.
6. Religious identities and membership of specific churches have often been connected to social class and ethnicity.
7. There is a constitutional emphasis on separating religion from the state.

The colonial period

Colonial settlement resulted in many religious denominations. Most early colonists were Christian Protestants. There were conflicts between denominations. In the 17th century two groups of settlers arrived in New England and were different from the Virginia Anglicans. A first group (Pilgrims) came to Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620 from England and Holland to found their own church. A second, larger group (Puritans) arrived in Massachusetts Bay in 1630 and wanted to purify the Church of England. Neither group was religiously tolerant.

They both believed that God had chosen or predestined specific individuals to achieve salvation. Hard work was a means of pleasing God, and any resulting prosperity was a sign that He regarded them favourably. It is argued that this so-called Puritan (Protestants) work ethic is a conditioning factor to general American ambition to succeed materially in life.

The 18th century

There was a change of emphasis in the 18th century. Immigrants now travelled to the US for material advancements, free land or commercial adventure. There was a decline in religious influence and observation, and it is estimated that in 1750 only 17% of the population belonged to a religious group. Two events affected colonial communities in the 18th century and produced more active religiosity, at least for a time. These events were:

1. **The Great Awakening** [religious revival]. It affected the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s and was the forerunner of modern evangelical activities. It was an emotional reaction to the formalistic, appealing nature of most religious practices. Beginning in Massachusetts amongst Congregationalists and spread then on the East Coast from Maine to Georgia. The Great Awakening created friction, and churches were split as ministers and congregations either supported the revivalists or opposed their emotionalism and conversion practices. The radicalism of the Great Awakening influenced revolutionary sentiments and the coming War for Independence.
2. **The American War for Independence**. This was a time of conflict for American religion with divided loyalties among the churches. It was basically the Americans versus the British striding for religious supremacy. After the war, the Anglican Church lost much prestige and influence due to its ties with England. Attempts to revive this position failed and the creation of a new American Protestant Episcopal Church proved to be necessary. This was important step towards a more clearly American church.

However, despite the Great Awakening and the War for Independence, religiosity at the end of the 18th century was weak and most Americans were no church members.

The 19th century

Religious groups recovered in the 19th century as further revival occurred. However, the Civil War [1861 to 1865] was a testing time for American religion. A second Great Awakening came at the beginning of the century on the East Coast. It also increased the number of evangelical groups and influenced future religious developments.

Movements or sects, with very different beliefs, were formed as a reaction to traditional faiths in the 19th century, such as spiritualism, or Mormonism. Meanwhile the Roman Catholic Church was greatly strengthened by Irish, French and German immigration from 1830. Catholic newcomers suffered considerable pre-justice from the Protestant groups.

After 1880 US will increase substantially making the divisions between rich and poor even stronger. The churches responded to these problems.

The 20th century

Religious variety and activity in the US started at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century as large numbers of immigrants arrived from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, Latin America and Asia. This influx strengthened

the Roman Catholic Church but also included new Eastern religions. The result was often intolerance directed against the new arrivals.

The dominant Protestant majority in the US history promoted basic national characteristics and institutions, but it often treated Roman Catholic, Jewish and other faiths with suspicion and hostility. This situation then changed in the early 20th century and considerably since the 1950s due to immigration, population growth in ethnic communities and a decrease in Protestant majority. Three major faiths [Protestant, Catholic and Jewish] then started to share American religious life with many other churches, groups and sects.

Spiritual renewal has also led people to join a wide variety of sects, cults and churches. Common amongst all of them is an attempt to create a sense of belonging through close emotional fellowship. It is argued that the emergence of so many religious and pseudo-religious groups and the possible diffusion of national identity in this amorphous situation have led concerned Americans to embrace a “civil religion” based on US political traditions. It is a mixture of religion, morality of nationalism that emphasizes symbols, and traditions, such as the national motto (“in God we trust”) and the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Contemporary US religion

US religion underwent changes after the post-war revival. The influence and membership of mainstream Protestants and other traditional denominations declined in the liberal social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. However, there was increasing pluralism. Despite these changes, the large majority of religious Americans today are still within the Judeo-Christian tradition and US religion consists of three main faiths: Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism.

Protestants

- But this is the largest and most diverse of the US faiths. Each church is independent, supports itself financially, has its own ministers, constructs its own buildings and follows its own beliefs and practices.
- Protestantism is divided between such mainstream churches and fundamentalist or Evangelical churches, often with conservative beliefs.

Roman Catholics

- Although there was a large Catholic immigration into the US in the 19th and 20th centuries, the country was still mainly Protestant in religion and national attitudes.
- This religion is the second largest after Protestantism, but the biggest in terms of a single denomination.
- Catholicism was historically confined into groups such as the Irish, Polish, Italians and Germans, which were all located in the big cities.
- The movement of Catholics from their tight urban community to the suburbs has arguably meant a decline in Catholic identity.

Other religious groups

- Buddhism
- Islam is arguably the fourth major faith in the US.

Church, state and politics

Church and state in the US are supposedly separated. The first amendment of the Bill of Rights [1791] states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It also protects individuals' rights to practice their own faiths. Religion, or the lack of it, is a private matter. Americans are divided on the question of religion in public life and that strict church-state separation is being questioned. Some people think that religion is under attack and others believe that the church-state barrier should be abolished.

There were established churches before the War for Independence and Massachusetts had an official church into the 1830s, but eventually all churches were separated from the states. This meant that they would not have to pay taxes and were not supposed to receive any federal or government supports. They depend upon their members' financial contributions for their existence and payment of expenses. They also provide social, cultural and community activities, supply relief aid for the poor and needy and engage in missionary work domestically and overseas. But, as society has become more complex and government more pervasive, church and state often interfered with each other. For instance, it is inevitable that religion and its moral concerns influence public and political debates on issues such as abortion, the death penalty, same-sex marriage and armed conflicts.

Religion and education

Local districts generally carry out administrative and financial organization of public schools, and school boards composed of elected citizens oversee the schools in their area. Education is supposed to be neutral. The constitutional separation of church from state means that public schools can teach about religion, but cannot promote or endorse a particular religion.

The Pledge of Allegiance and school prayers have been central to education debates. The Supreme Court since 1942 thought the students cannot be compelled to recite the pledge, or be punished for refusing. An important issue is whether or not religious organizations may use government money, grants and school vouchers, to subsidize religious schooling. The question of whether private schools should receive public money is vigorously debated and the private sector generally receives no funding from federal or state governments. However, the 2001 Supreme Court decision in "*Good news club versus Milford central school*" ruled that publically funded schools must allow religious groups to use their facilities for religious activities during non-school hours if they provide the same use to other non-school organizations.

Attitudes to religion

American attitudes towards religion and religious beliefs have been generally positive, although there have been declines in recent years. 80% consider that religion was personally significant, irrespective of whether or not they were members of a denomination. 70% also felt that religion is losing its influence.

(6) Political institutions: federal government

Historical origins

The English authorities allowed American colonists to evolve political institutions [governors, assemblies and courts] with little outside interference. At first most American opposed to a strong central government, which they identified with British oppression. The first US Constitution, the articles of Confederation established a loose league of independent states under a very weak central government. Due to chaos in the nation's economy and international relations, members of the merchant classes supported a stronger central government. They were called federalists.

The constitution would be ratified as soon as agreement was reached that 10 amendments would be added to satisfy the needs of both federalists and anti-federalists. This constitution turns to the colonial tradition of a government with three branches. Three compromises secured the states' approval for the new government:

1. The first balanced the representation of small and large states in Congress. In the House of Representatives the number of seats per state was made proportional to population, to please the large states. In the Senate every state was given two seats, regardless of population, to please the small states
2. The second compromise patched over conflicts between the North and the South regarding slavery.
3. They also compromised on economic disagreements by permitting Congress to tax imports exports.

The constitutional framework

4/5 Of the original text of the constitution remains unchanged, and only 17 amendments have been added after the bill of rights in late 18th century.

A republican form of government

Republicanism is the believe in government without any classes of people privileged by birth or by occupational class (prohibiting, for example, a privilege class of clergy). The Constitution of 1787 specifically prohibits inherited titles and an established national religion in the US.

Federalism

The constitution lays the foundation for federalism through the concepts of reserved and delegated powers in the 10th amendments. It reserves to the states or people those powers not specified or reasonably inferred as federal from the wording in the Constitution. American federalism is a political system in which the governing power is shared between the national government and the states. The Constitution is the country's supreme law.

Separation of powers

The third basic principle in The Constitution is the separation of powers between the legislative [Congress and support agencies], executive [the presidents executive bureaucracy] and judicial [US Supreme Court and other federal courts]

branches. In this non-parliamentary system, no person may serve in more than one branch at a time. As results, one or both of the houses Congress may often be controlled by one major party while the other holds the presidency.

Checks and balances

The branches must share power through a system of checks and balances. The president nominates federal judges, including justices of the Supreme Court, but the Senate must confirm their appointments. Senatorial approval is also needed for treaties negotiated by the executive of the presidents' candidates for other federal offices. The president can veto legislation passed by Congress, but a veto can be overridden by two-thirds majority of both houses.

Congress can raise money through taxes and spending on government programs. When implementing laws, however, the president and executive departments control the way funds are used by setting rules. Congress can create, regulate or eliminate elements of the executive branch below the vice president of the judicial branch below the Supreme Court. If someone challenges a law, the Supreme Court can declare it unconstitutional and can thus force other branches to revise their actions.

The political parties

The founding fathers viewed parties as fractions [interest groups that pursue narrow private interests rather than the common good]. The founders set up a system that encourages two parties, rather than no parties. Only one person from each electoral district is elected and that person needs only a plurality to win the elections [a plurality = more votes than any other candidate]. Since 1856 there have been two major national parties: the Democrats and the Republicans.

Differences between the parties

- Republicans much more frequently identify themselves as conservatives. Until recently, the major parties could also be distinguished by their strength in different regions of the nation.
- Due to the growth of African American voting, the influx of people from other regions and the economic modernization and urbanization has made the south a two party region.
- Across the nation today the **Democratic** Party label tends to represent a moderate to liberal political orientation
- The ideological centre of the Republican Party supports a small federal government, states rights, regulation, low taxes and solutions to poverty and other problems.
- **Democrats** are more in favour of government management of the economy, a public social safety net and unions.
- More **Democrats** have favoured civil rights and affirmative action programs for minorities, gun control and abortion rights
- More Republicans have favoured reducing government spending and balancing the federal budgets.
- **Democrats** had, on average, lower incomes, message Tatian and less prestigious okay patience.

Independent candidates and “third” parties

Independent candidates and minor or splinter parties (“third” party) have a long history in America. They seldom win elections because of election rules and the public’s loyalty to one of the major parties. Independents’ victories nearly always occur in state or local contests.

The legislative branch

Congress is a very powerful institution; it is no longer the bowling brunch of the federal government, as the founders intended. Its main functions are:

- Law-making
- Forming structures and programs to implement policy
- Overseeing the resulting bureaucracy
- Raising and allocating government funds and
- Advising the presidents on foreign affairs

Powers and functions of Congress

- The constitution grants Congress all legislative powers in the federal government.
- Only Congress can make laws.
- Members are truly representatives, so much of their work involves casework (handling pressure groups’ and voters’ complaints and requests).
- Congress also has the constitutional authority to regulate foreign and interstate commerce. It has the power to raise, finance and regulate the military forces, and declare war.
- It has created all the federal courts below the Supreme Court.

How about bill becomes an act of Congress

1. Bills can be introduced in one chamber first or in both chambers of Congress simultaneously.
2. The bill is referred to a committee, possibly a subcommittee
3. Members gather reports and hold hearings to give an opinion on the proposal
4. Then there’s a mark up session: the subcommittee agrees of changes in the bill.
5. It’s returned to the committee for another mark-up session before it goes to the chamber for debates and a vote on passage.
6. The confidence in both chambers produces a compromise text.
7. If it passes final voting in the House and Senate, the compromise bill is sent to the president, who may sign or veto.

The executive branch

The amount of control the president has over his departments and agencies, as well as the military depends on the rules set up by Congress. The president nominates the highest officials in the executive branch.