

7

PART

CHAPTER 21
An Emerging World
Power, 1890–1918

CHAPTER 22
Cultural Conflict,
Bubble, and Bust,
1919–1932

CHAPTER 23
Managing the Great
Depression, Forging
the New Deal,
1929–1939

CHAPTER 24
The World at War,
1937–1945

Domestic and Global Challenges

1890–1945

In a famous speech he made in 1918, amid the horrors of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson outlined his Fourteen Points for international peace. Americans, he argued, must help make the world “fit and safe to live in.” “We cannot be separated in interest or divided in purpose,” Wilson declared. Fifteen years later, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made a similar call for solidarity during the Great Depression. “We face the arduous days that lie before us,” he said, “in the warm courage of national unity.” Soon, even more grit and determination were needed, as Americans faced another looming world war.

In these years, America’s political leaders met major challenges at home and abroad with bold responses. The exception to this pattern was the 1920s, a decade of limited government under Republican presidents who deferred to business interests and to Americans’ isolationist, consumer-oriented mood. During the crises of World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, however, American voters called for — and got — what Roosevelt called “action and action now.”

Wilson’s proposals met with failure at the end of World War I, but Roosevelt won immense popularity for his measures to combat the depression, which helped millions of Americans survive unemployment and hardship. FDR, however, had limited success in ending the depression until World War II reignited the American economy. The United States emerged from the war with unprecedented global power, and the federal government with a broad mandate for sustaining the new welfare state. Part 7 addresses these transformations.



America's Rise to World Power

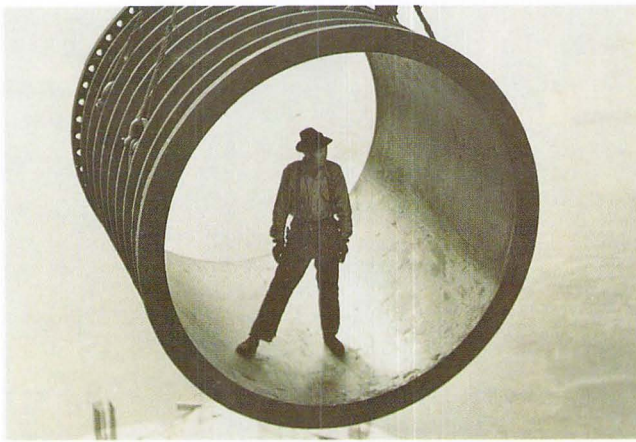
The United States became a major international power after the 1890s, first in the Western Hemisphere and by the 1940s across the world, renewing debates at home about America's global role. After defeating Spain in the War of 1898, the United States claimed overseas colonies and asserted control over the Caribbean basin. Though President Wilson attempted to maintain neutrality at the start of World War I, trade ties and old alliances drew America into the conflict on the Allied side. Wilson sought to influence the peace, but Allied leaders ignored his proposals and the Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles. By war's end, the United States's position on the world stage remained uncertain.

The 1920s was an era of dollar diplomacy and U.S. business expansion abroad. In the 1930s, faced with isolationist sentiment at home and the rise of fascist powers in Europe and Japan, the Roosevelt administration steered a middle course. In the late 1930s, it began to send aid to its traditional ally Great Britain without committing U.S. forces, keeping the nation out of the brewing wars in Europe and the Pacific. When the United States entered World War II in 1941, it did so as part of an alliance with both England and the Soviet Union against Germany and Japan (and their ally Italy). The United States emerged from the war as the dominant global power. These events are covered in Chapters 21, 22, and 24.

Modernity and Its Discontents

World War I had a powerful domestic impact in the United States. The Great Migration brought African Americans northward, and Mexicans across the U.S. border, to take up wartime jobs. A full-blown modern consumer culture also emerged by the 1920s as radio, cars, and Hollywood movies transformed leisure pastimes. While many Americans embraced consumer culture, others expressed deep fear and antagonism toward a new modern sensibility, especially secularism and sexual freedoms. Repressive impulses also came from above; during World War I, the federal government introduced new laws to police dissent, and the country took a sharp right turn. A Red Scare, rollback of labor and immigrant rights, and rising nativism marked the political scene. A resurgent nationwide Klan arose to target Catholics and Jews as well as African Americans. Many cultural conflicts emerged: the teaching of evolution in the schools angered religious fundamentalists, while "wets" and "drys" debated the prohibition of liquor.

Later events showed that racism took many forms: the U.S. government deported hundreds of thousands of people of Mexican descent during the Great Depression, including American citizens, and temporarily imprisoned Japanese Americans in a mass relocation policy during World War II. These, too, represented battles over what a diverse, modern nation would look like. We explore these conflicts in Chapters 21, 22, and 24.



Creation of the Welfare State

In comparison with their progressive predecessors (Chapters 19 and 20), Republican policymakers of the 1920s believed in hands-off government. Their policies likely helped trigger the Great Depression and deepened its impact after it arrived. Starting in 1932, Americans voted for change: President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs, 1933–1937, expanded federal responsibility for the welfare of ordinary citizens, sweeping away the *laissez faire* individualism of the previous decade. Though the New Deal faced considerable challenges on the political right—especially from business and corporate leaders and a hostile Supreme Court—the popularity of its programs, such as Social Security, established a broad consensus that the United States needed a modern welfare state to regulate the economy and provide a basic safety net for the nation's citizens. For an exploration of the New Deal, see Chapter 23.

Wartime measures went even further, as the government mobilized the entire economy and tens of millions of citizens to fight the Axis powers. The welfare state became a “warfare state,” and Congress gave the president broad powers to fight the war abroad and reorganize the economy at home. Under the government-directed wartime economy, business boomed and productivity grew, but other policies, such as the internment of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans, violated fragile civil liberties, leaving a mixed legacy. On America's roles in World War II, see Chapter 24.

Domestic and Global Challenges 1890–1945

Thematic Understanding

This timeline arranges some of the important events of this period into themes. Consider the entries under “America in the World,” “Politics and Power,” “American and National Identity,” and “Culture and Society.” What connections do you see between events on the world stage and developments within the United States? What impact did World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II appear to have on American politics, society, and culture? >

	AMERICA IN THE WORLD	POLITICS & POWER	AMERICAN & NATIONAL IDENTITY	CULTURE & SOCIETY	WORK, EXCHANGE, & TECHNOLOGY
1890	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress funds construction of modern battleships • U.S.-backed planters overthrow Hawaii's queen (1892) • U.S. wins War of 1898 against Spain; claims Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Philippines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Republicans sweep congressional elections as Americans respond to severe depression (1894) • Republican William McKinley elected president (1896) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "American exceptionalism" and rise of imperialism • Alfred Mahan, <i>The Influence of Sea Power upon History</i> (1890) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Remember the <i>Maine</i>" campaign fuels surge in nationalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression of 1890s increases pressure for U.S. to secure foreign markets
1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. war against Philippine revolutionaries • Roosevelt Corollary to Monroe Doctrine (1904) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William McKinley reelected on pro-imperialist platform (1900) • William McKinley assassinated; Theodore Roosevelt becomes president (1901) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Insular Cases</i> establish noncitizenship status for new territories (1901) • California, Washington, and Hawaii limit rights for Asian immigrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of modernism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Root-Takahira Agreement affirms free oceanic commerce (1908)
1910	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilson intervenes in Mexico (1914) • Panama Canal opened (1914) • United States enters WWI (1917) • War ends; Wilson seeks to influence peace treaty negotiations (1918) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodrow Wilson elected president (1912) • Red Scare (1919) • Woodrow Wilson issues Fourteen Points (1919) • U.S. Senate rejects Treaty of Versailles (1919, 1920) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Ku Klux Klan founded (1915) • Post-WWI race riots • Wartime pressure for "100% loyalty"; dissent suppressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moviemaking industry moves to southern California • <i>Birth of a Nation</i> glorifies the Reconstruction-era Klan (1915) • Radio Corporation of America created (1919) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Migration brings African Americans to northern cities, Mexicans north to United States • Assembly-line production begins
1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heyday of "dollar diplomacy" • U.S. occupation of Haiti and other Caribbean and Central American nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nineteenth Amendment grants women's suffrage (1920) • Prohibition (1920–1933) • Teapot Dome scandal (1923) • Republican "associated state," probusiness policies (1920–1932) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Origins Act limits immigration (1924) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of Hollywood • Harlem Renaissance • Popularity of jazz music • Scopes "monkey trial" (1925) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic prosperity (1922–1929) • Labor gains rolled back • Era of welfare capitalism • Rise of automobile loans and consumer credit
1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise of European fascist powers • Japan invades China (1937) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Franklin Roosevelt elected president (1932) • First New Deal (1933) • Second New Deal (1935) • Roosevelt attempts to reform Supreme Court (1937) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonus Army (1932) • Indian Reorganization Act (1934) • Social Security created (1935) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentary impulse in arts • WPA assists artists • Federal Writers' Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Depression (1929–1941) • Rise of CIO and organized labor
1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United States enters WWII (1941) • Atomic bombing of Japan and end of WWII (1945) • United Nations founded (1945) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roosevelt elected to fourth term (1944) • Roosevelt dies (1945) • Harry Truman becomes president (1945) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internment of Japanese Americans • Segregation in armed services until 1948 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film industry aids war effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • War spending ends depression • Rationing curbs consumer spending • Married women take war jobs