

## Chapter 41: The American People Face a New Century (2001-2014)

### Synopsis

- **Bush won a controversial election in 2000**
  - The nation remained heavily divided among party lines until the 9/11 attacks that united the US towards anti-terrorism
    - **After that the US involved itself in the wars in Afghanistan (against Osama bin Laden) and Iraq (for possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMD))**
- **Obama was elected in 2008 and re-elected in 2012, the first African American president**
  - This was during the Great Recession
  - He tried to enact large economic and healthcare reform
  - He triggered a strong Republican backlash
    - The strong disagreement between the two sides even shut down the government once for two weeks in 2013

### Bush Begins

- Bush was from a wealthy family background, but he tried to hide it with the manner of a “self-made good ol’ boy” and with humor
- Bush said that he would work well together with the Democrats, as he had done as governor of Texas
  - **However, he ended up being very conservative and this divided the parties more**
    - He lowered funding for “international health programs that sanctioned abortion, advocated federally financed faith-based social-welfare initiatives, and sharply limited government-sponsored research on embryonic stem cells” — i.e., very anti-liberal acts
    - He was pro-business and anti-environmental protection (another conservative alignment) by “challenging scientific findings on groundwater contamination,” not supporting the Kyoto Treaty, an international agreement to lower greenhouse gas emissions to reduce global warming, and working with major American oil companies to drill oil in Alaska
    - He passed major tax cuts (\$1.3 trillion) in 2001 and 2003 that led to massive financial deficits (> \$450 billion in 2008)

*Culture and Society:* Bush initially boasted that he would keep the two parties united by working with the Democrats and by promoting an aura of a “self-made good ol’ boy” rather than showing his privileged background. This was in order to keep his popularity high despite his controversial election, in which he won by a potential miscount in Florida against Albert Gore. However, with the nation already heavily divided down party lines by Clinton’s administration, it was difficult for Bush to work together with the Democrats, and he ended up passing many very-conservative measures that actually angered the Democrats rather than pleasing them. He went against improved welfare and healthcare initiatives, went against stem-cell research (a liberal-supported action), went against environmental-protection agreements — even going against the widely-praised Kyoto Treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions — and passed huge tax cuts. These showed how biased the nation, with its generation of an increasing

number of conservative-minded seniors, stayed inevitably Republican-minded, even despite its attempt to reconcile with the liberal-minded Democrats. Despite the popularity of the Clinton era, with its federal surpluses, the nation found its society remaining strictly conservative— economically (tax cuts), environmentally (ignoring global warming), socially (anti-stem cell research), and politically (generally anti-Democrat).

## Terrorism Comes to America

- **The 9/11 attacks happened on September 11th, 2001**
  - Four planes were hijacked, two crashing into the Twin Towers in NYC, one into the Pentagon, and one attempted to fly into the White House
  - This broke a long tradition of no attacks on American soil
  - 3,000 people died on this day
- Bush responded to 9/11 by giving an address to Congress identifying the main enemy as Al Qaeda, the terrorist group headed by Osama bin Laden
  - He specifically “emphasized his respect for the Islamic religion and Muslim people” to avoid offense
  - Osama bin Laden was in Afghanistan, which was ruled by the Taliban
    - bin Laden drew on the anti-American hatred that was strong in the Middle East
      - **Bush attacked Afghanistan** when the Taliban refused to hand over bin Laden
        - The US and rebel Afghan forces overthrew the Taliban in 3 months but did not find bin Laden
        - Some people suggested that asymmetric warfare (when the military powers of the two nations be very different) to combat the smaller, more guerilla-type warfare of the Taliban; these were not adopted because
          - This involved “employing not just traditional military muscle but also counterinsurgency tactics like innovative intelligence gathering, training of local police forces, economic reprisals, infiltration of suspected organizations, and even assassinations”
  - A recession coincided with the terrorist attacks, worsening both the economy and people’s spirits
    - The tourist and air travel industries were especially hurt as paranoia over hijacked planes was high
  - **Congress passed the USA Patriot Act (2001) that “permitted extensive telephone and e-mail surveillance and authorized the detention and deportation of immigrants suspected of terrorism,” as well as the Department of Homeland Security to “protect the nation’s borders and ferret out potential attackers”**
    - These showed the high paranoia about terrorism, enough for the government to override the citizens’ rights to privacy

- The Justice Department and Bush held suspected terrorists and rounded up immigrants among this hysteria, and many Taliban fighters were stuck in prison at Guantánamo Detention Camp in Cuba
  - After this, Americans began to doubt this excessive crackdown on anti-terrorism

#### Bush Takes the Offensive Against Iraq

- Iraq had resisted weapons inspections by the UN
  - In 1998, Clinton declared Saddam Hussein's removal for his resistance to these weapons inspections
  - In 2002, with the heightened anti-terrorism sentiment in the US, Bush "claimed that Iraq, along with Iran and North Korea, constituted an 'axis of evil' that gravely menaced American security"
    - Iran and North Korea both had nuclear missile programs
    - Taking down Iraq and Saddam Hussein became the main goal of the Bush administration at this time
- Bush greatly criticized Iraq in defense of the US attack
  - He accused them of "oppressing its own people; frustrating the weapons inspectors; developing nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction ("WMD"); and supporting terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda"
  - Many Americans (including the Secretary of State) and European nations felt that Bush was naive and that his view of solving all of Iraq's problems was too utopian
- In 2002 Congress passed a resolution to allow the US to use force to "defend against Iraqi threats to America's national security"
  - The UN passed a resolution to allow Iraq a final chance to adhere to the mandatory weapons inspections
- **After the weapons inspectors were turned back again, the US invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003**
  - The UN did not give approval to the US to use force to force Iraq to comply to the weapons inspections
  - The US quickly toppled Saddam Hussein's military, taking over Baghdad (the capital of Iraq) in a month and capturing Saddam Hussein in 9 months

#### Owning Iraq

- After the fall of the Hussein regime, cultural wars and anti-American hatred broke out, making Iraq ever more unstable and dangerous for American troops there
  - The Sunni and Shia Muslim groups were the largest ethnic groups in Iraq, and they clashed viciously with each other and against the US forces
  - After the US decided to disband the Iraqi army and after it was discovered that US soldiers had tortured Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison an insurgency in Iraq began to brew
  - Jihadist terrorists moved into the chaos to support their own extremist views, such as Al Qaeda

- **In summary, “three battles—Shia-Sunni ethnic violence, counter-occupation insurgency, and jihadist terrorism—fed a spiraling maelstrom of bloodshed” in Iraq**
  - By 2006, more Americans died in the Iraqi invasion than on 9/11
- The US slowly withdrew their troops, almost from the beginning of the invasion
  - In 2004, “the American military ceded political power and limited sovereignty to an interim Iraqi government”
  - While national elections in 2005 called for a national constitution to be drafted, the ethnic wars and other violence in the country made it difficult for peace to last
    - The majority Shia government was under attack by “bombings and political assassinations” by the minority Sunni people

*America in the World:* The terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the resulting wars begun by Bush essentially defined the new foreign policy of the US. Now that the Cold War was safely ended and communism was no longer a threat to the US, the terrorist attacks were the only threat to American security, with the 9/11 attacks killing some 3,000 Americans on its own soil, the largest attack on the American homeland to date. Bush immediately began the Afghanistan war to try to take down Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda and the coordinator of the 9/11 attacks. Shortly thereafter, Bush enforced the anti-Hussein sentiment by invading when weapons inspectors were ousted from the nation once again. Both of these attacks were eventually successful in their initial objectives (the Taliban was quickly defeated and Osama bin Laden was found in 2010, and Hussein was captured in 9 months) but caused chaos in those countries in the Middle East, which was already riotous with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict raging. As a result, the US foreign-policy seemed centered around taking down extremist leaders such as Hussein and bin Laden, and then to keep order after the regimes fell and conflicts such as Shia-Sunni ethnic conflict arose. With the Arab Spring and the emergence of ISIS very recently, this continues to be a major part of American foreign policy.

Reelecting George W. Bush

- **America was very divided during Bush’s first term**
  - Some people were concerned that the government took civil liberties (e.g., privacy) in exchange for “fighting terrorism”
  - There was “flagrant corporate fraud” that angered many Americans
  - There was increased cultural tension when LGBT rights advanced in San Francisco and Massachusetts
  - Affirmative action was still controversial
- Bush tried to spur his popularity because of these divisions in American society
  - He claimed that his tax cuts had greatly helped the economy
  - He created the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) that “mandated sanctions against schools that failed to meet federal performance standards”
  - He stayed very conservative, opposing liberal advocates for stem cell research and gay marriage
- John Kerry, a Democratic Massachusetts senator, ran against Bush in the 2004 presidential election
  - Kerry pushed for progressive reforms and a strong anti-terrorism initiative

- **Bush won the election of 2004 286 to 252 electoral votes**
  - However, he only won by one state, like it was in the 2000 election against Gore

#### Bush's Bruising Second Term

- Bush began his second term with very conservative actions
  - He appointed two conservative justices to the Supreme Court, John G. Roberts (the new chief justice) and Samuel A. Alito, Jr.
  - He attempted to privatize much of Social Security, an action that had a major backlash by AARP (the American Association of Retired Persons) and eventually lost popularity as a result
  - He attempted to ban gay marriage, but this lost popularity as well
  - He argued that immigrants were “usurping American tax dollars, jobs, and privileges,” but many people were sympathetic to immigrants and wanted the legalization of many illegal immigrants
    - Bush tried to make a bill that made a compromise between the two sides (giving a path to citizenship with a fine), but it displeased both sides and lost popularity as well
- There was scandal in Bush's second term that lessened support for the government again
  - The Vice President's chief of staff was convicted of perjury
  - People discovered that the government was illegally tapping into Americans' wires
- Hurricane Katrina (2005) hit New Orleans, and the federal government had a very poor response
  - It “flooded 80 percent of the historic city and caused over 1,300 deaths and \$150 billion in damages”
- **Bush's inability to respond effectively to social, economic, and political emergencies caused him to be recognized as an “impetuous, unreflective, and frequently feckless leader”**
  - As a result of the anti-government sentiment, Democrats gained control of both houses of Senate in 2006
  - Americans were especially opposed to the Iraq war, with Iraq having no confirmed connection to Al Qaeda nor 9/11

#### The Presidential Election of 2008

- The Democratic Party had Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton as its main political candidates for the election of 2008
  - Obama barely won against Clinton because he had a better idea of globalization, having lived in Hawaii and Indonesia
  - He had raised a record \$700 million for campaign funds
- The Republicans chose John McCain as their main presidential candidate, with Sarah Palin as his running-mate
  - Palin was supposed to be photogenic and help popularize the Republicans, but her lack of political knowledge hurt the Republicans
- The economy plummeted in 2008 with the housing crisis

- The “American housing price bubble, fed by years of the Federal Reserve System’s easy-money policies and the private banking system’s lax lending practices, burst” — in other words, cheap and risky loans failed to pay out and house prices dropped
- Many homeowners defaulted, losing much of the value of mortgage-backed securities
- Many financial companies, in America and abroad, had to deleverage, or sell off many of their assets whose values were rapidly declining
- **This led to the Great Recession, the worst financial disaster since the Great Depression**
- Bush responded to the Great Recession quickly (within a few days)
  - The Federal National Mortgage Association and the federal Home Mortgage Corporation, the two largest mortgage companies in the US, were nationalized, as well as the American International Group (AIG), the world’s largest insurance company
  - The Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) authorized the use of \$700 billion federal dollars to be injected into American banks and companies
- The financial crisis under Bush’s Republican rule gave Obama more popularity over McCain
  - **Obama won the election 365 to 173 electoral votes**
    - He won most of the minority votes, showing an ongoing trend of minority voters’ support for the Democratic party

*Politics and Power:* Bush’s presidential terms showed that he lacked the political expertise to use his power efficiently in the situations that he was presented with. He could not manage to reconcile the two parties, trying to pass conservative bills banning gay marriage and compromise bills giving some liberal concessions that failed. He did not respond promptly to Hurricane Katrina and his economic policies allowed for the financial “housing bubble” to collapse and cause the Great Recession. Especially unpopular were his newfound wars, which were costly in both money and lives, and Iraq’s connection to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 was weak. As a result, there was somewhat of a liberal backlash in contrary to the failed Republican actions of Bush: President Obama, inaugurated in 2008, fit this role. He had a greater sense of globalization because he had lived in Hawaii and Indonesia (and therefore would work better with other parts of the world rather than starting new wars), and the Democrats had a good recent track record with Clinton’s balanced federal budget. Thus the political alignment of the nation switched once more in response to the conservative issues of the nation at the time to the political Left.

#### Obama in the White House

- The Great Recession was strongly under way when Obama came into office
  - The US was losing 700,000 jobs a month, home construction slowed, mortgage foreclosures increased, many businesses went out of business, and unemployment rose above 10%
  - Obama quickly passed bills to stimulate the economy, such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
    - This act cut \$1 trillion in taxes, increased spending on “jobs, infrastructure projects, and relief to state and local governments,” as well as helping bankrupt businesses (such as General Motors and Chrysler)
    - These saved an estimated 3 million jobs
- By mid-2009, the economy began to slowly improve

- Unemployment remained high (above 9%) and many people remained paranoid about the state of the economy
- Obama passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010) (a.k.a., Obamacare)
  - This was his attempt to reform healthcare, a long-term liberal goal that received almost no support from the Republicans in Congress
  - This mandated health insurance for all Americans, new state-organized “exchanges” to buy insurance, allowed children under 26 to be covered by their parent’s health insurance plans, and gave subsidies to lower-income families
  - This had an estimated \$940 billion cost over 10 years but had an estimated \$1 trillion deficit reduction in 20 years
- Obama also reformed financial regulation with the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (2010)
  - This “aimed to curb the risky, high-flying practices that had contributed to the debacle of 2008 with new controls on banks, investment houses, and stock markets, and with new truth-in-lending rules to protect consumers”

#### Back to Backlash

- Obama’s policies were not too popular because they did not have any apparent immediate effect
  - His reforms and relief programs only slowed the recession, but did not really improve the economy
  - The federal budget had greatly increased over Obama’s presidency (partially because of Bush’s programs), which people thought was irresponsible in the middle of an economic recession
- **A conservative, anti-big government movement named the Tea Party became popular against Obama’s heavy-spending initiatives**
  - They used “street-theater demonstrations” as well as the media to protest against heavy government spending
  - The Tea Party had support from billionaires and PACs
  - They blocked liberal legislation such as an anti-global warming law limiting greenhouse gas emissions
  - This conservative movement led the Democrats to lose the majority in the House of Representatives in 2010
- Despite the high anti-liberal sense in government and with the people, Obama still passed some liberal measures
  - Obama elected two liberal justices to the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan (two women, including the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice)
  - He passed “an \$858 billion package that extended unemployment benefits as well as the Bush-era tax cuts”
  - He ended the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy created by Bush for gays in the military
  - He created a new START nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia
- Republicans in Congress created strong opposition to Obama simply raising the debt ceiling

- Raising the debt ceiling was usually a routine matter but the strong conservative sentiment gave the Republicans a sense of authority to demand more from the Democrats before raising it again
- The prolonged indecision in government lowered many people's trust in the government
- Obama agree to increase the debt ceiling in exchange for no tax increases and lower federal spending

### The Politics of Inequality

- Poorer people protested against the richest people because of the high economic inequality after the 2008 recession
  - Some people seemed to be unfairly gaining huge sums of money, such as financiers
  - Many people camped outside Wall Street in protest in the Occupy Wall Street movement
    - While this movement failed (it did not cause effect any new legislation), Obama acknowledged that this was a problem that needed solving
  - By 2012, the top 1% held 20% of the nation's wealth, and even the top of this top 1% was growing wealthier
  - The issue of inequality was especially high in the US, higher than in other industrialized nations
  - This was caused by a variety of factors, including
    - The lower taxes that favored the wealthy under Reagan and Bush
    - There was a higher level of global competition (because of globalization and more of a free-market economy)
    - There was a reduction in highly-paid intellectual jobs (and the increase in manufacturing jobs)
    - The decline of unions
    - More part-time and temporary work
    - Increasing number of lesser-skilled immigrants
    - Tendency of intermarriage within the same socioeconomic group
    - The best colleges were extraordinarily expensive, and schools in poorer areas were underfunded

*Work, Exchange, and Technology:* With the rise in cultural and economic pluralism (a greater acceptance of cultural diversity and a growing economic stratification) came a sense of injustice with the American masses. After the wealthy-favoring tax cuts by Reagan and Bush and the economic loss of the Great Recession, many middle- and lower-class Americans were angry at the unfair tax rates of the wealthy, the unfair earnings of some professions such as financiers, and the heavy spending by Obama's administration that seemed to have little effect on people's diminished incomes after the economic crisis. As a result, frustrated Americans formed a hyper conservative group named the "Tea Party" that clashed with Obama's heavy spending initiatives, Americans formed the "Occupy Wall Street" movement, and the Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives. This continued a social trend of inequality of work and incomes, with the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. This problem had many underlying and unfixed causes, such as the decline of unions, the



increase of lesser-skilled immigrants, the inequality of education quality, and a decline in intellectual, high-paying jobs.

#### New Directions in Foreign Policy

- **Obama sought to wind down both wars that Bush had begun (the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars)**
  - He employed many advisors who had served in Clinton's administration, including Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state
  - His efforts to "repair frayed alliances, forge new arms-control agreements, and engage the citizenry of regional hotbeds of anti-Americanism" — these efforts won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009
  - He announced that American combat in Iraq would end by 2010 and combat troops would be removed by 2011, and he kept this promise
- Obama declared that it was necessary to win the war in Afghanistan to defeat Al Qaeda, but it was difficult because of increasing jihadist terrorist resistance to American forces
  - The Taliban and Al Qaeda moved to Pakistan, threatening to move the fight there as well
  - Obama announced that he would start withdrawing troops by 2011, which he did
    - However, in the meantime he greatly increased the number of troops there, which led to the successful assassination of Osama bin Laden in 2011
    - Troops in Afghanistan were taken out as promised, but they were replaced with unmanned drone attacks, which was very controversial
- Obama tried to revert Bush's controversial anti-terrorism measures
  - He successfully made waterboarding, a torture technique, illegal
  - He tried to close down Guantanamo prison but Congress didn't allow him to

*America in the World*: [see synthesis under "Owning Iraq"]

#### Battling for the White House in 2012

- Obama ran for re-election in 2012
  - He claimed that his economic policies were sound and fair, and that he would lower income tax levels on the wealthy
- The Republicans chose Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan as their presidential / vice-presidential candidates
  - Romney was a businessman before he was a politician and was moderate as the governor of Massachusetts
  - He aimed to "repeal the Affordable Care Act and the Wall Street Reform Act, cut domestic spending, and slash taxes" — all traditionally conservative measures
- A new Supreme Court Ruling, Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission, ruled that people had unlimited spending power in politics
  - This meant that advocacy groups — now "super-PACs" because of the huge sums of money they poured in — could pay as much money as they want to sway political elections
  - **As a result, the two candidates spent over \$2 billion in campaigning combined**
- **Obama won the election 332 to 206 electoral votes**

- Democrats also regained control of the Senate
- This was partly because whites contributed to a smaller percentage of the voters (more multiracial people that supported the Democrats voted)

### Second-Term Stalemate

- Obama's second term remained divided between the political parties
  - Under conservative John Boehner, the House was very resistant to Obama's liberal policies
    - They refused to lift the debt ceiling any more, but Obama also refused to negotiate; this led to a 16-day government shutdown until the Republicans relented
- The people began to worry, especially because a growing number of people were aging and welfare programs for the wealthy still had to be funded by the government
  - By 2012, over 13% of Americans were retirement age, and it was estimated that over 20% of Americans would be retirement-age by 2050
  - **Social Security and Medicare were both federally-funded welfare programs for the elderly, and the increasing number of elderly people (especially in the baby-boom generation, which was growing older) made it difficult for the government to pay for all of these seniors**

*Politics and Power:* The political divisions and stalemate of Obama's second term shows the occasional inefficiency of the two-party system. In a time that arguably needed political action to take place quickly and efficiently, whether Republican or Democratic, the government stalled (actually shutting down for two weeks) because the party divisions were so strong. Furthermore, the election of 2012 was especially heated, with Mitt Romney essentially promising to *undo* many of Obama's major policies, such as Obamacare and the Wall Street Reform Act, showing how opposite the two parties' ideologies were. Although the government shutdown in 2013 gave the government some time to debate it out and did end up in a more moderate compromise with Obama conceding to not increase taxes and to lower federal spending, the inability of the government to effectively coordinate its actions between the two parties and work out solutions together frustrated the people and increased the anti-government sentiment strengthened after the Great Recession and the great amounts of inequality by the Tea Party and other hyperconservative groups, essentially weakening the authority of the government against the people, frustrated the American people further, and made ongoing problems such as economic inequality slower to resolve politically.

### Citizenship and Civil Rights

- Obama tried to cause immigration reform with the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) to create a path for citizenship, but the Republicans blocked it
  - This was especially important because of the growing number of illegal immigrants in the US (especially Latinos)
  - Many Americans, especially Republicans, were against the bill, however

- In Arizona, where there were many illegal immigrants from Mexico, a law was passed that allowed police to detain people if they had “reasonable suspicion” of illegal status, and Alabama and South Carolina passed similar laws
- **The Supreme Court helped the immigration reform movement by declaring some discriminatory laws unconstitutional**
  - It didn’t allow Arizona’s new law
  - In *Shelby County v. Holder* it declared unconstitutional some parts of the Voting Rights Act that discriminated against some states, making voting rights more equal for all states
  - It also passed a new liberal law that declared unconstitutional the Defense of Marriage Act that discriminated against gay couples
- Obama was accused of allowing large NSA wiretapping of internet and phone lines
  - This showed the increasing effect of the Internet on people’s lives and the increasing resistance that the people had against government control over it
    - Households with Internet went up from 18% in 1997 to 75% by 2012
    - The Internet increased the people’s vulnerability to spying by criminals or the government

#### Gridlock Locks On

- Obama was becoming ever less popular as the parties became more divisive
  - His approval ratings dropped to 40%
  - His economic policies had not helped many people’s incomes
  - More problems broke out and the government was unsure how to handle them
    - The deadly Ebola virus broke out in Africa
    - The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was a new terrorist organization that emerged
  - This disapproval caused the Republicans to gain majorities in both houses of Congress again

#### The American Prospect

- The US was “both an old and a new nation”
  - It was the world’s oldest democracy
  - However, it valued “innovation entrepreneurship, and risk-taking”
- The beginning of the 21st century was similar to that of the 20th century
  - There were many waves of immigrants in the early 2000s like in the early 1900s
  - There were massive technology inventions in the early 2000s, especially with the rise of globalization
- **Americans were becoming increasingly pluralistic in a more globalized world**
- Despite the many advances of America, it still had multiple problems at its hands by the beginning of the 2000s
  - Jihadist terrorism and the conflict-full Middle East were difficult for anyone to figure out how to resolve
  - Global climate change is a major social, economic, and political problem

- Major improvements in technology give ethical changes (such as stem cell research)
- Inequality and race relations still beleaguer the nation
- **The state of democracy is dynamic, and the changes occurring in America are to be expected.**

*American and National Identity:* The ongoing conflict is, unfortunately, an innate part of American culture. Being a free people means that the government is inherently weaker than that of a dictatorship, whether it be of the radical Left (e.g., communist dictators such as Stalin) or reactionist Right (e.g., jihadist terrorist groups such as ISIS), but the people have some say to work out decisions. The nation is often switching between political parties (since 1900, for example, no political party has been in power for more than two consecutive presidents) as a way to check itself from becoming so far left or right, which leaves people the fundamental right to remain free to express themselves and affect the government as they see fit. Recently, for example, this happened with immigration reform, when Obama tried to allow a path to citizenship (a liberal move) with his DREAM Act, which was subsequently blocked by the Republicans (a conservative move). Every issue of national or international importance, whether it be how to deal with Ebola or ISIS or global warming, gives the people the choice to influence the government's decision, whether towards a conservative or liberal direction, which shows the dynamic nature of American identity.