IBN TOUFAIL UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND HUMAN SCIENCES
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
SEMESTER 3
2020/2021

UK/US CULTURE

CONTENT

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is a term used by social scientists for a way of life. Every human society has a culture. Culture includes a society's arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, inventions, language, technology, and values. A culture produces similar behavior and thought among most people in a particular society. To learn about a culture, one may ask such questions as these: What language do the people speak? What do the people of the society wear? How do they prepare their food? What kind of dwellings do they live in? What kind of work do they do? How do they govern themselves? How do they judge right from wrong?

People are not born with any knowledge of a culture. They generally learn a culture by growing up in a particular society. They learn mainly through the use of language, especially by talking and listening to other members of the society. They also learn by watching and imitating various behaviors in the society. The process by which people-especially children- learn their society's culture is called *enculturation*. Through enculturation, a culture is shared with members of a society and passed from one generation to the next. Enculturation unifies people of a society by providing them with common experiences.

The term *civilization* is similar to culture, but it refers mostly to cultures that have complex economic, governmental, and social systems. A *civilization* is technologically more advanced than other cultures of its time. A *culture* is any way of life, be it simple or complex, advanced or not advanced.

For hundreds of thousands of years, human beings have had at least some of the biological abilities on which culture depends. These abilities are to learn, to use language and other symbols, and to employ tools to organize their lives and adapt to their environments. Besides human beings, other animals also have such elements of culture as the ability to make and use tools and the ability to communicate. For example, elephants break off tree branches and wave them with their trunks to brush off flies. Dolphins communicate with one another by means of barks, whistles, and other sounds. But no other animals have developed language and other symbols as complex as those of human beings. Thus, no other animal possesses to the same extent the abilities to learn, to communicate, and to store, process, and use information.

Characteristics of Culture

There are several important characteristics of culture. The main ones are these: (1) A culture satisfies human needs in particular ways. (2) A culture is acquired through learning. (3) A culture is based on the use of symbols. (4) A culture consists of individual traits and groups of traits called patterns.

Satisfying basic needs. All cultures serve to meet the basic needs shared by human beings. For example, every culture has methods of obtaining food and shelter. Every culture also has family relationships, economic and governmental systems, religious practices, and forms of artistic expression.

Each culture shapes the way its members satisfy human needs. Human beings have to eat, but their culture teaches them what, when, and how to eat. For example, many British people eat smoked fish for breakfast, but many Americans prefer cold cereals. In the Midwestern United States, people generally eat dinner at 5 or 6 p.m. However, most Spaniards dine at 10 p.m. Many Turks prefer strong coffee with the grounds left in the cup, but most Australians filter out the grounds for a weaker brew. Many Japanese eat their meals from low tables while sitting on mats on the floor. Canadians usually sit on chairs at higher tables.

Learning. Culture is acquired through learning, not through biological inheritance. That is, no person is born with a culture. Children take on the culture in which they are raised through enculturation.

Children learn much of their culture through imitation and experience. They also acquire culture through observation, paying attention to what goes on around them and seeing examples of what their society considers right and wrong. Children also may absorb certain aspects of culture unconsciously. For example, Arabs tend to stand closer together when speaking to one another than most Europeans do. No one instructs them to do so, but they learn the behavior as part of their culture.

Children also learn their culture by being told what to do. For example, a parent tells a son or daughter, "Say thank you" or "Don't talk to strangers." Individual members of a particular culture also share many memories, beliefs, values, expectations, and ways of thinking. In fact, most cultural learning results from verbal communication. Culture is passed from generation to generation chiefly through language.

Using symbols. Cultural learning is based on the ability to use symbols. A symbol is something that stands for something else. The most important types of symbols are the words of a language. There is no obvious or necessary connection between a symbol and what it stands for. The English word dog is a symbol for a specific animal that barks. But other cultures have a different word that stands for the same animal-the French word chien, for example, or the Swahili word mbwa.

There are many other kinds of symbols besides the words in a language. A flag, for example, stands for a country. Colors have symbolic meaning, and the meanings vary from culture to culture. For Chinese people, white is a color of mourning. In Western societies, black is the color of mourning. White is a symbol of purity, and brides wear white. All human societies use symbols to create and maintain culture.

Forming patterns. Cultures are made up of individual elements called cultural traits. A group of related traits is a cultural pattern.

Cultural traits may be divided into material culture and nonmaterial culture. Material culture consists of all the things that are made by the members of a society. It includes such objects as buildings, jewelry, machines, and paintings. Nonmaterial culture refers to a society's behaviors and beliefs. A handshake, a marriage ceremony, and a system of justice are examples of nonmaterial culture.

Cultural patterns may include numerous traits, both material and nonmaterial. The pattern for agriculture, for example, includes the time when crops are harvested (nonmaterial), the methods (nonmaterial) and machinery (material) used in harvesting, and the structures for storing the crops (material).

Most traits that make up a cultural pattern are connected to one another. If one custom, institution, or value that helps form a cultural pattern changes, other parts of the pattern will probably change, too. For example, until the 1950's, the career pattern for most women in Western societies was to work full-time as homemakers and mothers. By the late 1900's, the pattern was for most women to get jobs outside the home. As part of the new pattern, attitudes about marriage, family, and children also changed. The new pattern includes marriage at a later age than ever before, a dependence on alternative child-care systems, and more frequent divorce.

The Boundaries of Cultures

Every human society has a culture. People who grow up in the same nation can be said to share a national culture. But they may be part of other societies within the nation that have separate cultural traditions.

Social scientists sometimes use the term *subculture* to describe variations within a culture. Social groups

often develop some cultural patterns of their own that set them apart from the larger society they are part of. Subcultures may develop in businesses, ethnic groups, occupational groups, regional groups, religious groups, and other groups within a larger culture. For example, Amish people in Pennsylvania and several Midwestern States make up a subculture, as do members of a teen-age street gang.

Many cultural traits and patterns are limited to a particular culture, but many others are common to more than one culture. For example, cultures in the same part of the world often have similar patterns. A geographical region in which two or more cultures share cultural traits and patterns is called a *culture area.* Northern Europe is an example of a culture area.

Some cultural traits have spread throughout the world. For example, some clothing, music, sports, and industrial processes are the same in many areas of the world. Cultural traditions that extend beyond national boundaries form what is called international culture. For example, countries that share an *international culture* include Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Their common cultural traditions include the English language and a heritage of British founders.

Culture and Society

Multiculturalism. Some societies-such as those of Tibetans in Tibet and various peoples of the Pacific Islands-have traditionally been associated with a single culture. Other societies-such as those of the United States and Canada-are *multicultural* societies. They include many distinct cultures.

A shared cultural background makes people feel more comfortable with other people from their own culture. Many people initially may feel confused and uneasy when they deal with people of another culture. The discomfort that people often feel when they have contact with an unfamiliar culture is called *culture shock*. Culture shock usually passes if a person stays in a new culture long enough to understand it and get used to its ways.

A multicultural society supports the view that many distinct cultures are good and desirable. The multicultural view encourages such diversity. Thus, in the United States, millions of people speak both English and the language of their own culture. They eat both American food (apple pie and hamburgers) and ethnic food. They celebrate both national holidays (Fourth of July and Thanksgiving) and their ethnic holidays. For example, many Mexican Americans celebrate Mexican Independence Day on September 16. In Chinese communities across the country, parades and other festivities mark the Chinese New Year.

Multiculturalism succeeds best in a society that has many different ethnic groups and a political system that promotes freedom of expression and awareness and understanding of cultural differences. *Ethnic groups* can bring variety and richness to a society by introducing their own ideas and customs. However, ethnic groups that keep their own values and traditions can also threaten national unity. In many parts of the world, neighboring ethnic groups dislike and distrust one another. In some cases, these feelings have even led to war. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, a civil war broke out in the early 1990's between Serbs and non-Serbs, who included Bosnian Muslims and Croats.

How to Study Culture

The scientific study of human beings is called *anthropology*. One of the main branches of anthropology is *cultural anthropology*, which studies human cultures. The work of cultural anthropologists is *comparative* and *cross-cultural*-that is, cultural anthropologists study various societies to determine their cultural similarities and differences.

Cultural anthropologists study the artwork, houses, tools, and other material products of contemporary

cultures. They also investigate the nonmaterial creations, including social groups, religious beliefs, symbols, and values. They gather information primarily by living for a time among the people they are studying and by observing them and talking with them. They organize the information into a scientific description called an *ethnography*.

Other social scientists who study aspects of culture include *sociologists* and *political scientists.* They work mainly in a single urban, industrial society, and they make cross-cultural comparisons less often than anthropologists.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRITAIN

Stone Age Britain

Over thousands of years, groups of people came from the continent of Europe to Britain. The very first people were Stone Age hunters living all over Europe and the British Isles. It was about 2400 BC when the first farmers arrived in England from southern Europe; these are the people who built the mysterious stone monuments like Stonehenge. Then, about 1700 BC another group of taller and stronger invaders who used metal tools came from Holland and Germany. Like all the groups who invaded Britain throughout its early history, they married and mixed in with the native population.

The Celts

The Celts came to England about 800 BC from Central Europe (France and Germany). Another group of warlike Celts invaded in the 4th century BC and conquered land in the north of England and Scotland and Ireland. They became the first aristocracy to control most of Britain. They imposed their language (Gaelic) on the people, which still survives today to some degree in Ireland and Scotland and Wales.

The Romans

After the Celts, the next group of people to come to Britain and rule over it was the Romans. The Romans first came in 55 and 54 BC. They lived peacefully in England for about 300 years. The brought to Britain a highly developed legal system, system of taxation, engineering skills, Roman architecture and the Latin language. In the 4th century Rome was converted to Christianity and Christian missionaries went to Britain to spread that religion. We sometimes call talk about this period as the Celtic-Roman period because the two different cultures lived together peacefully. In the 4th century AD, during the period of the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Roman troops in Britain left. Some historians say the Romans were important in British history, others say that their influence was really very small. In any case, after the Romans left, the Celtic people who remained were then invaded by a new group of people who had a very big influence on British history: the Anglo-Saxons.

The Anglo-Saxons

After the Romans left England in the 4th century, the peaceful Celtic Britons were attacked by the warlike Angles, Saxons and Jutes, three groups of people who came from West Germany and Denmark. They took control of most of the country they called, "Aengla-land" between AD 450 and 600. They were an agricultural people who lived in long houses and spoke a language we now call "Old English," which is, of course, a Germanic language.

The Vikings

The Vikings came from Scandinavia. They were similar to the Anglo-Saxons, but more aggressive and warlike. Their Scandinavian language (Old Norse) was also Germanic so that was relatively easy for them to communicate with the Anglo-Saxons who had come from Germany and Denmark years before. When Vikings attacked in their long boats, the Anglo-Saxons united under King Alfred the Great (872-901) to try

to fight them off. King Alfred is called The Great because he kept part of England free from Viking control. The Danish Vikings controlled the east northeast by the 9th century; the Saxons were able to maintain control in the west.

Britain in the Middle Ages (1066-1485)

Key facts:

1. England was ruled by the Norman French.

2. The country was united under a feudal system.

3. Great castles, cathedrals and monasteries were built.

4. England went to war with France over land and lost.

5. The Norman French rulers gradually became English.

6. The language of the people gradually changed into what we call "Middle English."

7. England went to war with Scotland and lost.

8. The Black Death (plague) killed off almost half the population.

The Normans

In October 1066 William, the Norman king invaded England, becoming King William I (William the Conqueror) of England. Within five years, the Normans had conquered all of England. They imposed unity on England and helped to link England with the culture of the rest of Europe. William gave a lot of land to the Norman nobility (known as barons). These barons then owed military service to the king. The nobility gave land to others to work on as farmers. People in the village who received land had to work 2 or 3 days a week on the rich person's land or pay taxes. This system of land holding is known as feudalism.

The French invaders became the upper-class aristocracy who ruled over the English. French was the language of the upper classes, of law and government and the army. The Anglo-Saxon peasants did not speak French. The Normans built many castles which helped them to rule the land they had conquered. They also built beautiful churches in the shape of a cross. The arches above the doorways were always rounded (Romanesque style). They build fine monasteries which became the center of village life.

The Rise of the English Nation

By the 13th century, the rulers of England thought of themselves as English, not French. The rulers eventually spoke English like everyone else, not French. English and French had mixed over the years and evolved into what we now call Middle English. This period was a time of great changes in government and society. Oxford and Cambridge universities started in the 13th century. Also the power of a Parliament started growing in this period. Edward I (1272-1307) was a strong king who tried to take Scotland- but failed (because of brave Scotsmen like William Wallace and Robert Bruce). Then in (1348-9) the Black Death (plague) came to England killing almost half the population.

The Tudor Age (1485-1603): Renaissance, Reformation and a New World

The social and economic order of the medieval period was beginning to break down. More and more people were rejecting the authority of kings and the Catholic Church. This was the period of the English Renaissance, and the growth of a new form of Christianity which rejected the authority of the Roman Catholic Church: Protestantism. The two most famous English monarchs in this period were Henry VIII and Elizabeth I of the House of Tudor.

Henry VIII (1509-1547)

Henry VIII was a typical Renaissance prince: a poet, musician, fine horseman and lover of the arts. When he was 36, he still had no son and became tired of his Spanish wife Catherine of Aragon. He loved Anne Boleyn and asked the Pope permission to divorce Catherine so he could marry Anne. The Pope said no, and Henry broke with Rome. There was a lot of anti-Catholic feeling in England so Parliament and the people supported Henry against the Pope.

Parliament made the king the "Supreme Head of the Church of England," and helped him to destroy the Catholic Church. Henry took church lands and buildings and gave much of the wealth to his friends. He ordered that church services should be in English instead of Latin and that each church should have an English bible.

Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603)

Henry's first daughter, Mary, was Catholic like her mother Catherine, and tried to bring Catholicism back to England. However, when she died, the next in line was Henry's second daughter Elizabeth (by Henry's second wife, Ann Boleyn). She came to be queen at age 25. She was fluent in Greek, Latin, French, and Italian. She studied theology and became a strong Protestant. When she came to power England had no army or police and a weak bureaucracy. When she died in 1603, she left England as one of the most powerful nations on earth. In 1559 Elizabeth made Protestantism as the national religion by having Parliament pass the Act of Supremacy: this law made the queen (or king) the supreme head of the Church of England.

There were rumors that Catholics were going to try to assassinate Elizabeth and that Mary, Queen of Scots was involved. Parliament wanted her executed and Elizabeth had her head cut off (in 1587). King Philip of Spain wanted to help the Catholics in England (this was a time of fighting between Catholics and Protestants). Also, English and Spanish ships were coming into conflict on the ocean. By the mid 1580's it became clear that Spain and England would go to war with each other. In one of the most famous battles in English history, the English beat the whole Spanish fleet in the English Channel (1588). In this same year Shakespeare arrived in London. He wrote 20 plays which Elizabeth enjoyed very much. Many of his historical plays celebrated England's greatness. This was a time of great economic growth for England. This was also the beginning of the great age of exploration and discovery around the world.

The English Civil War

Under Elizabeth, the power of Parliament was growing. After she died, her cousin, king of Scotland, became King James I of England (1603). This was the end of the Tudor dynasty and the beginning of the House of Stuart. At this time, there were religious reformers who thought the Anglican Church (Church of England) was not strict enough and they wanted to reform it. These groups of religious reformers were called Puritans, because they wanted to purify the church. There was a lot of hostility towards these Puritans and some escaped England to make a new religious community, first in Holland, and then later in America (in Massachusetts). After King James I died, his son became King Charles I (1625). Charles believed in the

divine power of kings and tried to rule without Parliament. He tried to arrest Members of Parliament. Parliament fought back. Thus began the English Civil War.

Civil war started in 1640, with Oliver Cromwell as the leader of Parliament. The main issues of this war were religious toleration (for Puritans and other Protestant groups) and more power for Parliament (and less power for the king). Puritans supported the Parliament against the king. King Charles I was defeated by Cromwell's army and executed on January 30, 1649, and for the first and only time in English history, there was no monarch.

England without a King: "The Commonwealth" (1649-1660)

England now had no king. It was ruled by Cromwell as a "commonwealth" rather than a kingdom. There were many different groups (religious and political) competing for power, and so the army generals under Cromwell took control. England became a military dictatorship under Puritan rule. There were strict religious laws (e.g., the theaters were all closed).

The Restoration (1660-1713)

Eventually the people got tired of this Puritan form of government and wanted a king. King Charles II was invited back to England and the people rejoiced (1660). Theatres were opened and a period of great artistic and cultural achievement began. The main spirit of the Restoration was that of reason. The power and wealth of the middle classes grew. This was a time of great commercial success around the world, and scientific achievement. This was also the beginning of science and medicine and the period known as the English Enlightenment. Also, the king no longer had absolute power; from then on, he had to share power with the Parliament.

The Rise of the British Empire

During the 17th and 18th centuries the British sailed across the seas with the purpose of increasing British power and wealth, competing mostly with France for colonies around the world. Emigration was a solution to the over population problem in Britain. Little by little, people looking for freedom or wealth settled in these far away places. By the late 19th century, under queen Victoria, England ruled about 1/4 of the world's land and population. During this period, England also became the leading industrial nation in Europe. In fact, England was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution. In 1834, Britain stopped slavery in all its colonies. In the 19th and 20th centuries, her colonies became more and more independent, and the big companies were not allowed to monopolized trade. It became too difficult to maintain such a huge Empire, and so it gradually disappeared; today there is only a linguistic and cultural connection with Great Britain.

Major Colonies in the British Empire:

America

1607 - Jamestown was founded in Virginia as for trade (tobacco and cotton). 1620- Massachusetts: A religious colony started by strict Puritans (Pilgrims). By mid-18th century there were 13 English colonies stretching up and down the east coast of America.

Canada

The Hudson Bay Company was important for exploring Canada and setting up trade (especially furs). The British went to war with France in Canada and won (1763). Many French stayed there living peacefully with the British in eastern Canada. After America won its independence, many pro-British colonists went

north to Canada (especially the Toronto area). On the west Coast of Canada (British Columbia), Vancouver was started for the China trade (1788). In 1936 Canada became a self-governing nation in the British Commonwealth .

India

The East India Company started in 1600; it had a monopoly on trade for the next 150 years; the import of tea (and export of tea to America) made the company rich because the English became addicted to tea in the 18th century. In 1750, the British defeated the French in India and the British East India Company to take control of India. The Indian people tried to revolt in 1857 but lost. After this, the British government took over the administration of India, until Indian independence in 1947.

Australia and New Zealand

New Zealand and Australia (called New South Wales) were discovered by the British (Captain Cook) and made part of Britain (in 1770). In the beginning, Australia was a prison colony for Britons convicted of fairly minor crimes. In 1813 the islands of New Zealand were made part of New South Wales, under British protection. Many Scottish farmers made New Zealand into a rich colony. New Zealand was colonized from 1840. Like Australia, New Zealand became an independent country within the British Commonwealth and Empire. By the 1840, six separate colonies covering all of Australia were decided; in 1910 they formed into one Commonwealth of Australia.

South Africa

In the 19th century, the British and the Dutch (Boers) fought each other for control of South Africa. In 1880 an Independent Boer Republic was started, but South Africa remained under British rule. Finally in 1948 the Boers (Afrikaner National Party) took control of the government.

Hong Kong

In 1841 the British took Hong Kong Island to trade with China. The shipped opium from India and sold it to China and imported lots of Chinese goods. Britain had a year lease (till 1997) on Hong Kong. They never gave the Hong Kong people democracy.

The British Empire came to an end in the 20th century after Britain fought in two world wars. Many profound changes occurred in English social and political life, as was the case throughout most of Europe and America in the 20th century. This last century of ours, the 20th century, really requires a separate textbook to fully understand all the important changes that have taken place. Although Great Britain is now radically different from its pre-20th century history, it still has many influences from the past. Hopefully this textbook has given you, the student, a good basic understanding of the roots of British history for your further study of this great nation.

Britain in the 20th Century

Home affairs

Britain's main internal problem of the 20th century was, besides the war difficulties and damage, the **Irish question**. As the granting of home rule to Ireland had been put off before World War I, the so-called *Easter Rebellion* broke out in Dublin on Easter Sunday 1916. Though it was crushed, the independent Irish Republic, formed in 1916, was declared in existence in 1919, and a war against Britain started. After three

years of guerrilla warfare, the *Irish Free State* was formed in 1922, with the status of a dominion. Ulster, however, remained part of the UK, as the Protestant majority of its inhabitants demanded in a referendum. In 1937, the Irish Republic or *Eire* got a new constitution and was proclaimed an independent state. It remained neutral in World War II and, in 1949, left the British Commonwealth of Nations. The Irish Republic joined the European Union in 1973, the same year as the UK.

The Catholic minority in **Ulster** felt discriminated by the Protestant majority. In 1968, Catholics started a civil rights movement. Peaceful demonstrations soon changed into a serious conflict, when extremist organisations, both Catholic and Protestant,

started using terrorist methods. The British government felt obliged to send troops to Ulster to keep order. More than three decades of disturbances caused by both Catholic and Protestant terrorist organisations followed. Periods of terrorist attacks and street fighting were followed by attempts to achieve power-sharing, which Protestants refused. As late as 2006 formal talks between representatives of the Catholic and Protestant parties started. In 2007, Northern Ireland finally got its own executive and legislature, Northern Ireland Assembly, which has mechanisms to ensure effective power-sharing: consequently, representatives of both Catholics and Protestants sit in the Assembly.

In the course of the century, the *Labour Party* replaced the Liberals as one of the two leading political parties. The *right to vote* was extended *to women* in 1918 and 1928; the *powers of the House of Lords* were reduced by several Acts of Parliament and *life peers* were created in 1958.

In 1948, the Labour government provided Britain with a system of social security and medical care covering everyone in the country (the **Welfare State**) and important parts of the economy were *nationalised* in 1948-50. An "*Age of Affluence*" (the late 1950s and the 1960s) was, however, followed by *economic troubles* in the 1970s, strengthened by prolonged strikes. After *Mrs Thatcher* became Prime Minister as the leader of the Conservative Party, she reduced the overlarge powers of British trade unions and embarked on a programme of denationalisation. She supported private enterprise and initiated cuts in public expenditure, especially social services. As a result, British economy started to recover, but the slump that started in the USA in 2008 may affect it adversely.

Foreign affairs

As the balance of powers in Europe was collapsing at the beginning of the 20th century, Britain abandoned the policy of "splendid isolation" and joined the *Allied powers* (i.e. Britain, France and Russia). British soldiers fought in **World War I** (1914- 18) on the side of the Allies.

In the **interwar period**, Britain pursued the *policy of appeasement* (i.e. trying to prevent the outbreak of another war by giving Hitler what he demanded), together with other western states. As a result, Britain was not prepared for **World War II** (1939-45). In 1940, Britain was left alone to fight Germany and its allies, but it managed to defeat the German attempt to bomb it to submission in the *Battle of Britain* and to continue fighting until the victory in 1945.

Britain joined the **NATO** in 1949, and it was involved in five **wars** in the second half of the 20th century: the *Korean War* (1950-53), the *Suez Crisis* (1956), the *Falkland Crisis* (1982), the *Gulf War* (1993) and again in *Iraque* (the 2010s).

The **British Empire** changed into a voluntary association of independent states, called the British **Commonwealth of Nations**, between 1931-49; the adjective "British" was dropped in the 1960s. The

Commonwealth comprises over 50 members at present. (cf.Fig.10.)

In 1973, Britain joined the **European Union**, though it has not accepted the Euro as its currency yet.

Economy

In the first half of the 20th century, *Britain lost its position of economic superpower*. The main *reasons* for this were:

• the two *world wars*: Britain became indebted to the USA and it was badly damaged, especially by World War II;

• the *loss of the Empire*, which had provided cheap raw materials and markets for British goods;

• *economic reasons*: the continuing lack of investment at home, decreasing productivity and the growing inability of the traditional industries (i.e. mining, steel and iron, shipbuilding and textiles) to compete with other industrial states, especially the USA: by the end of the 1970s, Britain had fallen behind all the leading industrial nations of western Europe (cf. the table below).

The situation described above led to the *restructuring of British economy*: new industries appeared, traditional ones were closed or restructured. The discovery of *North Sea oil* in the 1970s-'80s was another economic asset. Britain kept its position of world importance mainly in financial services.

Chronology of significant dates in British history

800 BC continuing settlement of Celts

55–54 BC Julius Caesar's exploratory expeditions

AD 43 Roman conquest begins under Claudius

122–38 Hadrian's Wall built between Scotland and England

409 Roman army withdraws from Britain

410 Anglo-Saxon invasions; Anglo-Saxon kingdoms created

597 St Augustine brings Christianity to the Anglo- Saxons

664 Synod of Whitby chooses Roman Catholic Church model

789–95 Scandinavian raids begin

844 union of the Celts in Scotland

878 Vikings defeated in England by King Alfred

1014 Vikings defeated in Ireland

1066 William the Conqueror defeats King Harold at Hastings and ascends the English throne

1172 Henry II invades Ireland

1215 King John signs Magna Carta, which protects feudal rights against royal abuse

1265 first English Parliamentary Council meets (de Montfort)

1295 the Model Parliament (first regular English Parliament)

1314 battle of Bannockburn ensures Scottish independence

1326 first Scottish Parliament

1337 Hundred Years War between England and France begins

1348–49 Black Death (bubonic plague) destroys a third of England's population

1362 English replaces French as the official language

1381 Peasants' Revolt in England

1402 Welsh independence under Owen Glendower for five years

1407 the House of Commons becomes responsible for taxation

1415 the Battle of Agincourt; France defeated

1455–87 Wars of the Roses between Yorkists and Lancastrians

1477 first book to be printed in England, by William Caxton

1534–40 English Reformation; Henry VIII breaks with Papacy and becomes Head of the English Church

1536–42 Acts of Union integrate England and Wales

1547–53 Protestantism becomes official religion in England under Edward VI

1553–58 Catholic reaction under Mary I

1558 Calais, England's last possession in France, lost

1558–1603 Elizabeth I; moderate Protestantism established

1560 establishment of Church of Scotland by John Knox

1564 William Shakespeare born

1584 first English colony (Virginia) in North America

1587 Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, executed in London

1588 defeat of Spanish Armada

1590–1613 plays of Shakespeare written

1600 East India Company founded

1603 union of the two crowns under James VI of Scotland

1607 Plantation of Ulster; Scots and English settle in northern Ireland

1611 the Authorized Version of the Bible issued

1642–51 Civil Wars between King and Parliament

1649 execution of Charles I, monarchy abolished

1653–58 Oliver Cromwell rules as Lord Protector

1660 monarchy restored under Charles II

1666 the Great Fire of London

1679 Habeus Corpus Act passed; party political system grows

1688 Glorious Revolution: accession of William I and Mary

1689 the Declaration of Rights

1690 Irish defeated by William III at the Boyne

1707 Act of Union unites England and Scotland as Great Britain

1721 Walpole becomes Britain's first Prime Minister

1760s–1830s Industrial Revolution

1761 opening of the Bridgewater Canal begins the Canal Age

1769 the steam engine and the spinning machine invented

1775–83 American War for Independence; loss of thirteen Colonies

1793–1815 Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

1801 Act of Union unites Great Britain and Ireland as the United Kingdom

1805 Battle of Trafalgar

1807 abolition of the slave trade

1815 Napoleon defeated at the battle of Waterloo

1825 opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the world's first passenger railway

1829 Catholic emancipation

1832 First Reform Act extends the franchise

1838 the People's Charter and the beginning of official trade unions

1845 disastrous harvest failure in Ireland

1851 first trade unions appear (New Model Unionism)

1868 Trade Union Congress (TUC) established

1870 compulsory elementary education introduced

1871 legal recognition of trade unions

1884 universal male suffrage

1911 political power of the House of Lords restricted

1914–18 First World War

1916 Easter Rising against Britain in Dublin

1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty establishes the Irish Free State; Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom

1924 the first Labour government

1926 General Strike

1928 universal suffrage for women

1939–45 Second World War

1944 Butler Education Act

1945 United Nations formed

1949 Irish Free State becomes Republic of Eire; NATO created

1952 accession of Elizabeth II

1956 the Suez Crisis **1960** Britain joins EFTA

1973 Britain enters European Community (European Union)

1979 Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's first woman Prime Minister

1997 Referendums on devolution for Scotland and Wales

THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

HOW HISTORY HAS SHAPED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The single most important fact in understanding the nature of the British political system is the fundamental continuity of that system. For almost 1,000 years, Britain has not been invaded or occupied for any length of time or over any substantial territory as the last successful invasion of England was in 1066 by the Normans. Is this true of any other country in the world? I can only think of Sweden.

This explains why:

- almost uniquely in the world, Britain has no written constitution (the only other such nations are Israel, New Zealand and Saudi Arabia)
- the political system is not neat or logical or always fully democratic or particularly efficient
- change has been very gradual and pragmatic and built on consensus
- British attitudes towards the rest of Europe have been insular, not just geographically but culturally, which was a major factor behind the Brexit decision of 23 June 2016.

To simplify British political history very much, it has essentially been a struggle to shift political power and accountability from the all-powerful king - who claimed that he obtained his right to rule from God - to a national parliament that was increasingly representative of ordinary people and accountable to ordinary people. There have been many milestones along this long and troubled road to full democracy.

A key date in this evolution was 1215 when King John was forced to sign the *Magna Carta* which involved him sharing power with the barons. This is regarded as the first statement of citizen rights in the world - although Hungarians are proud of the Golden Bull of just seven years later.

The so-called *Model Parliament* was summoned by King Edward I in 1295 and is regarded as the first representative assembly. Unlike the absolute monarchs of other parts of Europe, the King of England required the approval of Parliament to tax his subjects and so, then as now, central to the exercise of power was the ability to raise funds.

The bicameral nature of the British Parliament - Commons and Lords - emerged in 1341 and the two-chamber model of the legislature has served as a template in very many other parliamentary systems.

The Bill of Rights of 1689 - which is still in effect - lays down limits on the powers of the crown and sets out the rights of Parliament and rules for freedom of speech in Parliament, the requirement for regular elections to Parliament, and the right to petition the monarch without fear of retribution.

It was the 19th century before the franchise was seriously extended and each extension was the subject of conflict and opposition. The great Reform Act of 1832 abolished 60 'rotten', or largely unpopulated, boroughs and extended the vote from 400,000 citizens to 600,000, but this legislation - promoted by the Whigs (forerunners of the Liberals) - was only carried after being opposed three times by the Tories

(forerunners of the Conservatives). Further Reform Acts followed in 1867 and 1884. It was 1918 before the country achieved a near universal franchise and 1970 before the last extension of the franchise (to 18-21 year olds).

Another important feature of British political history is that three parts of the United Kingdom - Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - have a special status and have local administrations with a wide range of responsibilities. However, England - which represents about 84% of the total UK population of around 65 million - does not have a clear and strong sense of regionalism. So the British political system does not have anything equivalent to the federal system of the 50 states in the USA. The nature of this (dis)United Kingdom took on a new form in the General Election of May 2015 when the Scottish National Party won 56 out of 59 seats in Scotland.

The final important part of British political history is that, since 1973, the UK has been a member of what is now called the European Union (EU). This now has 28 Member States covering most of the continent of Europe. Therefore the UK Government and Parliament are limited in some respects by what they can do because certain areas of policy or decision-making are a matter for the EU which operates through a European Commission appointed by the member governments and a European Parliament elected by the citizens of the member states. However, in a referendum held on 23 June 2016, the British people narrowly voted that the country should leave the European Union (a decision dubbed Brexit), a process that was activated in March 2017 but will take two years and be very complex.

The year 2015 was a special year for the British Parliament as it was the 750th anniversary of the de Montfort Parliament (the first gathering in England that can be called a parliament in the dictionary sense of the word), along with the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, the document that set the scene for the later 1265 de Montfort Parliament.

However, the period since the *Brexit* referendum of mid 2016 has exhibited a febrile and frenetic state of politics in Britain in which the unwritten constitution has come under unprecedented strain.

Traditionally Britain has seen no need for the legalistic idea of writing down its constitution in one place. Instead it has relied on the notion that its politicians know where the unwritten lines of the constitution lie and do not cross them. As expressed by academic and historian Professor Peter Hennessey: "The British constitution is a state of mind. It requires a sense of restraint all round to make it work." Rather quaintly, he calls this "the good chap theory of government".

THREE ARMS OF THE STATE

The British political system is headed by a monarchy but essentially the powers of the monarch as head of state - currently Queen Elizabeth II - are ceremonial. The most important practical power is the choice of the Member of Parliament to form a government, but the monarch follows the convention that this opportunity is granted to the leader of the political party with the most seats in the House of Commons or who stands the best chance of commanding a majority in a vote of confidence in the Commons.

Although any remaining powers of the monarchy are largely ceremonial, the Royal Family does have some subtle and hidden influence on the legislative process because of a little-known provision that senior royals - notably the Queen and her eldest son the Prince of Wales - have to be consulted about legislation that might affect their private interests and given the opportunity to have such legislation amended.

Traditionally the choice of monarch has been determined on the hereditary and primogeniture principles which means that the oldest male child of a monarch was the next in line to the throne. Under the terms of

the Act of Settlement of 1701, the monarch and the monarch's spouse could not be Catholics because the UK monarch is also the Head of the Church of England. In 2015, the primogeniture principle was abolished, so that the next in line can now be a female eldest child, and the monarch can marry a Catholic but not himself or herself be one.

In classical political theory, there are three arms of the state:

1. **The executive** - the Ministers who run the country and propose new laws
2. **The legislature** - the elected body that passes new laws
3. **The judiciary** - the judges and the courts who ensure that everyone obeys the laws.

In the political system of the United States, the constitution provides that there must be a strict division of powers of these three arms of the state, so that no individual can be a member of more than one. So, for example, the President is not and cannot be a member of the Congress. This concept is called 'separation of powers', a term coined by the French political, enlightenment thinker Montesquieu. This is not the case in the UK where all Ministers in the government are members of the legislature and one individual, the Lord Chancellor, is actually a member of all three arms.

THE U.K. PARLIAMENT

The British Parliament - like that of most larger countries - is bicameral, that is there are two houses or chambers. One tends to find unicameral legislatures in smaller nations such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Greece, Israel and New Zealand, although China and Iran are two larger nations with a single legislative chamber (but neither of these countries is a democracy).

The British Parliament is often called Westminster because it is housed in a distinguished building in central London called the Palace of Westminster which stands out because of the clock tower at the south end (this is the Elizabeth Tower and it houses Big Ben) and the tower with a flag at the other end (this is the Victoria Tower). Although this is a grand building, it is in an appalling state of repair and it is planned that in 2025 Parliament will move out of the building for a £3.5 billion refurbishment programme lasting an estinated six years. The House of Commons will move to Richmond House and the House of Lords will relocate to the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre.

The House of Commons

This is the lower chamber but the one with the most authority. The Commons is chaired by the Speaker. Unlike the Speaker in the US House of Representatives, the post is non-political and indeed, by convention, the political parties do not contest the Parliamentary constituency held by the Speaker.

The House of Commons currently comprises 650 Members of Parliament or MPs (the number varies slightly from time to time to reflect population change). This is a large legislature by international standards. For instance, the House of Representatives in the USA has 435 seats but, of course, each of the 50 US states has its own legislature. Before the General Election of 2010, the Conservative Party said that it wished to reduce the number of Commons seats by around 10% (65 seats) and the Liberal Democrats said that the Commons should be reduced by 150 MPs. The Coalition Government of 2010-2015 passed legislation to reduce the number from 650 to 600, as part of a wider change to the number and size of constituencies, but Parliament blocked the process of redrawing boundaries that is necessary before an General Election can be held with fewer seats.

Each member in the House of Commons represents a geographical constituency. Typically a constituency would have around 60,000-80,000 voters, depending mainly on whether it is an urban or rural constituency. The largest constituency in the country is the Isle of Wight with around 110,000 electors, while the smallest is Na h-Eileanan an Iar (formerly known as the Western Isles) with an electorate of only arouind 22,000. The Coalition Government of 2010-2015 intended to make the size of constituencies more equal in terms of electors, but so far the legislation has not been implemented.

Every citizen aged 18 or over can vote once in the constituency in which they live. Voting is not compulsory (as it is in Australia). In the last General Election of May 2015, 66.1% of the electorate actually voted. Most democratic countries use a method of election called proportional representation (PR) which means that there is a reasonable correlation between the percentage of votes cast for a particular political party and the number of seats or representatives won by that party. However, much of the Anglo-Saxon world - the USA, Canada, and the UK but not Australia or New Zealand - uses a method of election called the simple majority system or 'first past the post' (FPTP).

In this system, the country is divided into a number of constituencies each with a single member and the party that wins the largest number of votes in each constituency wins that constituency regardless of the proportion of the vote secured. The simple majority system of election tends to under-represent less successful political parties and to maximise the chance of the most popular political party winning a majority of seats nationwide even if it does not win a majority of the votes nationwide.

The House of Lords

This is the upper chamber but the one with less authority. Its main roles are to revise legislation and keep a check on government by scrutinising its activities. Since 1911, its power to block "money bills" is limited to one month and its power to block other bills is limited to one session, so ultimately it cannot block the will of the House of Commons. Furthermore, since 1945, there has been the Salisbury Convention that the House of Lords will not oppose a measure that was specifically mentioned in the last election manifesto of the political party forming the Government.

The House of Lords is an utterly bizarre institution that has no parallel anywhere in the democratic world. The explanation for the unusual nature of the Lords goes back to the beginning of this essay: the British political system has evolved very slowly and peacefully and it is not totally logical or democratic.

There is no fixed number of members in the House of Lords and the number fluctuates because of deaths, retirements and new appointments, but currently there are almost 800 members - many more than in the House of Commons, more than the combined houses of the American Congress or the Indian Parliament (although both of these nations have a federal system), and the second biggest legislative body in the world (after the Chinese National People's Congress which is effectively a rubber-stamping body).

Historically most members of the House of Lords have been what we called hereditary peers. This meant that years ago a king or queen nominated a member of the aristocracy to be a member of the House and, since then, the right to sit in the House has passed through the family from generation to generation. Clearly this is totally undemocratic and the last Labour Government abolished the right of all but 92 of these hereditary peers to sit in the House.

Almost all the other members of today's House of Lords are what we call life peers. This means that they have been chosen by the Queen, on the advice of the Government, to sit in the House for as long as they live, but afterwards no member of their family has the right to sit in the House. Almost 200 are former

Members of Parliament. Others are distinguished figures in fields such as education, health and social policy.

A small number of other members - 26 - are archbishops and bishops of the Church of England. The archbishops of Canterbury and York and the bishops of London, Durham and Winchester automatically take seats in the Lords, while the further 21 seats are allocated on the basis of length of service. Iran is the only other country in the world that provides automatic seats for senior religious figures in its legislature.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

In the British political system, almost all legislation is proposed by the Government and much of it comes from promises made in the manifesto of the relevant political party at the last election. At the beginning of each annual session of the Parliament, the main Bills to be considered are announced by the Queen in a speech opening that year's session of Parliament.

All legislation has to be approved by both Houses of Parliament.

In each House of Parliament, a proposed piece of legislation - called a Bill - goes through the following stages:

- First Reading - the Bill is introduced with simply a reading by a Minister of the long title of the Bill
- Second Reading - the general principles of the Bill are debated by all the members of the House and a formal vote is taken
- Committee Stage - each clause and schedule of the Bill, plus amendments to them and any new clauses or schedules, is examined in detail, in the Commons by a small, specially chosen group of members meeting as Public Bill Committee or in the Lords by the members as a whole on the floor of the House
- Report Stage - the changes made to the Bill in the Committee are reported to and debated by the whole House which is invited to consider the Bill as a whole, approve the changes by the Committee, and consider any further proposed changes that might be suggested
- Third Reading - the final version of the Bill is considered by the whole House in a short debate (in the Commons without the facility for further amendments)
- Royal Assent - the Crown gives assent to the Bill which then becomes an Act, the provisions becoming law either immediately or at a date specified in the Act or at a date specified by what is called a Commencement Order

In recent years, the number of Bills passed by Parliament has remained broadly constant at around 50 a year. However, these Bills have become longer and, in the past few years, about 3,000 pages of primary legislation, as well as around 13,000 pages of secondary legislation, have been processed by Parliament. The reality, therefore, is that Parliament provides increasingly less scrutiny of a lot of legislation. This situation could become even worse as Parliament attempts to deal with all the legislation needed to take the UK out of the European Union (Brexit).

POLITICAL PARTIES

The idea of political parties first took form in Britain and the Conservative Party claims to be the oldest political party in the world. Political parties began to form during the English civil wars of the 1640s and 1650s. First, there were Royalists and Parliamentarians; then Tories and Whigs. Whereas the Whigs wanted to curtail the power of the monarch, the Tories - today the Conservatives - were seen as the patriotic party.

Today there are four major political parties in the British parliamentary system. These are - with representation as a result of the General Election of 12 December 2019 - as follows:

- **The Conservative Party** (frequently called the Tories) - the centre-Right party, currently led by Boris Johnson, which since 2010 has been in Government either in coalition (2010-2015) or alone (since 2015). The Conservatives won 365 seats (with 43.6% of the vote) – a gain of 47 seats and the party's best result since 1987. This gives the party an overall majority of 80 in the Housae of Commons.
- **The Labour Party** - the centre-Left party, (temorarily) led by Jeremy Corbyn, which was last in Government from 1997 to 2010. Labour won 203 seats (with 32.2% of the votes) – a loss of 43 seats and the party's worst result since 1935.
- **The Scottish National Party** - the party supporting Scottish independence, which is led by Nicola Sturgeon. The SNP won 48 seats (with 3.9% of the vote) – a gain of 13 seats out of a total contested of 59.
- **The Liberal Democrat Party** (known as the Lib Dems) - the centrist, libertarian party, (temporarily) led by Jo Swinson, which was the junior member of the Coalition Government of 2010-2015. The Lib Dems won 11 seats (with 11.5% of the votes) – one seat down on 2017 and with the loss of the seat of its leader Jo Swinson.

In recent years, Britain has seen the rise and fall of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Brexit Party, both led by Nigel Farage. In the last General Election, it did not contest seats held by the Conservative Party and failed to win any of the seats which it did contest.

In addition to these parties, there are some much smaller UK parties (notably the Green Party) and some parties which operate specifically in Wales (Plaid Cymru) or Northern Ireland (such as the Democratic Unionist Party for the loyalistsand Sinn Fein for the nationalists).

Each political party chooses its leader in a different way, but all involve all the Members of Parliament of the party and all the individual members of that party. By convention, the leader of the political party with the largest number of members in the House of Commons becomes the Prime Minster (formally at the invitation of the Queen).

For decades, the combined share of the vote taken by Conservatives and Labour diminished as the two-party model fractured. The 2017 election dramatically reversed this trend as the two main parties took 82.4% of the votes. In the 2019 election, that figure dipped to 75.8%. The Liberal Democrats, the Greens and especially the Brexit Party all did poorly and now only have a mere 12 seats between them.

In the British political system, there is a broad consensus between the major parties on:

- the rule of law
- the free market economy
- the National Health Service (NHS)
- membership of NATO and possession of a nuclear deterrent

The main differences between the political parties concern:

- how to tackle poverty and inequality
- the levels and forms of taxation
- the extent of state intervention in the economy
- the balance between collective rights and individual rights

- the terms of the UK's departure from the European Union

THE U.K. GOVERNMENT

All Government Ministers have to be a member of either the House of Commons (most of them) or the House of Lords (the remainder of them) and every Government Department will have at least one Minister in the Lords, so that the Department can speak in either House as necessary. The number of Ministers varies from administration to administration, but typically there will be around 120, the 20 or so most senior being Cabinet Ministers. The Ministerial and Other Salaries Act, passed in 1975, limits prime ministers to 109 ministerial salaries being paid at any one time with a maximum of 95 ministers in the House of Commons. All Ministers are subject to the Ministerial Code which sets out they should behave in fulfilment of their duties.

Historically most British governments have been composed of ministers from a single political party which had an overall majority of seats in the House of Commons and the 'first-past-the-post' (FPTP) electoral system greatly facilitates and indeed promotes this outcome. However, occasionally there have been minority governments or coalition governments, especially in recent years.

The Prime Minister

The UK does not have a President. Constitutionally the head of state is the monarch who is a hereditary member of the Royal Family. However, the monarch has very few formal powers and stays above party politics. He or she receives a weekly oral report from the Prime Minister, a tradition which began with King George I in 1714 because this German had struggled to follow the English deliberations of his Cabinet.

Therefore, in practice, the most important person in the British political system is the Prime Minister. The first modern Prime Minister was Sir Robert Walpole who served from 1721-1742, so the current PM Boris Johnson is the 55th.

In theory, the Prime Minister simply choses the ministers who run Government departments and chairs the Cabinet - the collection of the most senior of those Ministers. In practice, however, the Prime Minister is a very powerful figure and increasingly has been behaving much like a president in other political systems, especially in the area of foreign policy.

The official residence of the Prime Minister is at 10 Downing Street in central London - a location I have visited about a dozen times - and the country residence of the Prime Minister is at Chequers in Buckinghamshire.

One British Prime Minister has been assassinated: Spencer Perceval was shot dead in the House of Commons in 1812.

Government Departments

The most important political departments are called:

- **The Treasury** - In most countries, this would be called the Ministry of Finance. It is responsible for the raising of all taxes and the control of all government expenditure plus the general management of the economy. The head of the Treasury is called the Chancellor of the Exchequer and is currently Rishi Sunak.

- **The Home Office** - In most countries, this would be called the Ministry of the Interior. It is responsible for criminal matters, policing, and immigration. The Head of the Home Office is called the Home Secretary and is currently Priti Patel.
- **The Foreign and Commonwealth Office -** In most countries, this would be called the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is responsible for all international relationships, especially membership of the European Union. The head of the Foreign Office is called the Foreign Secretary and is currently Dominic Raab.
- Many other UK Government Departments are similar to those in other countries and cover subjects such as education, health, transport, industry, and justice. However, there are also small departments for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and overseas aid.

When talking about the British Government, the media will often use the term Whitehall because a number of Government Departments are located along a central London street very close to Parliament called Whitehall.

DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT

The UK has a devolved system of government, but this is categorically not a system of federal government such as in the United States or Australia, partly because less than a fifth of the citizens of the UK are covered by the three bodies in question and partly because the three bodies themselves have different or asymmetrical powers from one another.

The three devolved administrations are:

The Scottish Parliament

This came into operation in May 1999 and it covers the 5.3 million citizens of Scotland. It has 129 members elected by a system of proportional representation known as the mixed member system. As a result, 73 members represent individual geographical constituencies elected by the 'first past the post' (FPTP) system, with a further 56 members returned from eight additional member regions, each electing seven members. All members are elected for four-year terms.

The Scottish Parliament meets in Holyrood, Edinburgh. It has legislative powers over those matters not reserved to the UK Parliament and it has limited tax-raising powers.

In the election of May 2011, for the first time a single political party gained an overall majority of the seats in the Scottish Parliament. That party was the Scottish National Party and its victory enabled it to require the UK Government to permit the holding of a referendum on Scottish independence.

The referendum was held on 18 September 2014 and, on an astonishing turnout of 85%, the 'no' vote won a decisive victory by 55% to 45%. However, in the final week of the two-year referendum campaign, the three major parties in the UK Parliament agreed that, if the Scots voted 'no', there would be an early transfer of substantial extra powers to the Scottish Parliament. This is now the subject of fierce political debate because of the implications for the other nations in the UK and for the UK Parliament itself.

The Welsh Parliament

This came into operation in May 1999 as an Assembly and in May 2020 was renamed aa a Parliament and it covers the 3 million citizens of Wales. It has 60 members elected by a system of proportional representation known as the mixed member system. As a result, 40 members represent individual

geographical constituencies elected by the 'first past the post' (FPTP) system, with a further 20 members returned from five additional member regions, each electing four members. All members are elected for four-year terms.

It meets in the Senedd, Cardiff. When first created, the Assembly had no powers to initiate primary legislation. However, since 2006, the Assembly had powers to legislate in some areas, though still subject to the veto of the Westminster Parliament. The Assembly originally had no tax-varying powers but the renamed Parliament does. The Welsh Parliament still has less power in some respects than either the Scottish Parliament or the Northern Ireland Assembly because - unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland - Wales does not have a separate legal system from England.

The Northern Ireland Assembly

The present version of the Assembly came into operation in May 2007 and covers the 1.8 million citizens of Northern Ireland. It has 90 members - five from each of the 18 Westminster constituencies - elected by a system of proportional representation known as the single transferable vote (STV).

It meets in the Parliament Building, Belfast. It has legislative powers over those matters not reserved to the UK Parliament, but it has no tax-raising powers.

A First Minister and a Deputy First Minister are elected to lead the Executive Committee of Ministers. As a result of the sectarian division in Northern Ireland, the two must stand for election jointly and to be elected they must have cross-community support by the parallel consent formula, which means that a majority of both the Members who have designated themselves Nationalists and those who have designated themselves Unionists and a majority of the whole Assembly, must vote in favour. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister head the Executive Committee of Ministers and, acting jointly, determine the total number of Ministers in the Executive.

Following the collapse of agreement between the political parties, Northern Ireland did not have a local administration for the three years January 2017 - January 2020.

THE U.K. JUDICIARY

The British judicial branch is extremely complex. Unlike most countries which operate a single system of law, the UK operates three separate legal systems: one for England and Wales, one for Scotland, and one for Northern Ireland. Currently Wales is slowly developing a fourth jurisdiction. Although bound by similar principles, these systems differ in form and the manner of operation.

The Supreme Court hears civil cases from all parts of the UK and criminal cases from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, so it is the ultimate court of appeal in all legal matters other than criminal cases in Scotland. The court also hears 'devolution' issues: matters which raise questions of constitutional importance about the exercise of devolved powers by the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In most cases, there is no automatic right of appeal to the Supreme Court. Generally cases are appealed from a lower court where there is sufficient uncertainty about how the law should be applied and what precedent the lower courts should follow in future.

Each case is usually heard by a panel of five Justices, selected by the President and Deputy President of the court. This can be increased to seven or nine Justices depending on the importance or complexity of the

case. Most exceptionally, in September 2019, the case concerning the constitutionality of an extended prorogation of Parliament was heard by 11 Justices. The court always has an an odd number sitting to ensure that a majority decision can be reached. Currently the Supreme Court is the only court in the UK where the proceedings are routinely filmed and available to watch live online.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court shares its building and administrative functions with the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Judicial Committee is the highest court of appeal for civil and criminal cases for about 30 Commonwealth countries (such as Jamaica) and British overseas territories, the crown dependencies, and military sovereign base areas.

The UK does not have its own Bill of Rights. However, since 1951 it has been a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights (part of the Council of Europe) and since 1966 it has allowed its citizens the right of individual petition enabling them to take the government to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg. The last Labour Government incorporated the provisions of the European Convention into UK domestic law in 2000, so that citizens can now seek to have the provisions enforced in domestic courts.

Finally, so long as the UK remains a members of the European Union, in respect of the application of European Union law in the UK, matters are subject to appeal to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) which is located in Luxembourg.

ISSUES IN BRITISH CULTURE:

IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY

What is identity?

- Gardiner and Kosmitzkisee identity as "a person's self-definition as a separate and distinct individual, including behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes."
- Ting-Toomey considers identity to be the "reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process.
- Identity development plays a critical role in the individual's psychological well-being.
- The study of identity helps to understand cultural diversity and intercultural dynamics within cosmopolitan societies like the UK, the US, …

Categories of Identity

- For Hall, there are 3 categorizations of identity:
- *Personal identities* are those that make you unique and distinct from others.
- *Relational identities* are a product of your relationships with other people, such as husband/wife, teacher/student, or executive/manager.
- *Communal identities* are "typically associated with large-scale societies, such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, or religious or political affiliation."

Subcategories of social identity

- Racial identity. (biological heritage that produces similar, identifiable physical characteristics like skin color, hair texture, eye shape,…)
- Ethnic identity. (a sense of shared heritage, history, traditions, values, similar behaviors, area of origin, and in some instances, language)
- Gender identity. (the meanings and interpretations we hold concerning our self-images and expected other-images of 'femaleness' and 'maleness).
- National identity. (belonging to a nation by birth or naturalization
- Regional identity. (cultural contrasts among geographical regions in one society manifested

through ethnicity, language, accent, dialect, customs, food, dress, or different historical and political legacies.

- Other subcategories include organizational, Personal, Cyber and fantasy identities

Types of ethnic identity in Britain

1. *Native British ethnic identity :*
   It is common among the 4 constituents of the UK. With few variations, all of them share physical features, language, religion, food habits, attitudes, character…). With different degrees, all have a relative sense of belonging to Britain.
2. *Non-native British ethnic identity:*
   6% of the British population, mainly from The Caribbean, South Asia, and the Middle East after waves of migration b/n 1950 and 1965. These groups brought with them important **cultural backgrounds**, other languages, religions, values and norms. Due to intra-ethnic marriage, they quickly multiplied and formed important groups => **cultural diversity within Britain.** 2nd and 3rd generations of migrants (born in Britain) have serious problems shaping their identities, unlike most of their ascendants. They are torn b/n their attachment to their **homeland** and to their **host country**. The sense of belonging and pride towards homeland increases as a **defensive attitude** against discrimination and racism

Factors defining identity in the UK

- Geographical identities (north/south, cockney, Mancunian,…) different accents, stereotypes, stories, jokes,....

- Social class identities (wealth, standard/non-standard English, accent Received Pronunciation (RP),....

- Religious and political identities are not as significant in England, scotland and Walse as they are in Northern Ireland which is divided into 2 poles:

1. A group whose ancestars came from south Scotland and England, protestant and unionist (they want to NI to stay with the UK)

2. Natives of Ireland, Catholic in faith and separatist (they want NI to be independent from the UK and be pat of the Republic of Ireland)

- The 2 camps live in utter separation in schools, media, festivities and celebrations, social gatherings, churches, …

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE US

Introduction

The United States of America has been a democracy for more than 200 years. Issues that were important in its early years remain so today: big government versus small government, individual rights versus group rights, free markets versus controlled trade, and connection with the world versus focusing on internal affairs. The U.S. tries to be a fair and just society, and much of the time it succeeds. Through compromise and change, the country has grown, prospered, and made progress toward its ideals.

Early America

The most recent Ice Age was about 35,000 years ago. Much of the world's water was frozen into big sheets of ice. A land bridge—as wide as 1,500 kilometers— joined Asia and North America. By 12,000 years ago, humans lived throughout much of what now are the Americas. The first "Americans" crossed the land bridge from Asia. Historians believe that they lived in what now is Alaska for thousands of years. They moved south into today's mainland United States. They lived by the Pacific Ocean in the Northwest, in the mountains and deserts of the Southwest, and along the Mississippi River in the Midwest.

These early groups are known as Hohokam, Adenans, Hopewellians, and Anasazi. They built villages and grew crops. Their lives were connected to the land. Family and community were important to them. History shows they told stories and shared information mostly by talking, not writing. Some used a form of picture writing called hieroglyphics. Nature was important to their spiritual beliefs. Some groups built big piles of earth in the shapes of snakes, birds, or pyramids. The different groups traded with each other, but they also fought. No one knows why, but these groups disappeared. Other groups, Hopi and Zuni, later came to this land and prospered. By the time the first Europeans arrived, about two million native people lived in what now is the United States.

Historians believe that the Norse may have been the first Europeans to arrive. They came from Greenland, where Erik the Red had started a settlement around 985. In 1001, Erik's son, Leif, explored the northeast coast of what now is Canada. Remaining pieces of Norse houses were found in northern Newfoundland. It took almost 500 years for other Europeans to reach North America, and another 100 for them to build permanent settlements. The first explorers did not know about America. They were looking for a way to go to Asia from Europe by sea. Other Europeans who arrived later—mostly Spanish and Portuguese, but also Dutch, French, and British— came for land and the riches of the "New World." The most famous explorer was Christopher Columbus. He was Italian, but Queen Isabella of Spain paid for his trips. Columbus landed on islands in the Caribbean Sea in 1492. He never reached what is now the United States.

In 1497, John Cabot, an explorer sailing for England, landed in eastern Canada. His arrival established a British claim to land in North America. During the 1500s, Spain explored and claimed more land in the Americas than did any other country. In 1513, Juan Ponce de Léon landed in Florida. Hernando De Soto landed in Florida in 1539 and then explored all the way to the Mississippi River. Spain conquered Mexico in 1522. In 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado wanted to find the mythical Seven Cities of Cibola. He started looking in Mexico and then traveled north to the Grand Canyon in Arizona and into the Great Plains.

Other Europeans, such as Giovanni da Verrazano, Jacques Cartier, and Amerigo Vespucci, explored further north. The two American continents were named after Amerigo Vespucci. The first permanent European settlement in North America was Spanish. It was built in St. Augustine in Florida. Thirteen British colonies to the north would later form the United States. Virginia and Massachusetts were the two earliest. It wasn't just explorers who settled in the New World. People started to come to the New World to live. These people were immigrants from Europe.

Colonial Period

Most people who came to the British colonies in the 1600s were English. Others came from The Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. By 1690, 250,000 people lived in the New World. By 1790, there were 2.5 million people. People came for different reasons. Some left their homes to escape war. Others sought political or religious freedom. Some had to work as servants to pay back the cost of their trip before gaining their freedom. Some, like black Africans, arrived as slaves. In time, the 13 colonies developed within three distinct regions.

The first settlements were along the Atlantic coast and on rivers that flowed into the ocean. In the Northeast, trees covered the hills and stones filled the soil, but water power was available. The Northeast was called New England, and it included Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. The economy was based on timber, fishing, shipbuilding, and trade. The middle colonies included New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. The weather was milder and the countryside was more varied. People worked in industry and agriculture. The society was more diverse and sophisticated. People living in New York came from all over Europe.

The Southern colonies included Virginia, Georgia, and North Carolina and South Carolina. The growing season was long and the soil was fertile. Most people were farmers. Some owned small farms that they worked themselves. The wealthy farmers owned large plantations and used African slaves as workers. The relationships between settlers and Native Americans (also called Indians) were good and bad. In some areas, the two groups traded and were friendly. In most cases, as the settlements grew bigger, the settlers forced the Indians to move. As time went on, all the colonies developed governments based on the British tradition of citizen participation. In Britain, the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689 limited the power of the king and gave more power to the people. The American colonists closely observed these changes. Colonial assemblies claimed the right to act as local parliaments. They passed laws that limited the power of the royal governor and increased their own authority. Disagreements between the royal governors and the assemblies continued. The colonists realized that their interests often were different from Britain's interests. At first, the colonists wanted self-government within a British commonwealth. Only later did they want independence.

The Road to Independence

The ideas of liberalism and democracy are the basis of the U.S. political system. As the colonists built their new society, they believed more strongly in these ideas. Britain's 13 colonies grew in population and economic strength during the 1700s. Although ruled by a distant government, the colonists governed many local affairs. After Britain won a costly war with France in the 1750s, the colonists were asked to help pay for the war, and for Britain's large empire. These policies restricted the colonists' way of life. For example, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 restricted the colonists from settling new land. The Currency Act of 1764 made it illegal to print paper money in the colonies. The Quartering Act of 1765 forced the colonists to provide food and housing for the royal soldiers. The Stamp Act of 1765 taxed all legal papers, licenses, newspapers, and leases. The Stamp Act united the colonists in an organized resistance. The main problem was that they weren't allowed to participate in the government that taxed them. In October 1765, 27 delegates from nine colonies met in New York. They passed resolutions saying that the individual colonies

should have the right to impose their own taxes. This satisfied most of the delegates, but a small number of radicals wanted independence from Britain. One of those people was Samuel Adams of Massachusetts. He wrote newspaper articles and made speeches. The groups he helped to organize became a big part of the revolutionary movement. By 1773, colonial traders, who were angry with British regulation of the tea trade, were interested in

Sam Adams's ideas. In December 1773, a group of men sneaked on three British ships in Boston harbor and threw the cargo of tea overboard. This event became known as the Boston Tea Party. The British Parliament punished Massachusetts by closing Boston's port and by restricting local authority. Colonists called these new laws the Intolerable Acts and united to oppose them. All the colonies except Georgia sent representatives to Philadelphia in September 1774 to talk about their "present unhappy state." It was the First Continental Congress. Colonists were angry with the British for taking away their rights, but not everyone agreed on the solution. Loyalists wanted to stay subjects under the king. Moderates wanted to compromise and build a better relationship with the British government. The revolutionaries wanted complete independence. They began collecting weapons and getting men ready—waiting for the fight for independence.

Revolution

The American Revolution and the war for independence from Britain began with a small fight between British troops and colonists on April 19, 1775. The British troops left Boston, Massachusetts, planning to take weapons and ammunition from revolutionary colonists. At Lexington, they met armed colonists who were called Minutemen because they could be ready to fight in a minute. The Minutemen planned to protest silently and not shoot unless the British shot first. The British ordered the Minutemen to leave. The colonists obeyed, but as they left, someone fired a

shot. The British troops attacked the Minutemen with guns and bayonets. Fighting broke out in other places along the way as the British soldiers in their bright red uniforms returned to Boston. More than 250 "redcoats" were killed or wounded. The Americans lost 93 men. Colonial representatives hurried to Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress. More than half voted to go to war against Britain. They decided to form one army from the colonial forces. George Washington of Virginia became the commander-in-chief. At the same time, they sent King George III a peace resolution to try to avoid a war. The king rejected it. On August 23, 1775, the king said the American colonies were in rebellion. The desire for independence increased in the next few months. Thomas Paine, a radical political thinker, argued for independence and against hereditary monarchy in his pamphlet Common Sense. He described two possible conditions for America. The people could remain unequal citizens under a king, or they could live in an independent country with hopes of liberty and happiness. The Second Continental Congress created a committee to write a document that outlined the colonies' complaints against the king and explained their decision to separate from Britain. The reasons were based on French and British ideas. Thomas Jefferson was the main writer of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence told the world of a new nation and its beliefs about human freedom. It argued that political rights are basic human rights and are universal. The Second Continental Congress accepted this document on July 4, 1776. The Fourth of July became Independence Day in the United States.

The colonies and Britain went to war. British soldiers defeated General Washington's forces in New York and took control of Philadelphia, forcing the Second Continental Congress to flee. The Continental Army won at Saratoga in New York and at Princeton and Trenton in New Jersey. George Washington had problems getting the men and materials he needed to fight the war. In 1778, France recognized the United States as an independent country and signed a treaty of alliance. France helped the United States as a way to weaken Britain, its long-time enemy. There were battles from Montreal, Canada, to Savannah, Georgia. A huge British army surrendered at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781. The war ended when a peace treaty was

signed in Paris on April 15, 1783. In this treaty, Britain and other nations recognized the United States as an independent nation.

The Revolution affected more than North America. The idea of natural rights became stronger throughout the Western world. Famous men, such as Thaddeus Kosciusko (Poland), Friedrich von Steuben (Prussia), and the Marquis de Lafayette (France) took the ideas of freedom to their own countries. The Treaty of Paris turned the 13 colonies into states, but the job of becoming one nation remained.

Forming a National Government

I n 1783, the 13 colonies became the United States. Before the war ended, the colonies had developed the Articles of Confederation, a plan to work together as one nation, but the connections among the 13 states were loose. Each state had its own money, army, and navy. Each state traded and worked directly with other countries. Each state collected taxes in its own way. Each state believed its way was the right way. It was a nation of 13 countries. Alexander Hamilton from New York believed that the 13 states needed to rethink the Confederation. He and others suggested a large meeting to do this. In May 1787, 55 delegates met in Philadelphia. They knew about history, law, and political theory. They understood colonial and state government. Most did not think the Articles of Confederation worked very well. They proposed a constitution describing a new form of government based on separate legislative, executive, and judicial authorities. The delegates did not agree on all the details. Many delegates wanted a strong national government that would limit a state's rights. Others believed that a weak national government was better. They wanted the states to have more power. Some delegates wanted fewer people to have the right to vote; they believed that most people lacked the education to make good decisions. Delegates from small states wanted each state to have equal representation in the new Congress. Delegates from big states demanded that their states have more influence. Some delegates from states where slavery was illegal or not widely used wanted slavery to be unlawful throughout the nation. Delegates from states where slave labor was important refused. Some delegates wanted the newly settled lands to the West to be states. Others disagreed. The delegates debated four months before reaching a compromise. The Constitution provided the framework for

the new government. The national government could create money, impose taxes, deal with foreign countries, keep an army, create a postal system, and wage war. To keep the government from becoming too strong, the U.S. Constitution divided it into three equal parts—a legislature (Congress), an executive (president), and a judicial system (Supreme Court). Each part worked to make sure the other parts did not take power that belonged to the others. On September 17, 1787, most of the delegates signed the new Constitution. They agreed the Constitution would become the law of the United States when nine of the 13 states ratified, or accepted, it. It took about a year to ratify the Constitution. The country was divided into two groups. The Federalists wanted a strong central government. They supported the Constitution. The anti-Federalists wanted a loose group of states. They feared that a strong central government would become tyrannical. They were against the Constitution. After it was accepted, some Americans said the Constitution did not list the rights of individuals. When the first U.S. Congress met in New York City in September 1789, the delegates proposed a number of amendments to the Constitution to list these rights. They added 10 amendments, known as the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment promises freedom of speech, press, and religion, and the right to protest, meet peacefully, and demand changes. The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and arrest. The Fifth Amendment promises due process of law in criminal cases. Since the Bill of Rights, only 17 amendments have been added to the Constitution in more than 200 years.

Westward Expansion, and Regional Differences

George Washington became the first president of the United States on April 30, 1789. He had been in charge

of the army. As president, his job was to create a working government. With Congress, he created the Treasury, Justice, and War departments. Together, the leaders of these departments and the others that were founded in later years are called the cabinet. One chief justice and five (today eight) associate justices made up the Supreme Court. Three circuit courts and 13 district courts were created. Policies were developed for governing the western territories and bringing them into the Union as new states. George Washington served two four-year terms as president before leaving office. (Only one U.S. president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has served more than two terms. Today, the Constitution says that no one may be elected president more than twice.) The next two presidents—John Adams and Thomas Jefferson —had different ideas about the role of government. This led to the creation of political parties. John Adams and Alexander Hamilton led the Federalists. Their supporters included people in trade and manufacturing. They believed in a strong central government. Most of their support was in the North. Jefferson led the Republicans. Their supporters included many farmers. They did not want a strong central government. They believed in states having more power. They had strong support in the South.

For about 20 years, the United States was friendly to other countries and neutral toward their disputes, but France and Britain again were at war. The British navy seized American ships going to France. The French navy seized American ships going to Britain. After years of unsuccessful diplomacy, the United States went to war with Britain in 1812. The battles took place mostly in the Northeastern states and along the East Coast. One part of the British army reached Washington, D.C., the new U.S. capital. Soldiers set fire to the president's mansion. President James Madison fled as the White House burned. The Americans won important battles on land and sea. Weakened and in debt from its recent war with France, Britain signed a peace treaty with the U.S. in 1815. The U.S. victory made sure that Britain wouldn't establish colonies south of the Canadian border.

By 1815, many of the new nation's problems had eased. Under the Constitution, the United States had a balance between liberty and order. The country had a low national debt. Much of the continent was left to explore. The country had peace, prosperity, and social progress. An important addition to foreign policy was the Monroe Doctrine. President James Monroe's announcement of solidarity with newly independent nations in Central and South America was a warning to Europe not to seek colonies in Latin America. The U.S. doubled in size when it bought the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803 and Florida from Spain in 1819. From 1816 to 1821, six new states were created. Between 1812 and 1852, the population tripled.

As the country grew, differences among the states became more obvious. The United States was a country of civilized cities and lawless frontiers. The United States loved freedom but also tolerated slavery. The differences began to create problems.

Conflict within the United States

In 1850, the United States was a large country, full of contrasts. New England and the Middle Atlantic states were the centers of finance, trade, shipping, and manufacturing. Their products included lumber, machinery, and textiles. Southern states had many farms that used slave labor to grow tobacco, sugar, and cotton. The Middle Western states also had farms, but they were worked by free men. In 1819, Missouri asked to become a state. Northerners were against this because 10,000 slaves lived there. Because the Constitution allowed each new state to elect two senators, new states could change the political balance between "free" and "slave" states. Congressman Henry Clay suggested a way to make the North and South happy. Missouri would become a state with slaves. Maine would become a state without slaves. The Missouri Compromise was accepted. In the following years, each side held its beliefs more strongly. Many Northerners thought slavery was wrong. Others saw it as a threat to free workers. Most white Southerners considered slavery part of their way of life. Thousands of slaves escaped to the North with help from people along secret routes called the Underground Railroad. In 1860, however, one-third of the total population of slave states was not free. Most Northerners did not care about slavery in the South, but they did not want

slavery in the new territories. The Southerners believed that these territories had the right to decide for

themselves whether slavery would be allowed. A young politician from Illinois believed that this was not a local issue, but a national one. His name was Abraham Lincoln. He agreed that the South could keep its slaves, but he fought to keep slavery out of the territories. Lincoln thought that over time slavery would end. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he said. "This government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free." The South threatened to leave the Union if Lincoln became president. After Lincoln won the election, some Southern states began leaving the Union before he started working as president.

Civil War and Post-War Reconstruction

The American Civil War started in April 1861. The South claimed the right to leave the United States, also called the Union, and form its own Confederacy. President Lincoln led the Northern states. He was determined to stop the rebellion and keep the country united. The North had more people, more raw materials for producing war supplies, and a better railway system. The South had more experienced military leaders and better knowledge of the battlefields because most of the war was fought in the South. The war lasted four years. Tens of thousands of soldiers fought on land and sea. September 17, 1862, was the bloodiest day of the war. The two armies met at Antietam Creek in Maryland. Gen. Robert E. Lee and his Confederate Army failed to force back the Union troops led by Gen. George McClellan. Lee escaped with his army. The battle was not decisive, but it was politically important. Britain and France had planned to recognize the Confederacy, but they delayed. The South never received the help it desperately needed. Later in 1862, President Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves in the Confederate states. It also allowed African Americans into the Union Army. The North fought to keep the Union together and to end slavery.

The North began winning important battles. Gen. William T. Sherman left a path of destruction (known as the scorched-earth policy) as his army marched across Georgia and South Carolina in 1864. In Virginia in April 1865, Gen. Lee surrendered to Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. The Civil War was over. More Americans died in the Civil War than in any other U.S. conflict. Less than a week after the South surrendered, a Confederate sympathizer killed President Lincoln. Vice President Andrew Johnson became president with the job of uniting the country. Johnson was a Southerner. He gave pardons to many Southerners, giving them back their political rights. By the end of 1865, most of the former Confederate states canceled the acts of secession but refused to abolish slavery. All the Confederate states except Tennessee refused to give full citizenship to African American men. In response, the Republicans in Congress would not let rebel leaders hold office. The Union generals who governed the South blocked anyone who would not take an oath of loyalty to the Union from voting. Congress strongly supported the rights of African Americans. President Johnson tried to stop many of these policies. The House of Representatives impeached Johnson, but the Senate was one vote short of the two-thirds majority required to remove Johnson from office. He remained president but began to give in more often to the Republican Congress. The Southern states were not allowed to send representatives to Congress until they passed constitutional amendments barring slavery, granting all citizens "equal protection of the laws," and allowing all male citizens the right to vote regardless of race. For a time, these reforms led to real advances for African Americans in the South. When the North withdrew its army from the Southern states, especially during the late 1870s, white Southerners regained political power and began to deprive Southern blacks of their new rights. Southern blacks were free, but the local laws denied them their rights. They had the right to vote, but the threat of violence made them afraid to use it. Southern states introduced "segregation," a system that required blacks and whites to use separate public facilities, from schools to drinking fountains. Not surprisingly, the "black" facilities were not as good as the "white" facilities. The races lived separately in the South for the next 100 years. In the 20th century, this would become a national issue.

Growth and Transformation

The United States changed after the Civil War. The frontier became less wild. Cities grew in size and number. More factories, steel mills, and railroads were built. Immigrants arrived in the United States with dreams of better lives. This was the age of inventions. Alexander Graham Bell developed the telephone. Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. George Eastman made the moving picture, later called a movie. Before 1860, the government issued 36,000 patents. From 1860 to 1890, the government issued 440,000. Separate companies merged to become larger companies, sometimes called trusts. This happened especially in the steel, rail, oil, and communications industries. With fewer companies, buyers had fewer choices and businesses had more power. An antitrust law was passed in 1890 to stop monopolies, but it was not very effective. Farming was still America's main occupation. Scientists improved seeds. New machines did some of the work that men had done. American farmers produced enough grain, meat, cotton, and wool to ship the surplus overseas. The Western regions still had room for exploration and for new settlements. Miners found ore and gold in mountains. Sheep farmers settled in river valleys. Food farmers settled on the Great Plains. Ranchers let their cattle graze on the vast grasslands. Cowboys drove great herds of cattle to the railroad to ship to the East. The "Wild West" pictured in many cowboy books and movies lasted only about 30 years. When Europeans first arrived on the East Coast, they pushed the native people west. Each time, the government promised new land for the native people so they would have a home. Each time, the promises were broken while white settlers took the land. In the late 1800s, Sioux tribes in the Northern plains and Apaches in the Southwest fought back. Although they were strong, the U.S. government forces defeated them. Many tribes would live on reservations, which are federal lands administered by Indian tribes. Today there are more than 300 reservations.

Toward the end of the 1800s, European powers colonized Africa and fought for rights to trade in Asia. Many Americans believed that the United States should do the same. Many other Americans did not like any action that seemed imperialistic. After a brief war with Spain in 1898, the U.S. controlled several Spanish colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. Officially, the United States encouraged them to become selfgoverning. In reality, the United States kept control. Idealism in foreign policy co-existed with the desire to prevent European powers from acquiring territories that might enable them to project military power toward the United States. Americans also sought new markets in which they could sell their goods. By the end of the 19th century, the U.S. was beginning to emerge as a growing world power.

Discontent and Reform

By 1900, the United States had seen growth, civil war, economic prosperity, and economic hard times. Americans still believed in religious freedom. Free public education was mostly accessible. The free press continued. On the negative side, it often seemed that political power belonged to a few corrupt officials and their friends in business. In response, the idea of Progressivism was born. Progressives wanted greater democracy and justice. They wanted an honest government to reduce the power of business. Books by Upton Sinclair, Ida M. Tarbell, and Theodore Dreiser described unfair, unhealthy, and dangerous situations. These writers hoped their books would force the government to make the United States safer and better for its citizens.

President Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909) believed in Progressivism. He worked with Congress to regulate businesses that had established monopolies. He also worked hard to protect the country's natural resources. Changes continued under the next presidents, especially Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921). The Federal Reserve banking system set interest rates and controlled the money supply. The Federal Trade Commission dealt with unfair business practices. New laws improved working conditions for sailors and railway workers. Farmers got better information and easier credit. Taxes on imported goods were lowered or eliminated.

During the Progressive Era, more immigrants settled in the United States. Almost 19 million people arrived between 1890 and 1921 from Russia, Poland, Greece, Canada, Italy, Mexico, and Japan. By the 1920s, citizens worried that the immigrants might take their jobs and change the culture of the United States. Although the government created quotas to restrict immigration, it relaxed those restrictions in the 1960s, assuring that the United States would remain a nation in which many different people and cultures could forge an identity as Americans.

World War I, 1920s Prosperity, and the Great Depression

I n 1914, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey fought Britain, France, Italy, and Russia. Other nations joined the conflict, and the war reached across the Atlantic Ocean to affect the United States. The British and German navies blocked American shipping. In 1915, almost 130 Americans died when a German submarine sank the British ocean liner Lusitania. President Woodrow Wilson demanded an end to the German attacks. They stopped but started again in 1917. The United States declared war. More than 1,750,000 U.S. soldiers helped to defeat Germany and Austria-Hungary. The war officially ended on November 11, 1918, when a truce was signed at Versailles in France. President Wilson had a 14-point peace plan, including the creation of a League of Nations. He hoped the League would guarantee the peace, but in the final Treaty of Versailles, the victors of the war insisted on harsh punishment. Even the United States did not support the League of Nations. Today, most Americans accept the United States taking an active role in the world, but at that time they believed otherwise. After the war, the United States had problems with racial tension, struggling farms, and labor unrest. After Russia's revolution in 1917, Americans feared the spread of communism. This period is often known as the Red Scare.

Yet, the United States enjoyed a period of prosperity. Many families purchased their first automobile, radio, and refrigerator. They went to the movies. Women finally won the right to vote in 1920. In October 1929 the good times ended with the collapse of the stock market and an economic depression. Businesses and factories shut down. Banks failed. Farms suffered. By November 1932, 20 percent of Americans did not have jobs. That year the candidates for president debated over how to reverse the Great Depression. Herbert Hoover, the president during the collapse, lost to Franklin Roosevelt.

The New Deal and World War II

President Roosevelt believed that democracy had failed in other countries because of unemployment and insecurity. In the early 1930s, he proposed a "New Deal" to end the Great Depression. The New Deal included many programs. Bank accounts were insured. New rules applied to the stock market. Workers could form unions to protect their rights. Farmers received financial aid for certain crops. The government hired people to plant trees, clean up waterways, and fix national parks. Skilled workers helped build dams and bridges. The government provided flood control and electric power for poor areas. The Social Security system helped the poor, disabled, and elderly Many Americans were uneasy with big government, but they also wanted the government to help ordinary people. These programs helped, but they didn't solve the economic problems. The next world war would do that. The United States remained neutral while Germany, Italy, and Japan attacked other countries. Although many people wished to stay out of these conflicts, Congress voted to draft soldiers and began to strengthen the military. As Japan conquered territories in China and elsewhere in Asia, it threatened to seize raw materials used by Western industries. In response, the United States refused to sell oil to Japan. Japan received 80 percent of its oil from the United States. When the United States demanded that Japan withdraw from its conquered territories, Japan refused. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The United States declared war on Japan. Because Germany and Italy were allies of Japan, they declared war on America. American

industry focused on the war effort. Women built many of the 300,000 aircraft, 5,000 cargo ships, and 86,000 tanks while the men became soldiers. The United States fought with Britain and the Soviet Union against

the German Nazi threat in Europe. From the time that Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1939 (Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941) until the German surrender in 1945, millions of people died. Millions more were killed in the Holocaust, the Nazi regime's mass murder of Jews and other groups. Fighting continued in Asia and the Pacific Ocean even after the war ended in Europe. These battles were among the bloodiest for American forces. Japan refused to surrender even as U.S. forces approached the Japanese home islands. Some Americans thought invading Japan would cause larger numbers of U.S. and Japanese deaths. When the atomic bomb was ready, President Harry S. Truman decided to use it on two Japanese cities— Hiroshima and Nagasaki—to bring the war to an end without an invasion. World War II was finally over in August 1945. Soon the world would fear nuclear weapons far more powerful than the bombs used against Japan.

The Cold War, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam

After World War II, the United States and Great Britain had long-term disagreements with the Soviet Union over the future of Europe, most of which had been freed from Nazi rule by their joint effort. Each wanted to establish governments friendly to its own interests there. Russia had been invaded twice in the past 40 years, and the United States twice had been dragged into European wars not of its making. Each believed that its system could best ensure its security, and each believed its ideas produced the most liberty, equality, and prosperity. This period of disagreement between the United States and Russia often is called the Cold War.

After World War II, many empires fell, and many civil wars occurred. The United States wanted stability, democracy, and open trade. Because it feared that postwar economic weakness would increase the popularity of communism, the U.S. offered European nations including the Soviet Union large sums of money to repair the war damage and help their economies. The Soviet Union and the communist nations of Eastern Europe turned down the offer. By 1952, through a program to rebuild Western Europe (called the Marshall Plan), the United States had invested $13.3 billion. The Soviet military forced communist governments on nations in Central and Eastern Europe. The United States wanted to limit Soviet expansion. It demanded Soviet withdrawal from northern Iran. America supported Turkey and helped Greece fight against communist revolts. When the Soviets blockaded West Berlin, a U.S. airlift brought millions of tons of supplies to the divided city. In 1949, the communist forces of Mao Zedong took control of China. Communist North Korea invaded South Korea with the support of China and the Soviet Union in 1950. The United States got support from the United Nations, formerly the League of Nations, for military intervention, and a bloody war continued into 1953. Although an armistice eventually was signed, U.S. troops remain in South Korea to this day. In the 1960s, the United States helped South Vietnam defend itself against communist North Vietnam. All American troops withdrew by 1973. In 1975, North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam. The war cost hundreds of thousands of lives, and many Vietnamese "boat people" fled their nation's new communist rulers. Americans were divided over the war and not eager to get into other foreign conflicts.

Cultural Change 1950–1980

At home, some Americans began to have easier lives. Families grew and some moved from the cities into outlying areas where they could purchase larger homes. Not all Americans were so successful. African Americans started a movement to gain fair treatment everywhere. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that separate schools for black children were not equal to those for white children and must be integrated. President Lyndon Johnson supported the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in his peaceful fight for civil rights and voting rights for African Americans. Some black leaders, such as Malcolm X, believed in less peaceful means to reform. New laws ended segregation and guaranteed African Americans the right to vote. Many black Americans worked toward joining the more prosperous middle class. While racial prejudice was not gone, African Americans had a better chance to live freely and well. During the 1960s and 1970s, many

American women grew angry that they did not have the same opportunities as men. Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem were leaders of a movement that worked to change laws so women could compete equally with men in business and education. A proposed constitutional amendment promising equal rights for women failed when not enough states ratified it, but many new laws did grant equal rights. Native Americans fought for the government to keep its past promises. They won back control of tribal lands and water rights. They fought for assistance for housing and education. In 1992, Ben Nighthorse Campbell became the first Native American elected to the Senate. Hispanic Americans from Mexico, Central America, Puerto Rico, and Cuba were politically active too. They fought against discrimination. They were elected to local, state, and national positions. César Chávez organized a nationwide boycott of California grapes that forced growers to work with the United Farm Workers union dent Johnson began peace negotiations. Long hair, rock 'n' roll music, and illegal drugs were visible symbols of the "counter-culture" thinking of some young people during this time. Americans became more concerned about pollution. The first Earth Day was designated in 1970. The Environmental Protection Agency was created. New laws cut down on pollution. American society was changing. Slowly, the United States was embracing its multicultural population.

End of the 20th Century

The United States always has been a place where different ideas and views compete to influence law and social change. The liberal activism of the 1960s–1970s gave way to conservatism in the 1980s. Conservatives wanted limited government, strong national defense, and tax cuts. Supporters of President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989)

believe his policies helped to speed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. American politics, however, can change quickly: In 1992, Americans elected the more liberal Bill Clinton as president. Politics became more bitter than usual when the election was very close in 2000. A Supreme Court ruling about disputed ballots in Florida ensured that George W. Bush won the election over Al Gore.

President Bush expected to focus on education, the U.S. economy, and Social Security. On September 11, 2001, everything changed. Foreign terrorists crashed four passenger airplanes into the two World Trade Center towers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and a rural field in Pennsylvania. Bush declared war on worldwide terrorism and sent U.S. troops into Afghanistan and Iraq. At first, most Americans backed President Bush, but many grew uncomfortable with his policies. In 2008, Americans chose Barack Obama for the presidency. Obama became the first African American to hold the nation's highest office. He faces serious economic difficulties—the worst, many think, since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It is too early to know how the new president's administration will face the challenges of the 21st century. Regardless, Americans know that theirs will remain a land of freedom and opportunity.

Conclusion The United States has dramatically changed from its beginnings as 13 little-known colonies. Its population of 300 million people represents almost every national and ethnic group in the world. Progress continues in economics, technology, culture, and society. Americans live in an interdependent, interconnected world. The United States still is connected to the values of its early days. Among these are a belief in individual freedom and democratic government and the promise of economic opportunity and progress for all people. The work for the United States is to keep its values of freedom, democracy, and opportunity secure and vital in the 21st century.

Chronology of significant dates in American history

- 20,000- Asians and Mediterranean peoples migrate to the Americas
- 12,000 bc c.3000-2600 Mayan civilization flourishes in Central America

- c.ad 350-Anasazi build pueblo ‘apartment’ complexes in the American 1250 south-west
- 1001 Vikings establish ‘Vinland’ settlement in Newfoundland
- 1050-1250 Mississippian culture dominates the mid-western and south-eastern United States
- 1300s Aztec civilization rises in Mexico
- 1492 Columbus comes ashore in the Bahama Islands
- 1492-1542 European explorers visit and map parts of the Americas
- 1497 Europeans begin fishing in the Great Banks off the east coast of North America
- 1519-21 Hernán Cortez invadés and conquers Mexico
- 1518-1620 Smallpox and other European diseases decimate Native Americans
- 1607 Jamestown, Virginia settlement established
- 1619 First African workers arrive in Virginia
- 1622 Native Americans and Virginians wage war
- 1620-30 Pilgrims and then Puritans found New England colonies
- 1637 Native Americans and Puritans wage war
- 1624-81 New Amsterdam (New York), Maryland, New Sweden, Carolina, New Jersey and Pennsylvania are founded
- 1636, 1647 Harvard College and then public schools start in Massachusetts
- 1680-1776 The first wave of non-English immigrants arrive in the North American colonies
- 1732 Georgia, the last of the thirteen English colonies, is founded
- 1730s-1740s Religious ferment reaches a peak during the first Great Awakening
- 1757 New Yorkers riot against British policies
- 1770 British troops fire on Boston protestors
- 1775, 1776 The American Revolution begins; the Declaration of Independence
- 1783 The Treaty of Paris recognizes the independence of the United States and grants it the territory south of Canada to the Mississippi River
- 1787 A strong federal government under the US Constitution replaces the loose league of states under the Articles of Confederation
- 1789 George Washington takes office as President; federalists and anti-federalists compete in Congress
- 1792 The New York Stock Exchange opens
- 1803 The Louisiana Purchase from France adds a huge slice of the continent's mid-section to the USA; the US Supreme Court claims the power to declare laws unconstitutional
- 1808 Congress outlaws the import of African slaves
- 1810 New York passes Philadelphia in population at third US census
- 1808-13 Shawnee leaders Tecumseh and the Prophet organize the eastern tribes to resist US expansion beyond the Appalachians
- 1812-15 The USA wins no major battle in the war with Britain on American
- 1815-25 Industrialization starts in the New England and mid-Atlantic states
- 1820s-1840s A religious revival sweeps across the frontier in the second Great Awakening; social and utopian reform movements spread
- 1820s-1880s About 16 million Europeans and smaller numbers of Asians and Latinos immigrate in the second wave
- 1825 Opening the Erie Canal secures the economic power of the east
- 1831-8 Native Americans removed from the south along the Trail of Tears to ‘Indian Territory’ in Oklahoma
- 1830s The Democratic Party emerges and competes with the Whigs
- 1845-8 Conflict and war with Mexico; annexation of Texas, California and the south-west
- 1848 The first women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York

- 1850s Anti-foreign ‘nativist’, abolitionist and pro-slavery movements dominate US politics; the Republican Party emerges
- 1861-5 Civil War rages over slavery and states’ rights
- 1862 The Homestead Act grants land to people who live on and farm it for five years, spurring massive settlement of the inland west
- 1865-75Constitutional amendments and a civil-rights act are passed to secure the citizenship and rights of former slaves
- 1877 Reconstruction of the south ends; southern race laws progressively deny African Americans rights in the 1880s and 1890s
- 1869, 1882-3 Trans-continental railroads completed
- 1890T he ‘battle’ of Wounded Knee ends centuries of open warfare against Native Americans; the US census bureau announces the ‘closing of the frontier’
- 1890-1930About 45 million ‘third-wave’ immigrants arrive, mostly from southern and eastern Europe but also from Asia, Canada, Latin America and ‘old’ immigrant countries
- 1898 Anti-imperialist debate in Congress; the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War
- 1890-1920 Progressive Era reforms in social institutions, politics and government
- 1917-18 America fights with the Allies in the First World War
- 1919 The first tabloid newspaper, the New York Daily News, appears
- 1919-33 Prohibition of alcoholic beverages is the law under the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution (repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment)
- 1920 Women win the right to vote through the Nineteenth Amendment
- 1921 The Red Scare and general restriction of immigration start
- 1929 The Wall Street Crash signals the start of the Great Depression; the size of the House of Representatives is set at 435
- 1920s-1940s Hollywood's classic period of film production
- 1920s-1970s Progressively more of the Bill of Rights applies to state law and cases
- 1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected President and implements the New Deal to bring the USA out of the Great Depression
- 1937 The Supreme Court accepts New Deal powers of federal government
- 1939 Commercial television introduced at the World's Fair in New York City
- 1941 On December 7 Japan bombs the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii, and the USA enters the Second World War
- 1946 The post-war baby boom begins
- 1947 The National Security Act transforms American government for the Cold War; the Truman Doctrine sets path of US foreign policy
- 1950-3 McCarthy era ‘Red scare’ and Korean War
- 1954 Racial desegregation begins with the US Supreme Court Brown decision
- 1955 The American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) combine
- 1958 The National Defense Education Act funds scientific competition with the USSR
- 1953-74 US involvement and war in Vietnam; massive protests at home and abroad against the war in the 1960s; African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, women and gay Americans fight for civil rights
- 1963 President John F. Kennedy is assassinated; Lyndon B. Johnson assumes the presidency
- 1960s Great Society and War on Poverty social reforms; the high point of the youth ‘counter culture’ and of religious ecumenism in the USA
- 1964 The Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination in housing and jobs

- 1965 The Voting Rights Act protects voter registration, especially in the south; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides massive funding for education reform
- 1966-2004 In the continuing fourth wave of immigration, over 33 million people arrive, most from Latin America and Asia, but also from the former USSR, Africa and the Middle East
- 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy assassinated; 168 cities erupt in race riots
- 1970 More Americans live in suburbs than in cities or rural areas
- 1972 Nixon's 'new federalism' begins the return of power to the states
- 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizes limited abortion rights for women
- 1974 President Nixon resigns as a result of the Watergate scandal
- 1981 AIDS first identified in the USA
- 1970s-1980s The rise of Christian fundamentalism and conservative religious political activity
- 1986-8 Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan cooperate to bring the end of the Cold War; the Iran-Contras scandal casts a shadow over the second Reagan administration; George H. W. Bush wins the presidency
- 1991 The USA leads the Persian Gulf War to drive Iraq out of Kuwait
- 1993-2001 President Clinton presides over the longest economic boom in US history
- 1996 Devolution of policy-making power to the states occurs through the Welfare Reform Act
- 1999 Congress impeaches but does not convict President Clinton
- 2000 George W. Bush wins the presidential election after a five to four divided decision of the US Supreme Court stops Florida vote recounts and calls for uniform vote-counting procedures
- 2001 The No Child Left Behind Act sets in action the most far-reaching national educational reform since the 1960s; the World Trade Center is destroyed and the Pentagon is attacked by terrorists; the USA initiates a war on terrorism in Afghanistan and globally
- 2002 The Help America Vote Act passed to standardize voting procedures within states; USA Patriot Act and the authorization of the Department of Homeland Security transform American government for the War on Terrorism
- 2003 The US-led coalition of the willing invades and occupies Iraq
- 2004 No weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq; George W. Bush wins a second term as President and the Republicans secure larger majorities in both houses of Congress.
- 2006-8 In the longest and most expensive presidential election in US history, 10 or more men and women in each major party announce that they will try to win the Democratic or Republican nomination. By the early spring of 2008 John McCain emerges as the presumptive Republican candidate.
- 2008 On the Democratic side of the presidential contest, however, in the first seriously competitive campaign mounted by a woman, former First Lady and current New York Senator, Hillary Clinton, continues a closely fought contest with Illinois senator Barack Obama, an African American of mixed racial background whose mainstream campaign is also unprecedented. In June Obama becomes the presumptive Democratic candidate. The party conventions confirm the presumptive candidates, and by choosing Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his vice presidential running-mate, McCain picks the first female Republican nominee for vice president. On November 4 Obama wins a decisive victory, and the Democrats win clear majorities in both houses of Congress.
- 2008- With the collapse of major financial institutions, the US and then other nations enter the most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- 2009 On January 20 Barack Obama, the first African-American president of the US, takes office

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

The United States is - by size of electorate - the second largest democracy on the globe (India is the largest and Indonesia comes third) and the most powerful nation on earth, politically, economically and militarily, but its political system is in many important respects unlike any other in the world

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

To understand any country's political system, it is helpful to know something of the history of the nation and the background to the creation of the (latest) constitution. The Constitution of the United States is so different from those of other nations and because that Constitution is, in all material respects, the same document as it was over two centuries ago.

There are four main factors in the minds of the 'founding fathers' who drafted the US Constitution:

1. The United States had just fought and won a bloody War of Independence from Britain and it was determined to create a political system that was totally different from the British system in which considerable authority still resided in a hereditary King (George III at the time) or Queen and in which Parliament was increasingly assertive in the exercise of its growing powers. Therefore the new constitution deliberately spread power between the three arms of government - executive, legislature and judiciary - and ensured that each arm was able to limit the exercise of power by the other arms.
2. The United States was already a large country with problems of communications and a population of varied background and education. Therefore, for all the intentions to be a new democracy, it was seen as important to limit the influence of swings in public opinion. So the election of the president was placed in the hands of an Electoral College, rather than the subject of direct election, and the terms of office of the president and the two chambers of the legislature were all set at different lengths.

3. The United States was the creation of 13 individual states, each of which valued its traditions and powers, and so the overarching federal government was deliberately limited in its powers compared to the position of the central government in other nations. Arguably, the later Civil War was about states' rights more than it was about slavery and there is still a real tension today between the states and federal government.

4. The original 13 states of the USA were of very different size in terms of population and from the beginning there was a determination by the smaller states that political power should

not be excessively in the hands of the larger states.

THE CONSTITUTION

Unlike Britain but like most nation states, the American political system is clearly defined by basic documents. The Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the Constitution of 1789 form the foundations of the United States federal government. The Declaration of Independence establishes the United States as an independent political entity, while the Constitution creates the basic structure of the federal government.

The United States Constitution is both the longest-lasting in the world, being over two centuries old, and one of the shortest in the world, having just seven articles and 27 amendments. The first 10 amendments were all carried in 1789 - the same year as the original constitution - and are collectively known as the Bill of Rights.

At the heart of the US Constitution is the principle known as 'separation of powers', a term coined by the French political, enlightenment thinker Montesquieu. This means that power is spread between three institutions of the state - the executive (President & Cabinet), the legislature (House of Representatives & Senate) and the judiciary (Supreme Court & federal circuits) - and no one institution has too much power and no individual can be a member of more than one institution.

This principle is also known as 'checks and balances', since each of the three branches of the state has some authority to act on its own, some authority to regulate the other two branches, and has some of its own authority, in turn, regulated by the other branches.

Not only is power spread between the different branches; the members of those branches are deliberately granted by the Constitution different terms of office, which is a further brake on rapid political change. Therefore, the President has a term of four years, while members of the Senate serve for six years and members of the House of Representatives serve for two years. Members of the Supreme Court effectively serve for life.

The great benefit of this system is that power is spread and counter-balanced and the 'founding fathers' - the 55 delegates who drafted the Constitution - clearly wished to create a political system which was in sharp contrast to, and much more democratic than, the monarchical system then in force in Britain. The great weakness of the system is that it makes government slow, complicated and legalistic which is a particular disadvantage in a world - unlike that of 1776 - in which political and economic developments are fast-moving and the USA is a - indeed the - super power.

Since the Constitution is so short, so old and so difficult to change, for it to be meaningful to contemporary society, it requires interpretation by the courts and ultimately it is the Supreme Court, which determines what the Constitution means. There are very different approaches to the interpretation of the Constitution with the two main strands of thought being known as originalism and the Living Constitution.

Originalism is a principle of interpretation that tries to discover the original meaning or intent of the constitution. It is based on the principle that the judiciary is not supposed to create, amend or repeal laws (which is the realm of the legislative branch) but only to uphold them. This approach

tends to be supported by conservatives.

Living Constitution is a concept, which claims that the Constitution has a dynamic meaning and that contemporary society should be taken into account when interpreting key constitutional phrases. Instead of seeking to divine the views of the drafters of the document, it claims that they deliberately wrote the Constitution in broad terms so that it would remain flexible. This approach tends to be supported by liberals.

THE PRESIDENCY

What is the Presidency?

The President is the head of the executive branch of the federal government of the United States. He - so far, the position has always been held by a man - is both the head of state and the head of government, as well as the military commander-in-chief and chief diplomat.

The President presides over the executive branch of the government, a vast organization numbering about four million people, including one million active-duty military personnel. The so-called Hatch Act of 1939 forbids anyone in the executive branch - except the President or Vice-President - from using his or her official position to engage in political activity.

Who is eligible to become a President?

To be President, one has to:

- be a natural-born citizen of the United States
- be at least 35 years old
- have lived in the US for at least 14 years

How is a President chosen?

The President is elected for a fixed term of four years and may serve a maximum of two terms. Originally there was no constitutional limit on the number of terms that a President could serve in office and the first President George Washington set the precedent of serving simply two terms. Following the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to a record four terms, it was decided to limit terms to two and the relevant constitutional change - The 22nd Amendment - was enacted in 1951.

Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November to coincide with Congressional elections. So, the last election was held on 8 November 2016 and the next election will be held on 3 November 2020. The President is not elected directly by the voters but by an Electoral College representing each state on the basis of a combination of the number of members in the Senate (two for each state regardless of size) and the number of members in the House of Representatives (roughly proportional to population). The states with the largest number of votes are California (55), Texas (38) and New York (29). The states with the smallest number of votes - there are seven of them - have only three votes. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, has three Electoral College votes. In effect, therefore, the

Presidential election is not one election but 51. The total Electoral College vote is 538. This means that, to become President, a candidate has to win at least 270 electoral votes. The voting system awards the Electoral College votes from each state to delegates committed to vote for a certain candidate in a "winner take all" system, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska (which award their Electoral College votes according to Congressional Districts rather than for the state as a whole). In practice, most states are firmly Democrat - for instance, California and New York - or firmly Republican - for instance, Texas and Tennessee. Therefore, candidates concentrate their appearances and resources on the so-called "battleground states", those that might go to either party. The three largest battleground or swing states are Florida (29 votes), Pennsylvania (20) and Ohio (18). Others include North Carolina (15), Virginia (13), Wisconsin (10), Colorado (9), Iowa (6) and Nevada (6). This system of election means that a candidate can win the largest number of votes nationwide but fail to win the largest number of votes in the Electoral College and therefore fail to become President. Indeed, in practice, this has happened four times in US history: 1876, 1888, 2000 and 2016. On the last occasion, the losing candidate (Hillary Clinton) actually secured 2.9 million more votes than the winning candidate (Donald Trump) did. If this seems strange (at least to non-Americans), the explanation is that the 'founding fathers' who drafted the American Constitution did not wish to give too much power to the people and so devised a system that gives the ultimate power of electing the President to members of the Electoral College. The same Constitution, however, enables each state to determine how its members in the Electoral College are chosen and since the 1820s, states have chosen their electors by a direct vote of the people. The United States is the only example in the world of an indirectly elected executive president.

In the event that the Electoral College is evenly divided between two candidates or no candidate secures a majority of the votes, the constitution provides that the choice of President is made by the House of Representatives and the choice of Vice-President is made by the Senate. In the first case, the representatives of each state have to agree collectively on the allocation of a single vote. In the second case, each senator has one vote. This has actually happened twice - in 1800 and 1824. In 1800, the House of Representatives, after 35 votes in which neither Thomas Jefferson nor Aaron Burr obtained a majority, elected Jefferson on the 36th ballot. In 1824, neither John Quincy Adams nor Andrew Jackson was able to secure a majority of the votes in the Electoral College and the House of Representatives chose Adams even though he had fewer Electoral College votes and fewer votes at the ballot boxes than Jackson.

What are the powers of the President?

• € Within the executive branch, the President has broad constitutional powers to manage national affairs and the workings of the federal government.

• € The President may issue executive orders to affect internal policies. The use of executive orders has varied enormously between presidents and is often a controversial matter since, in effect, it is bypassing the Congress to achieve what would otherwise require legislation. Very few such orders were issued until the time of Abraham Lincoln (the Emancipation Declaration was such an order); use of executive orders was considerable and peaked during the terms of the seven presidents from Theodore Roosevelt to Franklin D Roosevelt (1901-1945); but, since the Second World War, use has been more modest with Democrats tending to issue them a bit more than Republicans. Barack

Obama has made very sparing use of this power, notably to reform immigration law and to tighten gun controls. Executive orders can be overturned by a succeeding President.

• €The President has the power to recommend measures to Congress and may sign or veto legislation passed by Congress. The Congress may override a presidential veto but only by a two-thirds majority in each house.

• €The President has the authority to appoint Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices. federal judges, and ambassadors but only with the'advice and consent' of the Senate which can be problematic especially when the Senate is controlled by a different political party to that of the President.

• €The President has the power to pardon criminals convicted of offences against the federal government and most controversially President Gerald Ford used this power to pardon his predecessor Richard Nixon.

• €The President has the power to make treaties with the 'advice and consent' of the Senate.

• €The President can declare war for 60 days but then has to have the approval of Congress (although it can be difficult to withdraw troops once they have been committed). Besides the formal powers of the President, there are informal means of exercising influence. Most notably, Teddy Roosvelt introduced the notion of 'the bully pulpit': the ability of the President to use his standing to influence public opinion. Over time, the changing nature of media - newspapers, radio, television, the Internet, social media - has presented a variety of instruments for the White House to use to 'push' Congress or other political players or indeed communicate directly with the electorate. Currently Donald Trump uses his personal Twitter account to issue several messages a day to (as at summer 2017) some 32.4 million followers. Add to that his POTUS Twitter account (18.8 million followers), Facebook pages (22.4 million likes and 1.7 million followers), YouTube subscribers (103,000 and 4.3 million), and Instagram (7 million followers). That is a lot of 'bullying'.

Since 1939, there has been an Executive Office of the President (EOP), which has consistently and considerably expanded in size and power. Today it consists of some 1,600 staff and costs some $300M a year.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

What is the House of Representatives?

The House of Representatives is the lower chamber in the bicameral legislature known collectively as Congress. The founders of the United States intended the House to be the politically dominant entity in the federal system and, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the House served as the primary forum for political debate. However, subsequently the Senate has been the dominant body.

Who is eligible to become a member of the House?

To be a member of the House, one has to:

- €be at least 25 years old
- €have been a US citizen for at least seven years
- €live in the state which one represents (but not the actual district)

How is a member of the House chosen?

The House consists of 435 members (set in 1911), each of whom represents a congressional district and serves for a two-year term. House seats are apportioned among the states by population according to each decennial (every 10 years) census, but every state must have at least one member and in fact, seven states have only one Representative each (Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming). Typically, a House constituency would represent around 700,000 people. Once House seats are reapportioned to the states, it is state legislatures that must redraw the physical boundaries of Congressional districts. Although the states are bound by limits established by Congress and the Supreme Court, there is scope for gerry-mandering to ensure electoral advantage for the dominant political party in the state. Such reapportionment of members of the House takes effect three years after the decennial census so, as the next census will take place in 2020, reapportionment will take effect for the 118th Congress (2023-2025).

Members of the House are elected by first-past-the-post voting in every state except Louisiana and Washington, which have run-offs if no candidate secures more than 50% of the vote. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years. Voting in congressional elections - especially to the House - is generally much lower than levels in other liberal democracies. In a year when there is a Presidential election, turnout is typically around 50%; in years when there is no Presidential election (known as mid-terms), it usually falls to around one third of the electorate. In the event that a member of the House of Representatives dies or resigns before the end of the two-year term, a special election is held to fill the vacancy.

The House has five non-voting delegates from the District of Columbia (1971), Guam (1972) the Virgin Islands (1976), American Samoa (1981) and the Northern Mariana Islands (2008) and one resident commissioner for Puerto Rico (1976), bringing the total formal membership to 441. Non-voting delegates are not allowed floor votes, but can vote in any committees to which they are assigned.

What are the powers of the House?

- €The House of Representatives is one of the two chambers that can initiate and pass legislation, although to become law any legislation has to be approved by the Senate as well.
- €Each chamber of Congress has particular exclusive powers. The House must introduce any bills for the purpose of raising revenue.
- €If the Electoral College is tied, the choice of President is made by the House of Representatives.

• €The House has a key role in any impeachment proceedings against the President or Vice-President. It lays the charges which are then passed to the Senate for a trial.

• €The House (and the Senate) have the power to declare war - although the last time this happened was in 1941. Other interesting facts about the House

• €The Speaker of the House - chosen by the majority party - has considerable power. He or she presides over the House and sets the agenda, assigns legislation to committees, and determines whether and how a bill reaches the floor of the chamber.

• €Currently the Majority Leader in the House - and therefore the Speaker - is the Republican Paul Ryan, while the Minority leader is Democrat Nancy Pelosi.

• €Much of the work of the House is done through 20 standing committees and around 100 sub- committees which perform both legislative functions (drafting Bills) and investigatory functions (holding enquiries). Most of the committees are focused on an area of government activity such as homeland security, foreign affairs, agriculture, energy, or transport, but others are more cross-cutting such as those on the budget and ethics.

• €Activity in the House of Representatives tends to be more partisan than in the Senate. One illustration of this is the so-called Hastert Rule. This Rule's introduction is widely credited to former Speaker Dennis Hastert (1999-2007); however, Newt Gingrich, who directly preceded Hastert as Speaker (1995-1999), followed the same rule. The Hastert Rule, also known as the "majority of the majority" rule, is an informal governing principle used by Republican Speakers of the House of Representatives since the mid-1990s to maintain their speakerships and limit the power of the minority party to bring bills up for a vote on the floor of the House. Under the doctrine, the Speaker of the House will not allow a floor vote on a bill unless a majority of the majority party supports the bill. The rule keeps the minority party from passing bills with the assistance of a small number of majority party members.

• €The House of Representatives has met in its chamber in the south wing of the Capitol in Washington DC since 1857.

• €Offices of members of the House are located in three buildings on the south side of the Capitol along Independence Avenue: the Cannon, Longworth, and Rayburn Buildings.

• €The House and Senate are often referred to by the media as Capitol Hill or simply the Capitol or the Hill.

THE SENATE

What is the Senate?

The Senate is the upper chamber in the bicameral legislature known collectively as Congress. The original intention of the authors of the US Constitution was that the Senate should be a regulatory

group, less politically dominant than the House. However, since the mid 19th century, the Senate has been the dominant chamber and indeed today it is perhaps the most powerful upper house of any legislative body in the world.

Who is eligible to become a member of the Senate?

To be a member of the Senate, one has to:

- €be at least 30 years old
- €have been a US citizen for at least nine years
- €live in the state which one represents

How is a member of the Senate chosen?

The Senate consists of 100 members, each of whom represents a state and serves for a six-year term (one third of the Senate stands for election every two years).

Each state has two Senators, regardless of population, and, since there are 50 states, then there are 100 senators. This equality of Senate seats between states has the effect of producing huge variations in constituency population (the two senators from Wyoming represent less than half a million electors, while the two senators from California represent 34M people) with gross over-representation of the smaller states and serious under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities.

For a long time, Senators were elected by the individual state legislatures. However, since the 17th Amendment to the Constitution in 1913, members of the Senate are elected by first-past-the-post voting in every state except Louisiana and Washington, which have run-offs. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years.

Each Senator is known as the senior or junior Senator for his or her state, based on length of service.

In the event that a member of the Senate dies or resigns before the end of the six-year term, a special election is not normally held at that time (this is the case for 46 states). Instead the Governor of the state that the Senator represented nominates someone to serve until the next set of Congressional elections when the special election is held to fill the vacancy.

What are the powers of the Senate?

- €The Senate is one of the two chambers that can initiate and pass legislation, although to become law any legislation has to be approved by the House of Representatives as well.

- €Each chamber of Congress has particular exclusive powers. The Senate must give 'advice and consent' to many important Presidential appointments including Cabinet members, Supreme Court justices. federal judges, and ambassadors.

• € The Senate has the responsibility of ratifying treaties.

• € If the Electoral College is tied, the choice of Vice-President is made by the Senate.

• € The Senate has a key role in any impeachment proceedings against the President or Vice-President. Once the House of Representatives has laid the charges, the Senate then conducts a trial on these charges. The Supreme Court Chief Justice presides over such a trial. A two-thirds majority of the Senate is required to uphold impeachment charges.

• € The Senate (and the House) have the power to declare war - although the last time this happened was in 1941. THE SUPREME COURT What is the Supreme Court? The Supreme Court is the highest court in the land. Originally it had five members but over time this number has increased. Since 1869, it has consisted of nine Justices: the Chief Justice of the United States and eight Associate Justices. They have equal weight when voting on a case and the Chief Justice has no casting vote or power to instruct colleagues. Decisions are made by a simple majority. Below the Supreme Court, there is a system of Courts of Appeal, and, below these courts, there are District Courts. Together, these three levels of courts represent the federal judicial system. Who is eligible to become a member of the Court? The Constitution does not specify qualifications for Justices such as age, education, profession, or native-born citizenship. A Justice does not have to be a lawyer or a law school graduate, but all Justices have been trained in the law. Many of the 18th and 19th century Justices studied law under a mentor because there were few law schools in the country. The last Justice to be appointed who did not attend any law school was James F. Byrnes (1941-1942). He did not graduate from high school and taught himself law, passing the bar at the age of 23. All Supreme Court judges are appointed for life.

How is a member of the Court chosen?

The Justices are nominated by the President and confirmed with the 'advice and consent' of the Senate. As federal judges, the Justices serve during "good behavior", meaning essentially that they serve for life and can be removed only by resignation or by impeachment and subsequent conviction.

Since the Supreme Court makes so many 'political' decisions and its members are appointed so rarely, the appointment of Justices by the President is often a very charged and controversial matter. Since Justices serve for life and therefore usually beyond the term of office of the appointing President, such appointment are often regarded as an important part of any particular President's legacy.

What are the powers of the Court?

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. The court deals with matters pertaining to the federal government, disputes between states, and interpretation of the Constitution. It can declare legislation or executive action made at any level of the government as unconstitutional, nullifying the law and creating precedent for future law and decisions. However, the Supreme Court can only rule on a lower court decision so it cannot take the initiative to consider

a matter.

There are three ways that a matter can come to the Supreme Court:

1. A federal authority makes a decision that is challenged as unconstitutional which goes straight to the Supreme Court which is not obliged to take it

2. A state makes a decision which someone believes is unconstitutional but the matter would have to have previously been heard by a Federal Court of Appeal (there are 11 circuits covering the 50 states)

3. There is a conflict between states that needs to be resolved (if the two or more states are in the same circuit, the matter would first have to go to the appropriate Federal Court of Appeal)

POLITICAL PARTIES & ELECTIONS

The Federalist Party was the first American political party and existed from the early 1790s to 1816. The party was run by Alexander Hamilton, who was Secretary of the Treasury and chief architect of George Washington's administration. The Federalists called for a strong national government that promoted economic growth. The Democratic-Republican Party was an American political party formed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in 1791/1793 to oppose the centralising policies of the new Federalist Party.

Although these parties were soon succeeded by others, there remains to this day the basic political cleavage between those who want to see an activist central government and those who want to limit the power of the central government - now represented broadly by the Democratic Party and the Republican Party respectively.

To an extent quite extraordinary in democratic countries, the American political system is dominated by these two political parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party (often known as the 'Grand Old Party' or GOP). These are very old and very stable parties - the Democrats go back to 1824 and the Republicans were founded in 1854.

In illustrations and promotional material, the Democratic Party is often represented as a donkey, while the Republican Party is featured as an elephant. The origin of these symbols is the political cartoonist Thomas Nast who came up with them in 1870 and 1874 respectively.

The main reason for the dominance of these two parties is that - like most other Anglo-Saxon countries (notably Britain) - the electoral system is 'first past the post' or simple majority which, combined with the large voter size of the constituencies in the House and (even more) the Senate, ensures that effectively only two parties can play. The other key factor is the huge influence of money in the American electoral system. Since effectively a candidate can spend any amount he can raise (not allowed in many other countries) and since one can buy broadcasting time (again not allowed in many countries), the US can only 'afford' two parties or, to put it another way, candidates of any other party face a formidable financial barrier to entry.

Some people tend to view the division between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the United States as the same as that between Labour and Conservative in Britain or between Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in Germany. The comparison is valid in the sense that, in each country, one political party is characterised as Centre-Left and the other as Centre-Right or, to put it another way, one party is more economically interventionist and socially radical than the other. However, the analogy has many weaknesses.

1. The Centre in American politics is considerably to the Right of the Centre in most European states including Britain, Germany, France, Italy and (even more especially) the Scandinavian countries. So, for instance, most members of the Conservative Party in the UK would support a national health service, whereas many members of the Democratic Party in the US would not.

2. As a consequence of the enormous geographical size of the United States and the different histories of the different states (exemplified by the Civil War), geography is a factor in ideological positioning to a much greater extent than in other democratic countries. For instance, a Northern Republican could be more liberal than a Southern Democract. Conversely there is a group of Democratic Congressmen that are fiscally very conservative - they are known as "blue dog" Democrats or even DINO (Democrats In Name Only).

3. In the United States, divisions over social matters - such as abortion, capital punishment, same-sex relationships and stem cell research - matter and follow party lines in a way which is not true of most European countries. In Britain, for instance, these sort of issues would be regarded as matters of personal conscience and would not feature prominently in election debates between candidates and parties.

4. In the USA, religion is a factor in politics in a way unique in western democracies. Candidates openly proclaim their faith in a manner which would be regarded as bizarre elsewhere (even in a Catholic country like France) and religious groupings - such as the Christian Coalition of America - exert a significant political influence in a manner which would be regarded as improper in most European countries (Poland is an exception here).

5. In the United States, the 'whipping system' - that is the instructions to members of the House and the Senate on how to vote - is not as strict or effective as it is in most European countries. As a consequence, members of Congress are less constrained by party affiliation and freer to act individually.

6. In the USA, political parties are much weaker institutions than they are in other democracies. Between the selection of candidates, they are less active than their counterparts in other countries and, during elections, they are less influential in campaigning, with individual politicians and their campaigns having much more influence.

7. The cost of elections is much greater in the US than in other democracies which has the effects of limiting the range of candidates, increasing the influence of corporate interests and pressure groups, and enhancing the position of the incumbent office holder (especially in

the winning of primaries). As long ago as 1895, the Chairman of the Republican National Committee Mark Hanna stated: "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can't remember what the second one is."

8. Whereas in other countries, voters shape the policies and select the candidates of a party by joining it, in the USA voters register as a supporter of one of the major parties and then vote in primary elections to determine who should be the party's candidate in the 'real' election.

Two interesting features of American political elections are low turnout and the importance of incumbency.

Traditionally turnout in US congressional elections is much lower than in other liberal democracies especially those of Western Europe. When there is a presidential election, turnout is only about half; when there is no presidential election, turnout is merely about one third. The exception was the elections of 2008: the excitement of the candidacy of Barack Obama led to an unusually high turnout of 63%, the highest since 1960 (the election of John F Kennedy).

While Congress as an institution is held in popular contempt, voters like their member of Congress and indeed there is a phenomenon known as 'sophomore surge' whereby incumbents tend to increase their share of the vote when they seek re-election. More generally most incumbents win re-election for several reasons: they allocate time and resources to waging a permanent re-election campaign; they can win "earmarks" which are appropriations of government spending for projects in the constituency; and they find it easier than challengers to raise money for election campaigns.

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM

Understanding the federal nature of the United States is critical to appreciating the complexities of the American political system.

First, some 240 years ago, there were were 13 autonomous states who, following the War of Independence against the British, created a system of government in which the various states somewhat reluctantly ceded power to the federal government. Around a century later, the respective authority of the federal government and the individual states was an issue at the heart of the Civil War when there was a bloody conflict over who had the right to determine whether slavery was or was not permissable. With the exception of Switzerland, no other Western democracy diffuses power to the same degree as America.

Each state has an executive, a legislature and a judiciary.

The head of the executive is the Governor who is directly elected. As with the President at federal level, state Governors can issue Executive Orders.

The legislature consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives (the exception is the state of Nebraska which has a unicameral system).

The judiciary consists of a state system of courts.

One other oddity of the American party system is that, whereas in most countries of the world the colour red is associated with the Left-wing party and the colour blue with the Right-wing party, in the United States the reverse is the case. So the 'blue states' are those traditionally won by the Democrats, while the 'red states' are those normally controlled by the Republicans.

Most political systems are created top-down. A national system of government is constructed and a certain amount of power is released to lower levels of government. The unique history of the United States means that, in this case, the political system was created bottom-up. So today the powers of the federal government remain strictly limited by the Constitution - the critical Tenth Amendment of 1791 - which leaves a great deal of authority to the individual states. The 50 states are divided into counties (parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska). Each county has its court.

Althought the Constitution prescribes precisely when Presidential and Congressional elections will be held, the dates and times of state and local elections are determined by state governments. Therefore there is a plethora of elections in the United States and, at almost all times, an election is being held somewhere in the country. State and local elections, like federal elections, use the 'first past the post' system of election.

In fact, most states choose to elect the governor and legislature when Congressional elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years. Exceptions are the states of Virginia and New Jersey which hold their governor and legislature elections in odd numbered years (known as "off-year elections"). This means that these states provide the first electoral indication of how voters view the performance of a newly-elected President and/or Congress.

The debate about federalism in the US is far from over. There are those who argue for a stronger role for the federal government and there are advocates of locating more power at the state level. The recent rise of the electorally-successful Tea Party movement owes a good deal to the view that the federal government has become too dominant, too intrusive and too profligate.

Meanwhile many states - especially those west of the Rockies - have what has been called "the fourth arm of government": this is the ballot or referendum initiative. This enables a policy question to be put to the electorate as a result of the collection of a certain number of signatures or the decision of the state legislation. Over the last century, some 3,000 such initiatives have been conducted - in some cases (such as California) with profound results.

In truth, for all its special features, the American political system needs to be seen as one among many models of democracy with its own strengths and weaknesses that need to be assessed in comparison to those of other democracies.

CONCLUSION

Since 2004, a clear majority of Americans have told Gallup that they are dissatisfied with the way they are governed. The numbers of those has several times climbed above 80% which is higher than at the time of the Watergate scandal. This disillusionment is reflected in the falling number of Americans who even bother to vote. In "The World In 2015", John Micklethwait, editor-in-chief of "The Economist", wrote: "In America, there is nothing particularly democratic about the ascent

of money politics, the arcane blocking procedures of Congress or the gerrymandering of district boundaries. Indeed they are all reminiscent of the rotten boroughs of 18th century England that infuriated the Founding Fathers."

The debate about the effectiveness of the US political system is a part of the wider debate about whether or not the United States is in relative decline on the world stage. In his book "Time To Start Thinking: America And The Spectre Of Decline", Edward Luce writes: "Sometimes it seems Americans are engaged in some kind of collusion in which voters pretend to elect their lawmakers and lawmakers pretend to govern. This, in some ways, is America's core problem: the more America postpones any coherent response to the onset of relative decline, the more difficult the politics are likely to get."

These issues have been highlighted by the recent election as US President of Donald Trump, someone who ran for election as the anti-establishment candidate who was going to"drain the swamp", who has never previously held political office, and who is governing in a most unconventional style. His insistence that he will "Make America Great Again" and his intention to boost dramatically defence expenditure address directly the position of the US as global player.

ISSUES IN AMERICAN CULTURE: DIVERSITY AND CONFLICT

Determining historical factors

1. The country's treatment of Native Americans and African Americans over time;

2. The early colonial settlement of the nation by Europeans from the late 15th century and the establishment of specific social values, religious faiths and institutional structures;

3. The War for Independence from Britain (1775-83);

3. The westward expansion of the new nation;

4. The effects of large-scale immigration into the country, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries;

5. The **Civil War** to end slavery(1861-5);

6. The **principles of the nation** (human dignity and rights to freedom, justice and opportunity) contained in the **Declaration of Independence** (1776) and the US **Constitution** (1787-9);

7. Ideologies of **egalitarianism**, **individualism** and **utopianism**;

8. The development of **corporate capitalism** with its management and **business philosophies**

9. **American attitudes towards the rest of the world**, particularly during the two world wars, the Cold War period and the early twenty-first century;

10. The development of the **USA as a dominant economic, military and cultural force** since the nineteenth century;

11. The claim that the **USA is the prime driver** of contemporary **globalization**

5. The claim that the **USA itself is subject to globalizing forces** beyond its control

Four distinctive features of US culture

1. A diverse ethnic culture

2. A pluralist religious culture

3. An active political-legal culture

4. A competitive, consumerist economic culture

1. **A Multi-ethnic Culture**

- Indigenous Native-American civilizations,
- European colonial settlement,
- African-American slavery, and
- Later waves of immigration.

A nation of immigrants

- British and other European origin settlers (50% of the population in 1776) established **a white, mainly Anglo-American, Protestant dominant culture** which produced a mainstream American identity.
- Today, **the biggest minority** immigrant population is **Latino.** It is found in southern states such as Florida, Texas, New Mexico and California,
- Next to it is **the African-American** community is the second largest minority
- **White population is very likely to decrease** in coming years due to immigration, higher birth rates among ethnic minorities, intermingling of races and an ageing white population with lower birth rates.

US Ethnic Make-up (2017)

- European white 60.7% (English 12.6%, Irish 10.6%, Italian 5.5%, ….)
- Hispanic 18.1% (Mexican 10.9%, …)
- African American 12.5%
- Asian and Passific Islander 5.8%
- American Indian/Alaskan 1%
- Other 2%

Challenges of Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- Conflicts and racial tensions between settled groups, Native Americans, African Americans and immigrants, erupting sometimes into violence.
- The rise of nativism (discrimination towards others by the majority indigenous population) and racism in many areas of American life.
- To the present day, racial and ethnic divisions still continue to disfigure American society in both covert and overt forms,

2. **A Multi-religious Culture**
   - Some early settlers escaped religious persecution in their homelands and hoped to establish

communities.
- Others brought established native denominations with them.
- Many later immigrants also often strongly identified with their home faiths and preserved them in the US.
- Although religiosity is relatively higher in the US than in other western countries, religion remains a private matter.
- There is still debate whether religion is completely detached from public life (in politics, economy, and social practice)

US Religious Make-up (Galup 2017)

- Protestant 48.5%
- Catholic 22.7%
- Mormon 1.8%
- Jewish 2.1%
- Muslim 0.8%
- Other 2.9%
- Not religious 21.3%

3. **A Political-Legal Culture**

theoretically based on:

- Individualism,
- Constitutionalism and
- Respect for the law
- Egalitarianism,
- Patriotism

4. **An Economic and Consumer Culture**

- Americans generally have a belief in individualism and a free-enterprise system.
- The people historically have had to fight for their economic and social survival, a process which can result in exploitation of others, excesses and a Darwinian 'survival of the fittest' mentality.
- The competitive nature of American life creates considerable disparities of wealth, social inequalities and varying life opportunities.
- In 2008, for example, 28 million Americans were dependent upon government food stamps (card debits) for their daily needs and 48 million could not afford health care insurance.

The Impacts of the 4 Cultures on American National Identity

- The ethnic, religious, political-legal and economic cultures affect what it means to be American ('Americanness') and what constitutes national identity.
- How to balance a need for civic unity against the reality of ethnic diversity?
- Conservativists initially supported 'Americanization', or the assimilation of different ethnic groups into a shared, Anglo-American-based identity or 'melting pot'.
- Liberalists maintained that a multicultural, multi-ethnic society should be the ultimate national goal.
- Americanization was gradually seen (by liberals) as pressurizing immigrants to assimilate into an Americanized dominant culture, with a resulting loss of their ethnic identity.
- On the other hand, emphases on ethnicity and difference arguably weaken the possibility of

achieving a set of values that could represent a distinctive 'American Way of Life'.

Debate on American Values

- Conservatives assert traditional American values, and many are opposed to liberal policies on abortion, gun control, school education, same-sex marriage, religion, the death penalty and immigration.
- Such divisions in opinion have led critics to argue that the USA should more realistically be regarded ethnically, culturally and ideologically as a 'mosaic' or a 'salad bowl' rather than a 'melting pot'.
- Total social assimilation proved to be both undesirable and impossible.
- But this can lead to hybrid cultural identities on the one hand and the breakdown of strong national links on the other.

Principal Values of Americanness

- 'Americanness' is based on elements such as:
- self-reliance, individualism, independence, utopianism, liberty, egalitarianism, freedom, opportunity, democracy, anti-statism (distrust of government), populism (grass-roots activism), a sense of destiny, respect for the law, and pragmatism
- 'American traits' are features such as restlessness, escape from restraints, change, action, mobility, quests for new experiences, self-improvement and a belief in potential
- American refuse to accept a fixed fate or settled location, but seek new jobs, new horizons and new beginnings in a hunt for self-fulfillment and self-definition

Conclusion

- One cannot define a single set of traits which are shared by all Americans.
- Diversity, individual differences and departures from consensual norms limit possibilities and can result in contradictions or tensions rather than unified beliefs.
- Yet, the four major cultures and various subcultures have produced a composite Americanness and distinctive US image, which are recognized internationally and have influenced a globalized culture.
- Despite severe tensions in the sociocultural fabric, The US stands out as a global superpower