

SECTION 5 Towards a Postindustrial Society: Living in a Global Age



THE BIG IDEA

Since the end of World War II, the rapid pace of change has turned the world into a "global village." Today

- technology and growing corporations have helped to increase job growth.
- most people have longer life expectancies, despite diseases such as AIDS.
- population growth and environmental concerns challenge the United States as well as other countries.

KEY TERMS

alternative energy sources
Internet
multinational corporations
Earth Day

SECTION OVERVIEW

The United States began as a nation of farmers. Today it is one of the leading economic and political powers in the world. Because of the advanced technology of the postindustrial age, the world has become what some call a "global village." Because of increased interdependence, major events in one part of the world have an impact upon the rest of the world.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

As you review this section, take special note of the following key themes and concepts:

Change What effects did technological change have on American society?

Places and Regions How did the United States play a unique role in helping resolve conflicts in other regions of the world?

Environment How are concerns about the environment being addressed by activist groups?

Interdependence How has the emergence of a global economy strengthened the interdependence of nations?

RAPID PACE OF CHANGE

Every generation since the Civil War has experienced the effects of the Industrial Revolution. However, the pace of technological change has picked up dramatically since World War II. Today, the United States is moving into a postindustrial age. That is, the American economy no longer rests on the development of new factories and heavy industries, such as the production of steel or coal. Instead, because of technological changes, service-related industries now occupy a larger sector of the economy.

Technology—What Is It?

Technology is the application of scientific knowledge to commerce and industry. To appreciate the effect of technological change, think of the following situations out of the past.

- George Washington, the nation's first President, never called a member of Congress on the telephone, never rode in a limousine, and never saw his photograph in a newspaper.
- Abraham Lincoln, President during the Civil War, never called generals on the telephone and never listened to battle reports on the radio.
- Franklin Roosevelt, President during World War II, never had a speech transmitted by satellite to Europe and never watched a program on television.
- John F. Kennedy, President in the early 1960s, never wrote a speech on a computer and never ate a snack heated up in a microwave.
- All recent Presidents have supported the American space program, but none has yet traveled into space. It is difficult even to imagine the changes that await future Presidents.

The Post-World War II Era

Since the end of World War II, a number of forces have had a great impact upon the economy and upon the lifestyles of Americans.

SCARCE ENERGY SOURCES Scarce oil supplies have led scientists to research **alternative energy sources**, such as solar power. Nuclear power is being used in some parts of the world. However, the hazards associated with nuclear energy, such as the storage of nuclear waste, have created controversy. The accident at a nuclear power plant at Chernobyl, Ukraine, in 1986 has increased debate even more.

USE OF NEW MATERIALS Inventions since World War II have replaced wood and steel in many jobs with synthetics, such as plastic. In some cases, these new materials are lighter and more durable than traditional materials.

SPREAD OF COMPUTERS The prevalent use of computers in American homes and businesses since the 1980s has revolutionized record keeping and the storage of information. Advocates of computers praise their ability to process and store large volumes of information. Critics charge that computers have increased the chances for the invasion of privacy as people access private records without permission, particularly as **Internet** use becomes increasingly widespread.

SECURITY CONCERNS The global increase in acts of terrorism, especially the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade towers, made some Americans fear that they were not safe. In response, the government took a number of measures. Airport security was tightened, as was security at bridges, tunnels, nuclear power plants, courthouses, and other vulnerable places. The Patriot Act of 2001 gave sweeping new powers to government agencies. To coordinate federal government efforts, President Bush created a new Cabinet-level department, Homeland Security. Its job was to coordinate the efforts of more than 40 federal agencies fighting terror. These agencies include the CIA, FBI, and the National Guard.

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Change

The United States faced a rapid pace of change during the Industrial Revolution, but that pace increased dramatically after World War II.

- How did the American economy change after World War II?

PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

How has the United States economy been influenced by each of the following since the end of World War II?

- new energy sources
- new job opportunities
- computers

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Change

Changes in technology frequently have an impact on the availability of certain jobs. For example, early telephones did not have a dial or push buttons to make a phone call directly. Instead, a caller would have to place a call through an operator, who made the phone connections at a switchboard. Once technology improved and direct dialing became commonly available, the need for telephone operators decreased.

- In the 1990s and early 2000s, what impact did technological improvements have on agricultural job opportunities?



PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

How have Americans' lifestyles been influenced by each of the following since the end of World War II?

- average family size
- longer life spans
- expansion of public education

In 2002 President Bush and Congress created the independent, bipartisan National Commission on Terrorist Attacks on the United States. After extensive hearings by the Commission it released in the summer of 2004 a detailed public report. One of its major recommendations was to unify the United States Intelligence community under the leadership of a new National Intelligence Director. President Bush named John Negroponte, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq to this position in February 2005. The Commission made a number of other recommendations to improve the security of the United States.

GROWTH OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS Since the 1800s, the organization of American businesses has changed from single ownership and partnerships to corporations. In the post-World War II period, many corporations have become **multinational corporations**, or businesses with bases of operation in many nations.

INCREASED JOB OPPORTUNITIES The greatest increases in jobs in the early 2000s promise to be in the service fields. The largest declines will occur in agricultural employment. Technological advances have made it possible for fewer farmers to produce more food, which will continue to reduce the need for agricultural labor.

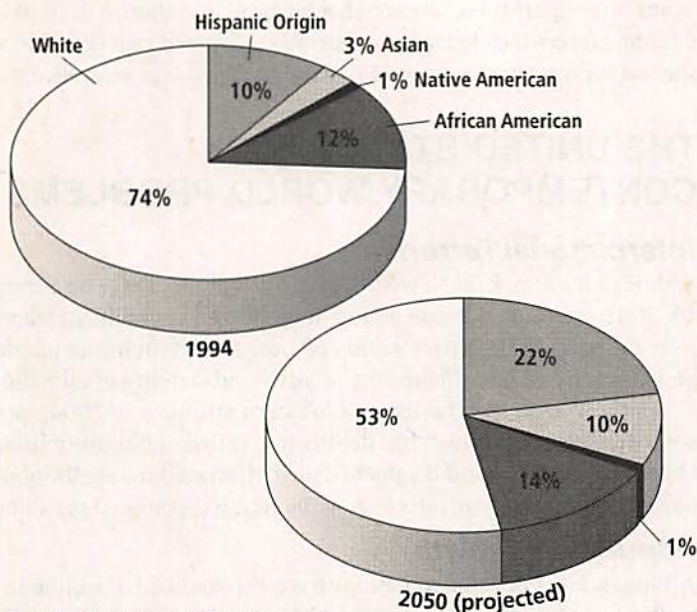
NEW LIFESTYLES AND LONGER LIFE SPANS American attitudes toward family size and divorce have changed since the 1950s. Average family size has declined. After years of expansion, many school districts throughout the nation, including New York's, experienced declining school enrollments in the 1980s. Divorce rates first rose and then remained constant. This created the largest number of single-parent households in the nation's history. At the same time, health-care improvements resulting from new technologies, such as laser surgery and organ transplants, have increased average life spans. This has increased the number of older Americans, who in recent years have organized to protect their rights and improve their lives.

EXPANSION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION Access to free public education has helped many Americans improve their standard of living. As individuals complete higher levels of education, they have the chance to secure better-paying jobs and more desirable housing. Thus, education helps further social mobility.

INCREASINGLY DIVERSE POPULATION If current trends continue, it is projected that the population of the United States will grow increasingly diverse over the next half century. More of the newest immigrants to the United States come from Asian and Latin American countries, compared with earlier waves of immigration that came from Europe.

DEALING WITH THE AIDS CRISIS Since the 1980s, medical researchers have gathered more information about AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Even so, AIDS has spread through some sectors of the American population at an alarming rate. Without a known

The Changing Ethnic Composition of the United States



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States

ANALYZING DOCUMENTS

Use the chart at left to answer the following questions.

- Between 1994 and 2050, which group of Americans is expected to grow most rapidly?
- Which group of Americans is expected to be a smaller proportion of the U.S. population?
- Which group is expected to remain the same proportion of the overall population?

cure, scientists and public health officials have tried to increase public awareness and prevention of the disease. Many critics have condemned the federal government for not acting faster to find a cure for AIDS.

HELPING THE HOMELESS Not everyone enjoyed the prosperity of the post-World War II years. President Johnson's Great Society programs in the 1960s tried to reduce poverty in the United States. However, cuts in social programs during the 1980s caused a significant rise in the number of Americans living below the poverty line. Local communities and private charitable organizations tried to provide relief, but the issue of homelessness has remained a troubling issue.

GUN CONTROL The issue of gun control became hotly debated in the late 1990s. Urban violence, as well as a number of highly publicized school shootings, caused millions of Americans to reconsider attitudes toward and the availability of guns in this nation. In May 2000, thousands of American mothers marched in the Million Mom March in Washington, D.C., to focus attention on the need to curb gun violence.

The National Rifle Association continues to be one of the strongest lobbyist groups and remains very vocal about the rights of gun owners. This topic will continue to be a controversial one for years to come.

RIGHT TO LIFE ISSUES The United States continues to be a very divided society on the topics of abortion and the right to life/the right to die. In March 2005 President Bush and the Congress took unprecedented actions by involving themselves in the case of Terri Schiavo. She

was a terminally ill Florida woman whose right to die had been debated in the Florida courts for many years. Ultimately the decisions of the Florida courts were upheld. This allowed her husband to authorize the removal of a feeding tube which led to her death after a fourteen year period in which she had been medically determined to be in a persistent vegetative state.

THE UNITED STATES AND CONTEMPORARY WORLD PROBLEMS

International Terrorism

Although the attack on New York and Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, was aimed at one nation, it mobilized government leaders all over the world. The attacks showed how terrorism has expanded its global reach and has affected the security and stability of all nations.

As the War in Iraq fueled anti Western attitudes in 2004, terrorist activities caused almost 200 deaths in a railroad bombing in Spain. Other areas of the world heightened their efforts at limiting the ability of terrorist groups to share information, money, weapons and personnel.

Population Growth

Although most developed nations have experienced a decline in their birthrates, the developing nations have an overpopulation problem. Millions of people suffer from malnutrition, living only a marginal existence. Foreign aid from the United States has become of vital economic importance in combating world hunger.

Environmental Concerns

Because of increased interdependence, an environmental problem in one nation frequently raises global concerns. An example includes the destruction of the Brazilian tropical rain forests.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS A number of groups have organized to reduce and clean up pollution on the land, in the water, and in the air. Other activist groups work to save endangered species of animals.

Recycling efforts have been organized to reuse paper, glass, plastic, and aluminum. Community organizers are opposing plans to convert vacant lands into dumpsites. Communities are studying the effects of industrial pollution on the groundwater that people drink. In response to public pressure, the federal government has enacted laws requiring automobile manufacturers to put antipollution devices on their cars. Since the first **Earth Day** celebration in 1970, the American people, along with the rest of the world, have begun to realize their obligation to protect the environment for future generations.

NATURAL DISASTERS In December 2006 a tsunami, a giant destructive wave, caused upwards of 200,000 deaths and left as many as 5,000,000 homeless in parts of South East Asia, the Indian subcontinent and East Africa. It was the worst natural disaster in modern history and the international community joined together in a massive

KEY THEMES AND CONCEPTS

Interdependence

The concept of a global community means that the United States can not isolate itself from problems in other countries. Population growth in developing nations and environmental concerns in nations with essential ecosystems are two issues that affect the entire world.

- Why should the destruction of tropical rain forests be a concern to people in other nations, including the United States?

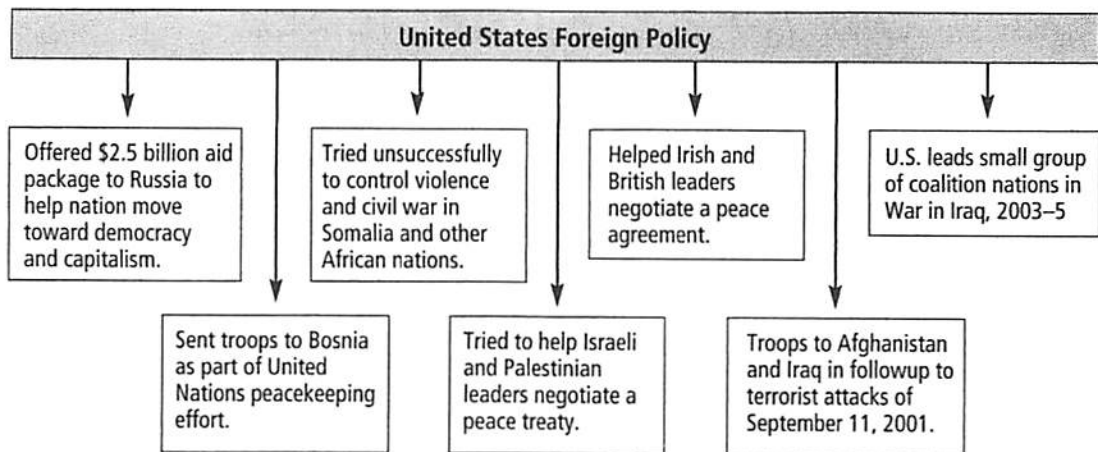
READING STRATEGY

Organizing Information

List three ways that environmental activists have raised public awareness about environmental issues.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Foreign Policy After the Cold War



outpouring of financial aid. President Bush committed the United States to \$350 million in aid and millions more were donated by Americans directly to private relief agencies. The President also requested his father, former President George H.W. Bush and former President Bill Clinton to work together to draw attention to the extent of disaster damage in the stricken areas, to visit the area and to solicit private funds to help in the immediate and long term needs of the people of the area.

Emerging Power Relationships

In the decades after World War II, a variety of power relationships emerged among nations. These relationships are broad categories, and there are exceptions to each.

- **East vs. West** During the cold war, tensions arose between the Soviet-dominated nations of Eastern Europe and the democratic nations of Western Europe and the United States. After the cold war, the relationship shifted from one based on ideology (or belief), to one based on economics and politics, as many of the nations of Eastern Europe began to enjoy some of the benefits of democracy and capitalism.
- **North vs. South** This relationship expressed the difference in power between the wealthier, industrialized nations of North America and Europe and many of the poorer, less industrialized nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- **Developed vs. developing (or haves vs. have-nots)** As the industrialized (or developed) nations continued to make great strides ahead because of improvements in technology, agriculture, and medicine, the gap widened between these developed countries and the developing nations that still lacked many basic amenities. Basic economic differences can be expected to cause problems in the decades ahead as developing nations struggle to raise their standards of living while resisting dependence upon the developed nations.

READING STRATEGY

Problem Solving

Why do you think the gap between rich and poor nations is widening?