

\*

## 1. **Bush, Sr.:**

\*- The Election of 1988: George H. W. Bush, Reagan's VP and successor, was not a popular man with hard conservatives. But his strengths were like that of LBJ's, having been in politics for 30yrs and having a veteran knowledge of how gov worked. In the primaries Bush faced Pat Robertson, a super-conservative televangelist who was popular. Bush was like Nixon and Ford, more moderate, but he chose Dan Quayle as his running mate, he embodied this new power of the religious right in politics. Quayle was relatively unknown, but he had "family values". Bush won due to his loyalty to Reagan. Literal successor.

- On the other side, Jesse Jackson became the first AA nomination to be doing well in the primaries, carried 11 states, but ultimately lost to the charismatic Michael Dukakis. Dukakis could not win back the New Deal coalition. He failed to get back: southern whites; Midwestern Catholics; m-c suburbanites. Bush smear campaign painted the Northeastern as a "card-carrying liberal" in reference to Hoover's "card-carrying communist". From now on, every four yrs, the now polarized America would fight this battle of progressives vs conservatives.

- The Reagan yrs had redefined the American political landscape. Shifted the political center away from the New Deal and Great Society liberal assumptions that gov. could be a positive force for citizens' lives. To survive, a new breed of Dems arose: socially liberal but fiscally conservative. The most successful, and then controversial, of these was William Jefferson Clinton, Governor of Arkansas. Bill Clinton was compassionate and magnetic in personality, even bear-hugging voters while campaigning.

## 2. **The Clinton Administration as Aberration:**

\*- Election of 1992: still, Bush-Sr was very pop., esp. after the successful Persian Gulf War, and ppl today often forget that he assumed to have a second term. But a libertarian third-party candidate, Texan Ross Perot, came into the picture. Perot, a Texan businessman, focused entirely on how the deficit had ballooned under Bush-Sr (fallout from Reagan spending). Old Guard GOP was facing upstarts from both the religious right and the anti-statism of libertarians. Perot berated Bush-Sr's spending and took 19% of the pop. vote, demonstrating as early as 1992. Clinton only won 43% of pop. vote and Bush had less than 38%. Teddy had split the GOP in 1912 letting Wilson in.

\*- Clinton Admin on Society: liberal disappointment: socially, he reneged on promise to lift the ban on gays in the military (went with "Don't ask, Don't Tell" policy of allowing closet homosexuals). In terms of health, his Admin failed to push thru an American form of universal healthcare. On that issue, he deferred to his First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, an Arkansas power-lawyer and politician. Hillary's problem, on healthcare, was that she essentially pushed too quickly and without outside voices; almost unilaterally declaring an entirely new relationship bw the gov and the citizenry.

- American aversion to healthcare: proponents claim healthcare is a public investment and uplifts the entire society. The problem with healthcare is healthcare products/services have always been expensive and the system seems perpetually underfunded, despite that it is the lion's share of Canadian taxation. In the American private system, the cost of healthcare is also expensive and health debts are rapidly growing in the US. Moreover, Americans don't want the fed. gov. to have such an intimate relationship with them; and what constitutes "medicine" / "health" is subjective.

\*- Hillary appreciated this American reticence but thought the time had come. Her aggressive push triggered a right-wing reaction, embodied by Newton Leroy Gingrich. Newt was born in Penn. and taught history and geography at U of West Georgia in the 70s before entering politics. By the 1994 midterm elections, Newt was a seasoned politician, an old cold warrior.

- 1993: Newt led a powerful backlash against the Clinton Admin's push for healthcare, which the Clinton's assumed they had a mandate for by virtue of winning the election. But 57% had voted conservative or libertarian, both adverse to 'socialized healthcare'.

\*- Clinton Admin on Economics: as opposed to his societal ineffectiveness, Clinton was economically blessed by two streams that seemed to only go upwards: computers and deregulation. Clinton spent a lot of capital to re-raise taxes on wealthy, and that brought back some of the revenue loss of the Reagan yrs. Deregulated the financial industries which for thousands of yrs were meant to be financially prudent, slow, conservative, acting in ppl's interests. Now, they were aggressively drove a style of raw capitalism that made more money, bc it was risking more money. The money supply opened up and loans and cash flowed. Regular folks found themselves with the ability to purchase homes, home accessories, cars, and now electronics.

\*- The new Computer Revolution rapidly expanded the economy and everyone seemed to benefit. But the computer rev. was temporary and hide three greater problems:

1. deregulating the financial sector triggered predatory banking, speculation in money, and almost collapsed the entire economy 15yrs later.
2. the growing unbalanced trade deficit was not dealt w. and is still a problem today.  
Exports: \$43b in 1970 to \$178b in 2000  
Imports: \$40b in 1970 to \$519b in 2000
3. free-trade is a liberal concept stemming from the 1800s. The opposite is tariffs. By the time Reagan's conservatives had saturated positions of economic importance, there was a war on tariffs, which while they do slow trade historically they are important mechanism of social control: for instance, maintaining cultural standards. The drive for free-trade made it legally difficult for nations to exclude another country's product/service due to unacceptable standards (say in how that product was made, slave labor, environmental damage, shoddier materials, etc). The result was out-sourcing and this reflected sophisticated globalization.

- Jobs flowed out of North America bc of it's higher standard of living when compared to newly emergent regions that were either decolonizing and or industrializing, and took on the same work for much lower wages. In the 1800s, tariffs would have balanced this. GM could make a car in Mexico, but they would face such a high tariff that it was not worth it, and thus workers in the auto industry maintained their cultural standards.

- Regular North Americans knew something was off about outsourcing, but they were provided with cheaper products at new gigantic box stores, which thrived until 2007/8.

\*- Class Divergence: In the 1950s/60s, most American families relied on single-incomes. Through the 70s to 90s this changed to a double-income support, instead of lowering lifestyle. From 1973 to 1989, median family income rose less than 2% when adjusted for inflation (\$33,656 a year to \$34,213), even though most families now have two incomes. While the top 40% of US society enjoyed a real increase, the bottom 60% was experiencing a real decline. The poorest 20% of the population experienced a drop of 15% in the 1980s and 1990s; after WWII they had their incomes double. Over all, in the last three decades of the 20th Century, poverty stopped declining.

\*- Political Clinton: Clinton's victory was a bit of an aberration, a break in the new anti-state trend of America's New Right. In the 1994 midterm elections, Newt Gingrich mobilized an attack to end the "corrupt liberal welfare state" and GOP took both House and Senate in greater numbers than Reagan or BushSr. had, and so Clinton was essentially a liberal figure-head to an increasingly conservative nation.

- Clinton was still popular with the ppl, and just barely won the election of 1996 by 0.1% of the pop vote. Perot took 8.4%, Bob Dole took 40.7% which would have equaled 49.1% and Clinton got 49.2%. Can't blame Perot. Represents the perfect polarization.

- However, scandal plagued Clinton's second term. In 1994 a special federal prosecutor named Kenneth Starr was investigating if Clinton had fraudulent land dealings back when he was attorney gen. of Arkansas (late-70s, even before he was Gov.). It was then that Starr learned that Bill had had a recent sexual relationship w. a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky (wealthy Californian). Other Presidents had been adulterous and dodged the issue. Clinton was pressed particularly hard. However, his mistake was similar to Nixon's. The attempt to cover up the issue produced more blow-back than the actual act. In fact, he lied under oath and only his loveable personality negated what could have easily been an impeachment if the public hated him.

- American society was beleaguered by political polarization, cultural wars, division over foreign policy and security at home, and then on top of that, the near-breaking of their basic economy. All this compounded into a decade of pain. Not a sharp pain, but a lingering, dull, constantly throbbing pain.

\*- Election of 2000: Polarization produced competing notions of governance: Al Gore, Vice President, more liberal than Clinton and focused on environmentalism, appeared wooden to the American ppl. George Bush, Jr. born-again evangelical (from the elites in the Northeast) w. folksy persona developed while Governor of Texas. Ralph Nadar for consumer protection and Patrick Buchanan for conservative Reform Party.

- Bush pushed for "ownership society" (ppl have more control over their own money) and "compassionate conservatism" (rely on private industry, charities, and religious institutions, and not government, to provide community services). However, his tenure was instantly taken over by the war on terror, and then at the end, the Great Recession. So the early anti-tax focused Bush is often forgotten, but both his reticence to tax and esp to tax two wars contributed the Great Recession.

\*- Election of 2004: Bush handily won the 2004 election (286 to Kerry's 252--a Vietnam War vet). Then, in 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. The gov. was excessively slow to respond and the city turned virtually lawless for many days. Constantly too there was the creeping, on-going deaths and maiming of US troops in Iraq, and the public was not happy. All these things caused Bush's popularity to plummet. By the presidential campaigning of 2008, both parties had detached from the Bush Admin's policies.

\*\*