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# The Structural Foundations of American Government and Politics

America, with the same voice which spoke herself into existence as a nation, proclaimed to mankind the inextinguishable rights of human nature, and the only lawful foundations of government.

John Quincy Adams



# Structural Influences on American Politics

- Structural factors greatly influence political outcomes
- Currently, four structural factors are especially important:
  - changes in the demographics of the American population
  - rapid technological change
  - the emergence of the US as the world's single superpower
  - the threat of terrorism



# America's Population: Growing Diversity

- Immigration
  - continued acceleration since 1990s
  - ...but immigration rate (net effect of immigration and emigration on an area's population, expressed as an increase or decrease per 1,000 population of the area in a given year) remains lower than it has been throughout most of our history

IMMIGRATION  
NATION

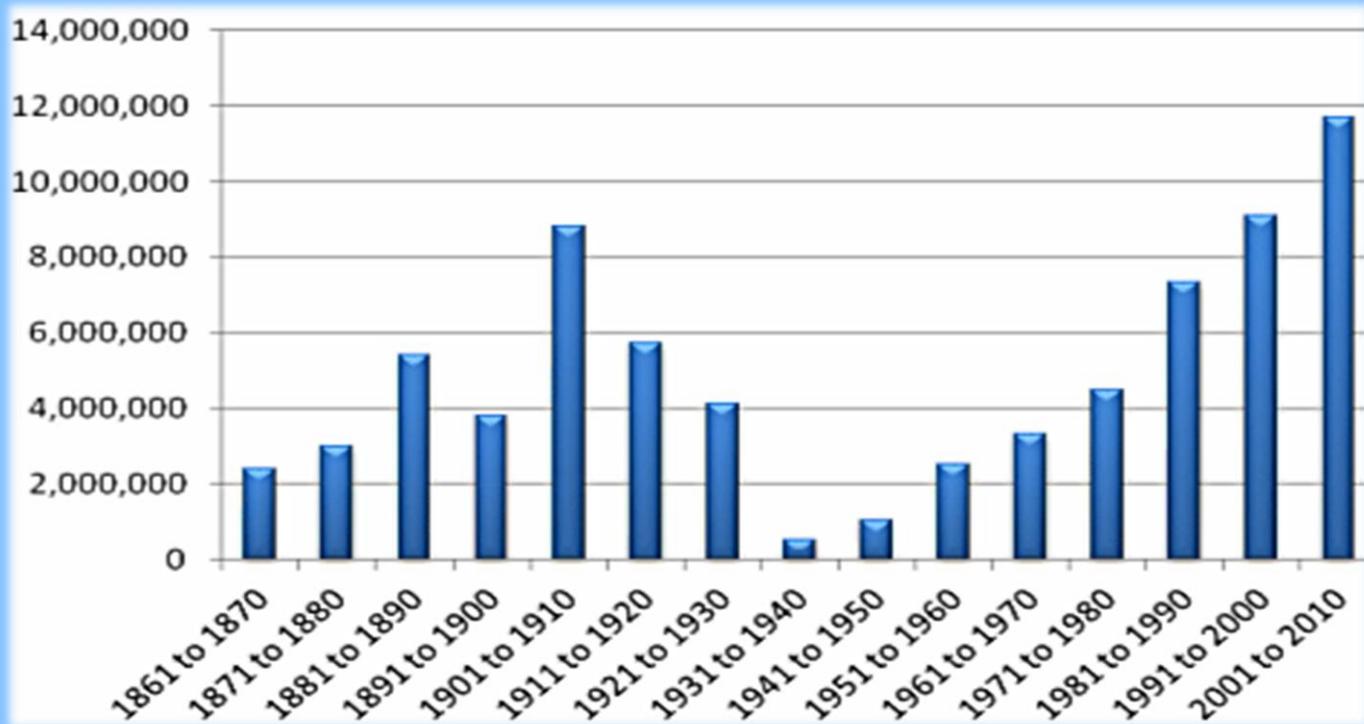


# America's Population: Growing Diversity

- Results
  - racial and ethnic diversity
  - more young people
  - stimulation of economy
  - backlash
    - **nativism:** policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established inhabitants against those of immigrants, opposition to immigration based on fears that immigrants will harm cultural values ... American nativism has existed since before the Revolution (which is ironic since everyone of us, except Native Americans, were or descended from immigrants).
    - recent debates over legislation



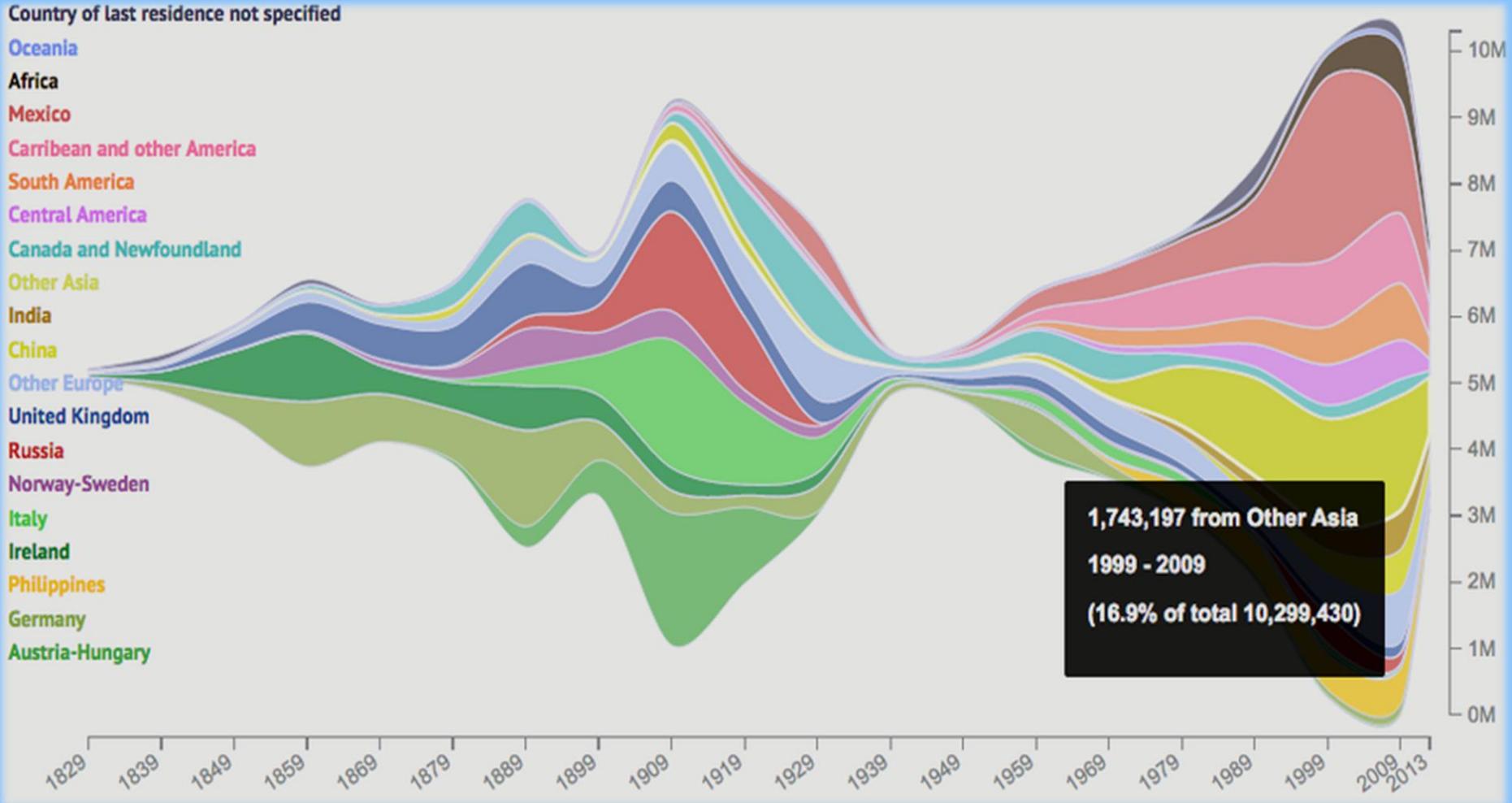
# Immigration to the US by Decade



From about 1880 through the mid-1920s, America experienced an immigration boom, the **Great Wave**, during which immigration averaged 600,000 annually. This was the period during which the US industrialized, creating a huge demand for factory workers. The demand was filled primarily by European immigrants particularly from southern and eastern Europe.

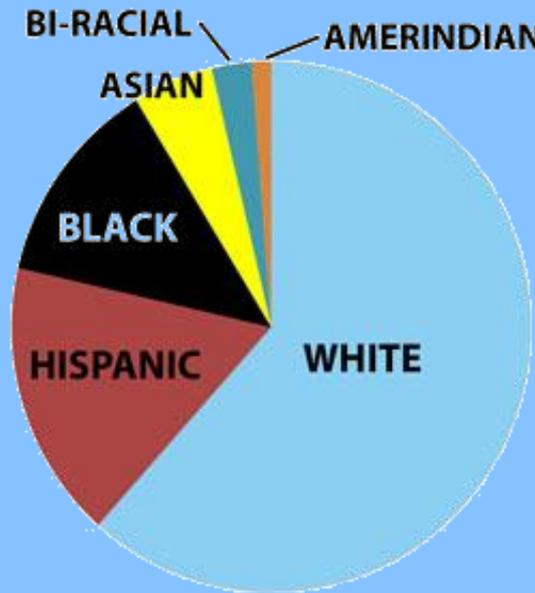


# Immigration to the US by Decade and Country of Origin

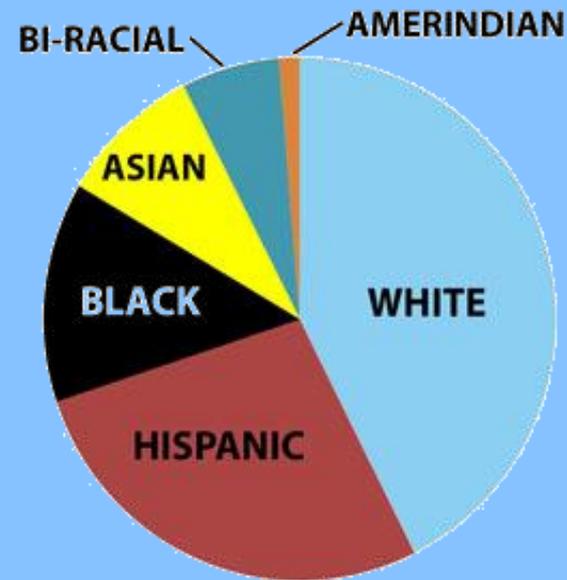




# Racial Composition of the US, 2014 and 2060 (projected)



Racial Mix of the United States  
2014



Racial Mix of the United States  
2060

The US is a racially and ethnically diverse society and is becoming more so each year ... although non-Hispanic whites (themselves made up of many ethnic groups) will remain in the majority for some time. [Note that Hispanics are defined by the Census Bureau as an ethnic group, including people with different racial backgrounds.]



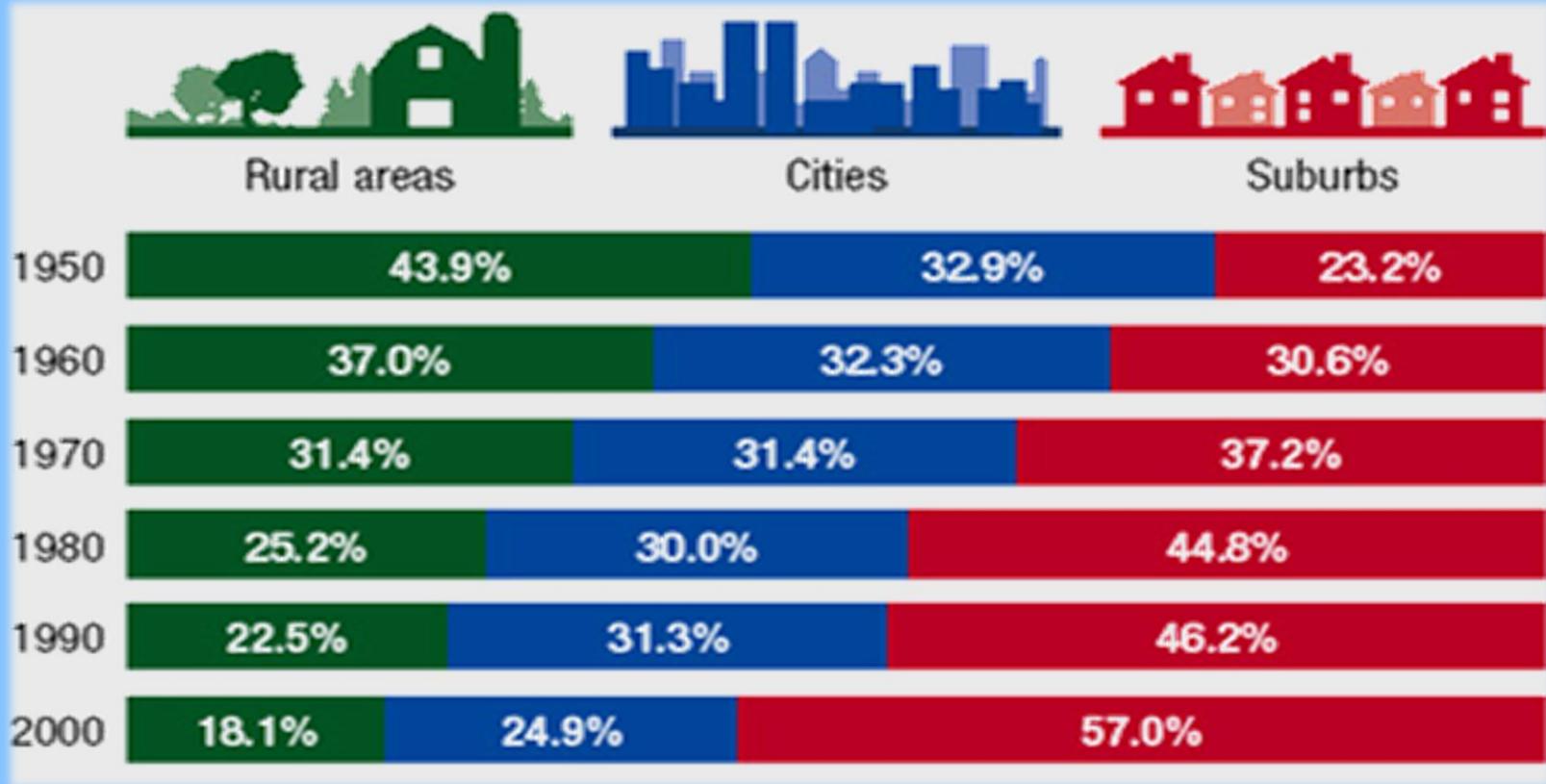
# Changing Location

- from urbanization to suburbanization
- steady population movement to the west and south (the **Sun Belt**) as employment opportunities shifted
- political ramifications
  - Political balance shifts south along with population and wealth ... realigns political power in the US.
  - Southern and western states gain more representation in Congress (and the Electoral College) vis-à-vis northeast and midwest states.
  - The same is true of federal funding dollars.
  - decline in federal aid to big cities since late 1970s
  - increased diversity in south and west
  - shift to more conservative social policies nationally





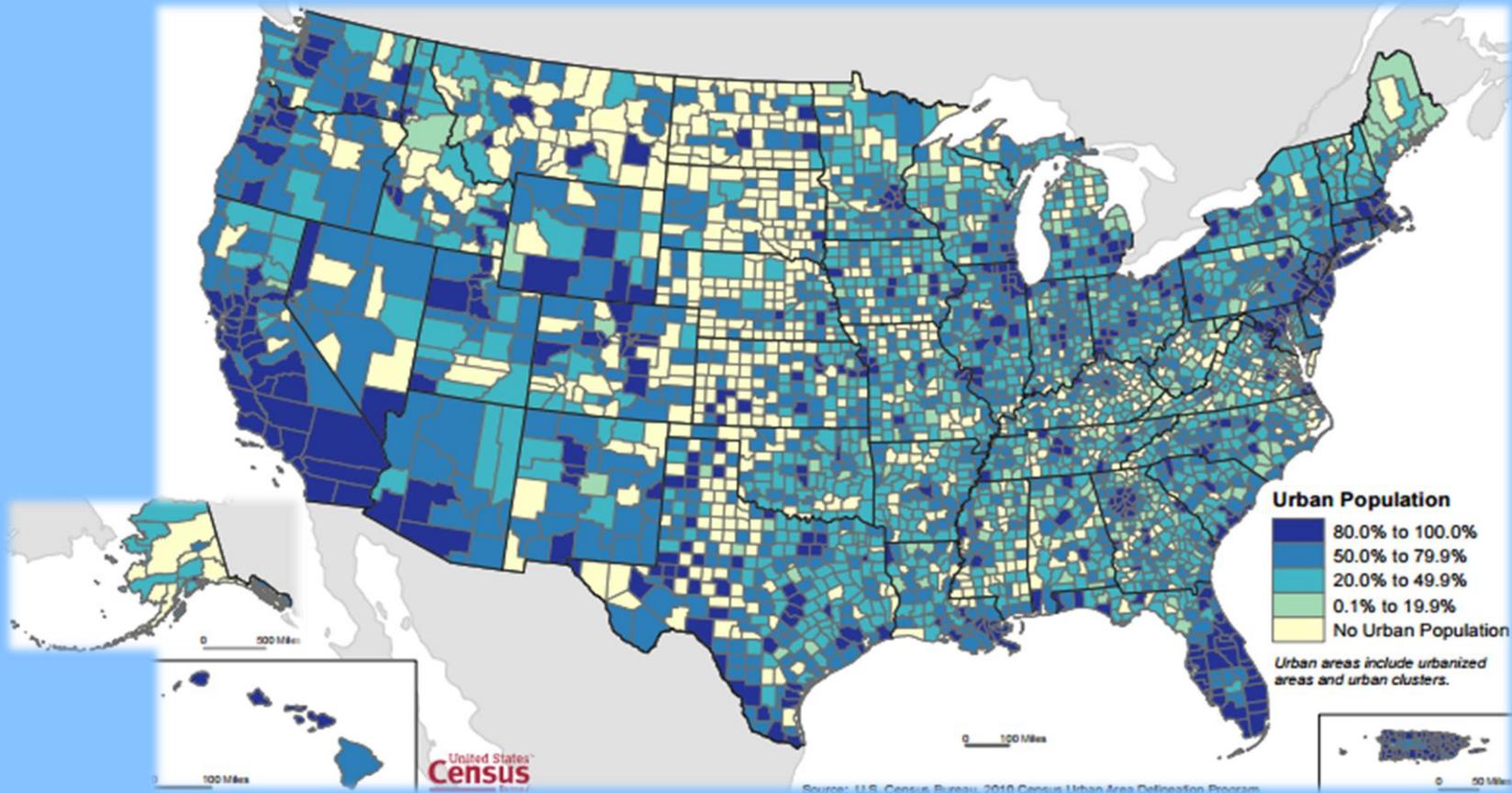
# Where Americans Live



In a relatively short period of time, the US has changed from a society in which the largest percentage of the population lived in rural areas to one in which the largest percentage lives in suburbs. This development has produced several important changes in US politics and in the fortunes of our political parties.



# Percent of Population Residing in Urban Areas by County, 2010



The urban population of the US increased from 79% in 2000 to 80.7% in 2010 ... a 12.1%: increase in urban population even though the total US population growth was 9.7%.



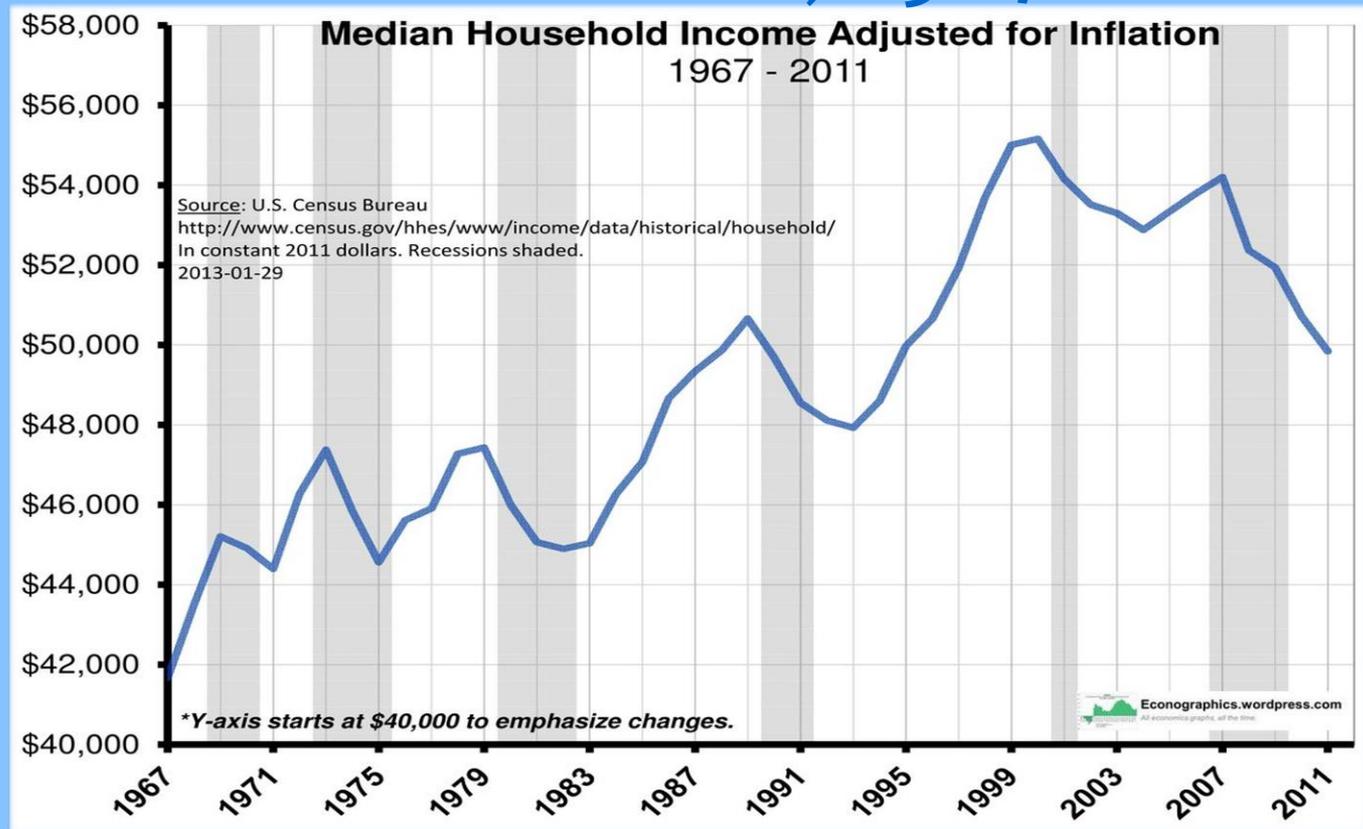
# Income

- overall rise in median household income
- periods of stagnation and variation among demographic groups
- increasing income and wealth inequality
- political ramifications
  - Leads to higher level of poverty, lower quality of education, increased crime and poor public health ... all of which increase economic and societal burden.
  - Wealthy maintain disproportionate (and growing) political power.
  - Political inequality and chance of political instability increase.
  - Human capital becomes increasingly scarce and its scarcity hinders long-term economic growth.

# Median Household Income, 1967-2012



The median income in 2013 was \$52,098. That's down from \$54,478 in 2009, when the recession officially ended. And it's below the \$55,480 that the median household took in when the recession began in 2007.



Nearly every group is worse off than four years ago, except for those 65-to-74 and top earners. Some groups have experienced larger-than-average declines, including blacks, young, upper-middle-aged and the unemployed.

It is worth noting that **income distribution** has become more unequal over time, with more going to the top income earners while other Americans' income has remained flat or decreased.



# Poverty

- overall decline since the 1950's, but recent rise
- much higher in the US than in other rich democracies
- concentrated among racial minorities and single-parent families
- **consequences:** crime, drug use, disintegration of families, poor education, decreased future opportunities and income



# Income and Wealth Inequality

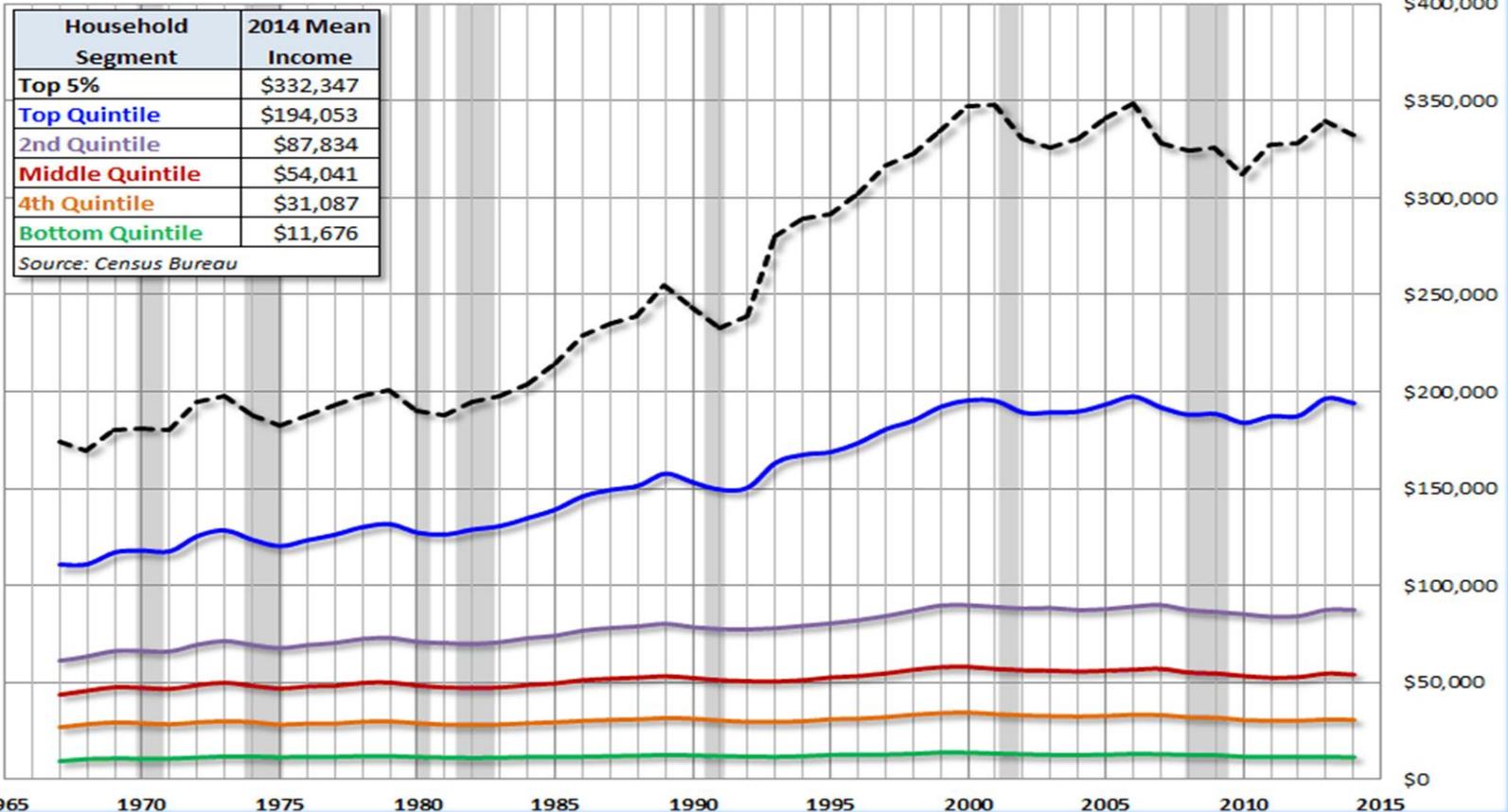
- ...gap between wealth and income of different groups (the rich get richer while the poor get poorer) ... an increasing concentration of wealth in an increasingly small number of hands
- has always been higher in the US than in other rich democracies
- even more pronounced over past two decades





# Real Mean Household Income by Quintile (fifth) and Top 5%, 1965-2015

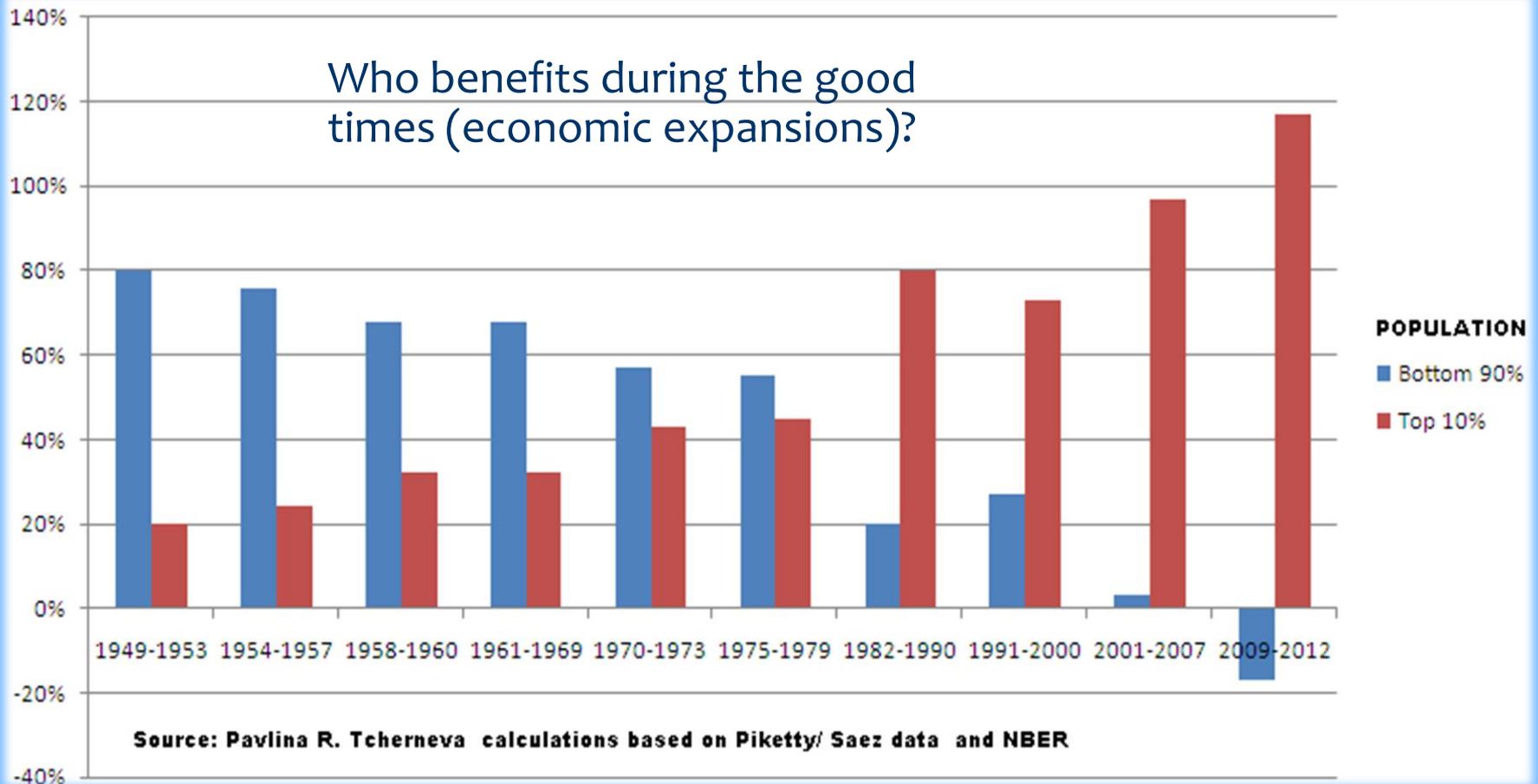
With Recessions Highlighted



Income inequality has been increasing in the US, reaching levels not seen since the 1920s. Note in particular the growing spread/gap between the top quintile (and the top 5%) and the other four quintiles.



# Distribution of Average Income Growth During Expansions, 1949-2012





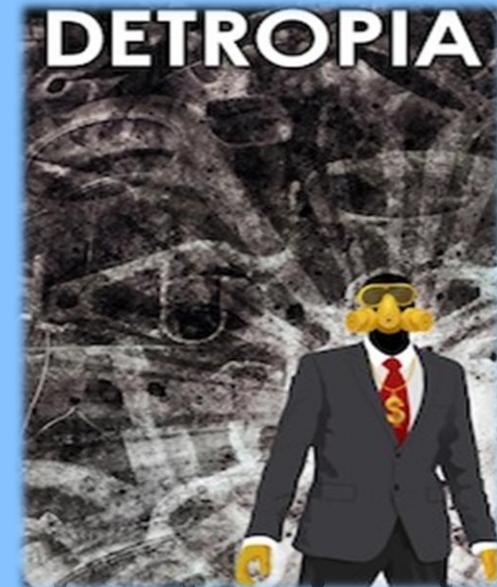
# The American Economy: The Rise of Industrial Capitalism

- before Civil War: numerous small and competitive enterprises
- after Civil War: economy increasingly industrialized and concentrated in giant enterprises
- Aside from a serious setback due to the Great Depression (1929-1930s), the American economy and corporations grew impressively through the 1960s.



# The Disappearing Highly Paid, Semiskilled Worker

- Traditionally, American automobile industry workers have enjoyed job security, high wages, full medical benefits and substantial pensions.
- In recent years, they have faced massive layoffs and slashed benefits.





# The Disappearing Highly Paid, Semiskilled Worker

- Causes
  - improvements in technology
  - increased global competition
- Consequences
  - dramatically reduced living standards for semiskilled workers with a high school education or less
  - especially hard on the African-American community



# Globalization and the New American Economy

- 1970s-1980s: rise in globalization and decline in American manufacturing jobs
- 1990s: American economy rebounds
  - growth in computer software, biotechnology, etc
  - strong performance relative to other wealthy democracies
  - **debate over causes:** government funded research and development, defense contracts, publicly funded university research, tight labor market, better skill development through better training and retaining of workers, growth in consumption (and consumer debt) leading to growth in investment





# Globalization and the New American Economy

- Consequences of Globalization
  - lower consumer prices
  - increases variety of goods and services available to consumers
  - more economic efficiency
  - rise in domestic wage rate will cause a decline in the quantity of domestic labor demanded because firms now have more labor market choices
  - unskilled and semiskilled workers face job and benefit cuts
  - potential consequence of the development of high-skilled labor is a rising income inequality between low-skilled and high-skilled workers
  - creative workers enjoy rewarding and highly-paid jobs



# Globalization and the New American Economy

- 2001: economic contraction and resulting increase in unemployment
- 2007: global **Great Recession**, disagreement over causes: financial regulation failures, reckless corporate governance, record-high household debt, housing bubble
- 2009: recession officially over in US (but see next slide) ... unemployment peaked and began decline, GDP did not show growth until 2010 and that was weak
- 2015: majority of Americans still believe the nation remains in a recession



# Globalization and the New American Economy

- Consequences of Great Recession in US
  - net worth of households and income levels substantially lower
  - poor and young just starting out hardest hit and likely won't recover completely ( Those under 35 are 68% less wealthy.)
  - wiped out all middle-class income gains in last 15 years leading to decrease in size of middle class
  - increase in adult discouraged-worker group
  - dramatic rise in number of people living under the poverty level, hitting suburbia particularly hard
  - economic inequality gap substantially larger ... Wealthiest actually saw an increase in wealth.





# The US in the World

- World War II thrust the US into a position of leadership.
- Within a decade of World War II, the US stood as the unchallenged economic, political and military power among the Western nations.
- **Cold War:** conflicts with the Soviet Union
- 1980s-1990s: dramatic changes in global political, military and economic systems
- Soviet Union's collapse leaves US as world's only military **superpower**.
- However, America's military superiority does not translate into diplomatic success.
- Being the world's single military superpower is also very costly.



# The US in the World

- Implications of America's Superpower Status
  - highest military expenditure in the world
  - world's largest navy (surpassing next 13 largest combined)
  - maintain bases around the world
  - maintain and secure huge nuclear arsenal
  - maintain global intelligence networks and ties with paramilitary and guerrilla groups
  - large armament production through defense contractors
  - leads at times to curtailment of domestic liberties
  - easy and obvious target for global terrorist elements
  - unending, often undesired, involvement in foreign affairs
  - inevitably causes foreign resentment / anger





# American Political Culture: How Exceptional?

- A good understanding of a country's political culture can help make sense of the way a country's government is designed, as well as the political decisions its leaders make.
- Our political culture defines political attitudes, institutions and activities that are most cherished in American political life.
- Americans share a common political culture, widely shared beliefs, values and norms that define the relationship between citizens and government, and citizens to one another.



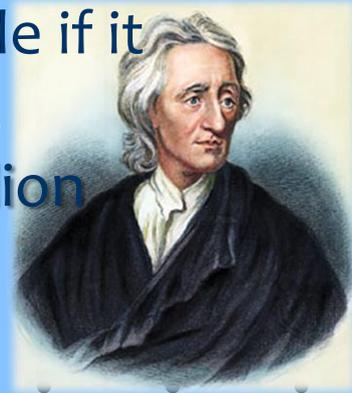
# Theoretical Influences on American Political Culture

- **Classical liberalism**, which asserts the dignity of the individual and their rational ability to control their own destinies, is central to American political culture. It derives from Enlightenment thinkers who opposed the heritage of European feudalism:
  - **John Locke** (natural law implies limited government, rather than absolute monarchy)
  - **Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (social contract, rather than divine right of kings)
  - **Adam Smith** (free markets under capitalism, rather than mercantilism)



# Theoretical Influences: John Locke

- British philosopher John Locke published *Two Treatises of Government* in 1690.
- Rejected claim that kings have **divine right** to rule others.
- Governments created among naturally free people as **social contracts**.
- Rulers derive authority from **consent of the governed** and hold power as a public trust.
- Rebellion against such a government is acceptable if it fails to protect certain self-evident natural rights, including life, liberty and property (**right of rebellion theory**).





# Theoretical Influences: Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- ...18<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher and writer
- monarchical absolutism and enlightened despotism are inconsistent with the ‘principles of political right’ ... power is imposed by might rather than by right
- political life is unnatural and must therefore be based on consent
- gave the name **citizen** to those who help make the laws to which they are subject and so “obeys no one but himself”
- sovereignty should reside with the people, in the form of the **general will** (formed when citizens ask themselves what is in the common interest), the source of law’s legitimacy
- **public-spiritedness** is wholly unnatural and must be cultivated artificially through set of institutions and practices



# Theoretical Influences: Adam Smith

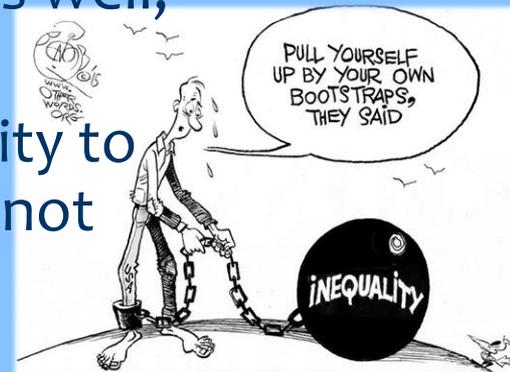
- 18<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish philosopher and political economist
- an unusually strong commitment to the soundness of the ordinary human being's judgments and to guaranteeing him the **natural liberty** to act in accordance with those judgments
- suspicious of the motives and skills of politicians and their ability, even when well-meaning, to change society ... not competent to handle much, so should **limit government**
  - the maintenance of justice is “the first and chief design of every system of government”
  - states could and should redistribute wealth to some degree, and defend the poor and disadvantaged
  - state should not micro-manage the economy





# Elements of American Political Culture

- **individualism:** an individual's fate is tied to his or her own efforts (pull yourself up by your bootstraps) ... need for help often seen as weakness
- **private property and private enterprise:** belief in importance of private property and efficiencies of the free market
- **liberty:** freedom for people to do what they want (but must be restrained to some extent), implies a limited government ... includes economic liberty as well, *laissez-faire* capitalism
- **equality:** political equality, equal opportunity to succeed (belief in equality of opportunity, not outcome)





# Elements of American Political Culture

- **rule of law:** government based on a body of law applied equally and fairly, not on the whims of a ruler
- **democracy:** tend to support policies that protect and expand democracy domestically, including principles of **popular sovereignty, majority rule** and **minority rights** (Sometimes a desire to spread democracy to other countries, whether or not they want it, drives American foreign policy.)
- **unity (nationalism):** support the republic and democracy even if disagree about policies ... politicians and other leaders frequently appeal to this sense of unity
- **diversity:** have many different cultural traditions and hold a variety of values, views and creeds ... take pride in heritage and cultural history





# American Political Culture: Theory vs. Practice

Although Americans have always cherished their core beliefs in theory, in practice we don't always live up to them. Slavery, the mistreatment of Native Americans, women's suffrage delayed over a century, racism, equal pay are a few examples.



# American Exceptionalism

Americans' combination of classical liberalism with populism (hostility of the common person to concentrated political and economic power and to the powerful) and widespread religious belief is unique in the world.





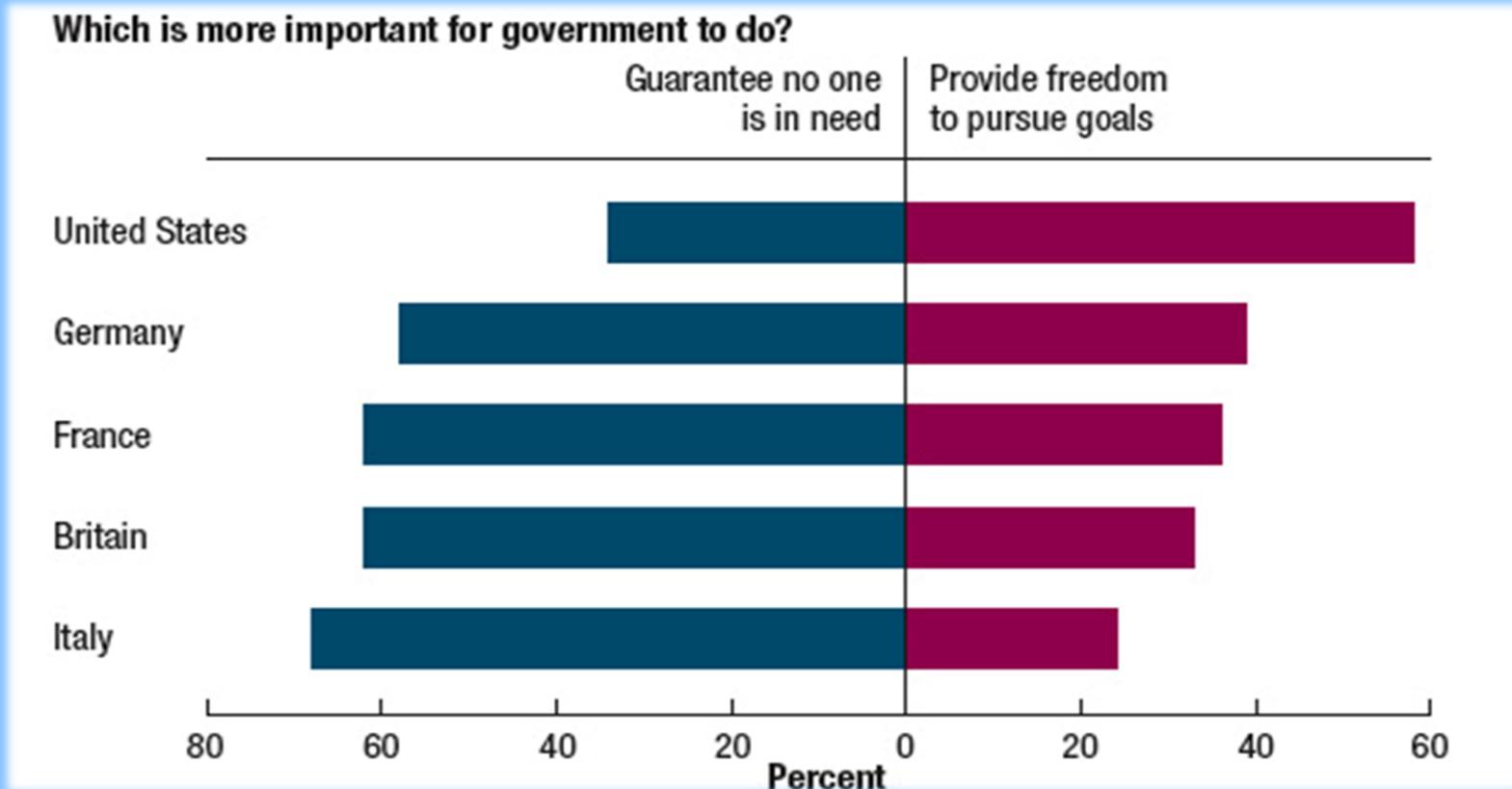
# American Exceptionalism

- Citizens in other rich democracies believe that extensive and high-quality public services are part of the good society.
- Most Americans favor private consumption over public services ... classical liberalism: set of ideas including individualism, the free market and limited government.





# American Exceptionalism



American beliefs about the role of government are remarkably different from those of people living in other rich democracies. Americans are much less likely to want government to do something about poverty and more likely to want to leave that up to individuals.



# American Exceptionalism

- Distrust of government
  - Government must be limited in its power and responsibilities.
  - closely associated with the idea of individualism
  - concern that a powerful government is likely to threaten individual rights
  - Such distrust is not common in other wealthy democracies.





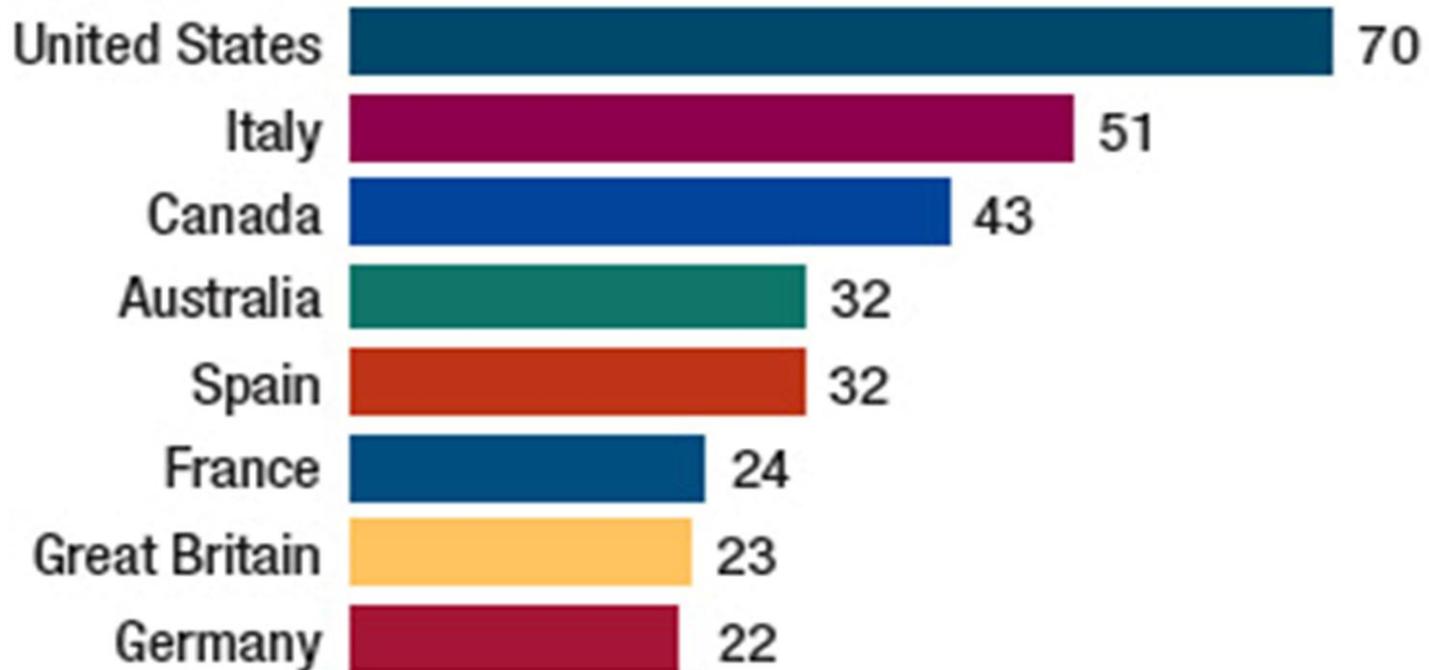
# American Exceptionalism

- **democracy:** one of the foundations of the American belief system, despite non-democratic features of American history
- **freedom and liberty:** at the top of the list of American beliefs and more strongly honored than elsewhere
- **religious belief:** Americans are much more religious than people in other rich democracies. Levels of religiosity in America approach those found in poor Muslim countries.



# American Exceptionalism

Percentage who say "I know God really exists"



Compared to people in other rich democracies, a substantially higher proportion of Americans say they believe in God.



# The Age of Apathy?

- Are Americans becoming less involved in politics, or just changing the ways in which they participate?
- **social capital**: democratic and civic habits of discussion, compromise and respect for differences, which grow out of participation in voluntary organizations
- Robert Putnam argues that the level of social capital has **steadily declined** in the US since WWII.
  - Many traditional civic, social and fraternal organizations have undergone a massive decline in membership.





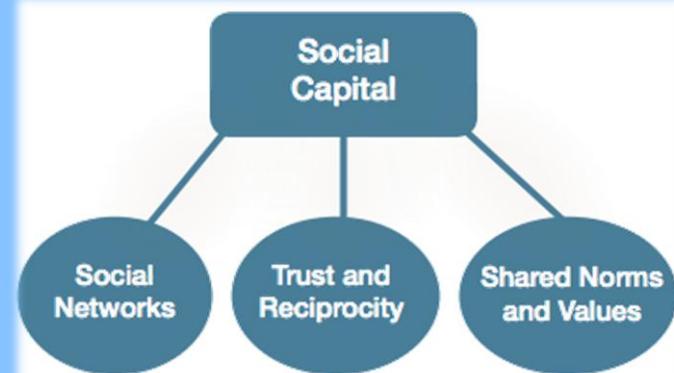
# The Age of Apathy?

- Putnam makes a distinction between two kinds of social capital.
  - **bonding capital:** occurs when socializing with people who are like you
  - **bridging capital:** occurs when socializing with people who are *not* like you ... necessary to create peaceful societies in a diverse multi-ethnic country
  - strengthen each other ... with decline of bonding capital inevitably comes the decline of bridging capital, leading to greater ethnic tensions



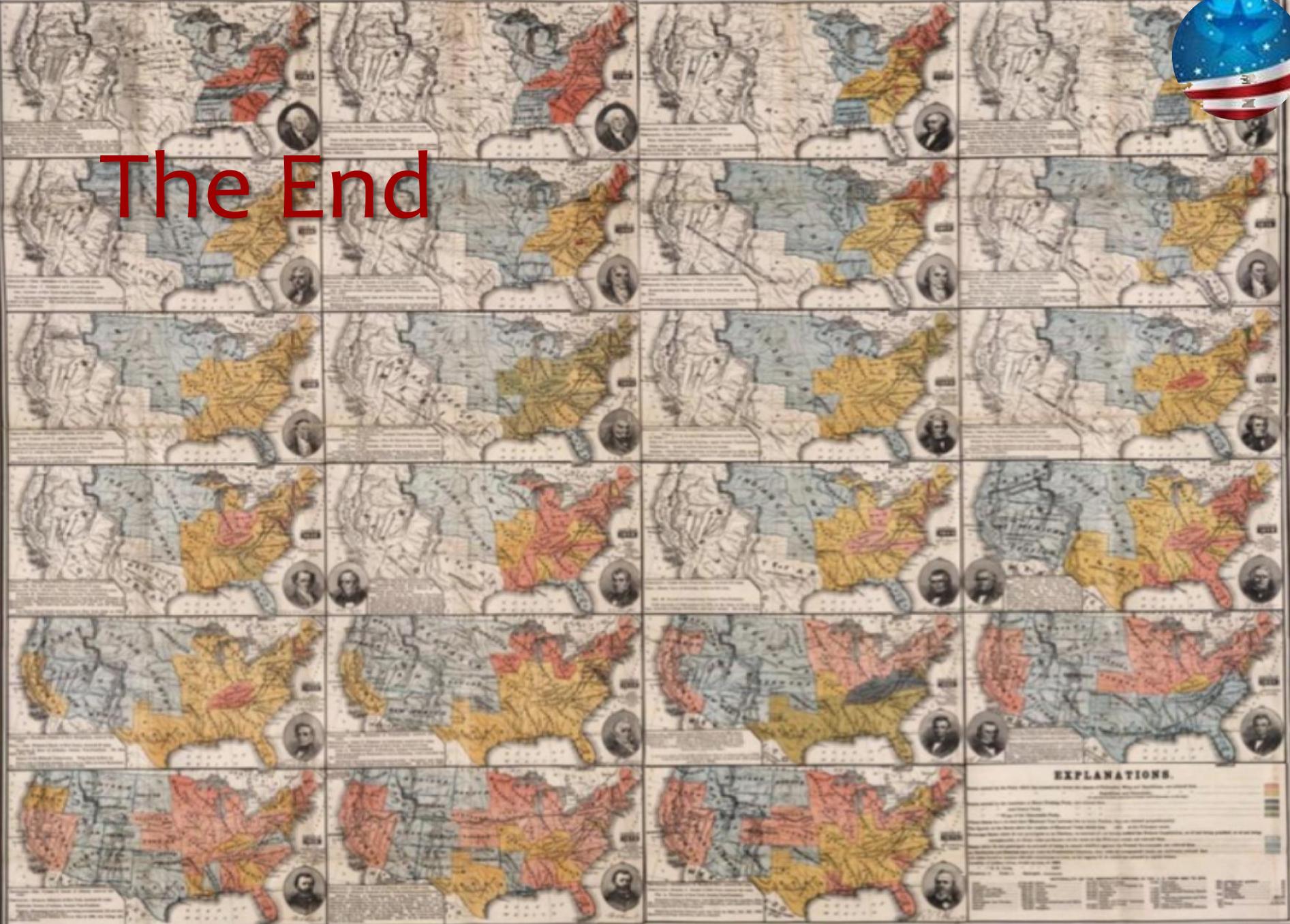
# The Age of Apathy?

- past: had real strength in area of social capital and relatively high levels of social trust
- Putnam says all that is declining ... If our system is built for one kind of people and one kind of community, and now we've got a different one, what problems will result?
- Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community





The End



EXPLANATIONS.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES. 1888. The following table shows the result of the Presidential Election of 1888, and the number of electoral votes cast for each candidate. The names of the candidates are given in the first column, and the number of electoral votes in the second column. The names of the States and Territories are given in the third column, and the number of electoral votes in the fourth column. The names of the States and Territories are given in the fifth column, and the number of electoral votes in the sixth column. The names of the States and Territories are given in the seventh column, and the number of electoral votes in the eighth column. The names of the States and Territories are given in the ninth column, and the number of electoral votes in the tenth column. The names of the States and Territories are given in the eleventh column, and the number of electoral votes in the twelfth column. 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THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES.

Designed & Drawn by HENRY CLAY DONNELL, San Francisco, Cal.

Published by the U.S. Election Map Co. *Amalgamated by Henry & Street U.S. General*