Having been badly defeated in the 1984 presidential election, the Democrats were eager to find a new approach to win the presidency. They felt more optimistic this time due to the large gains in the 1986 mid-term election which resulted in the Democrats taking back control of the Senate after 6 years of Republican rule. Among the field of candidates were the following:

- Bruce E. Babbitt, former governor from Arizona
- Joseph R. Biden Jr., U.S. senator from Delaware
- Michael S. Dukakis, governor of Massachusetts
- Richard A. "Dick" Gephardt, U.S. representative from Missouri
- Albert A. Gore Jr., U.S. senator from Tennessee
- Gary W. Hart, former U.S. senator from Colorado
- the Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, civil rights activist
- Paul M. Simon, U.S. senator from Illinois
- Patricia Schroeder, Senator from Colorado

Reagan's Vice President, George Herbert Walker Bush, easily defeated Senator Bob Dole of Kansas for the Republican nomination for President. Bush selected Senator J. Danforth (Dan) Quayle of Indiana to be his running mate. The Democrats, after exhausting primaries, selected Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts as their nominee. The 1988 election set the precedent for the use of television as the primary method of voter mobilization.

Bush assailed his opponent for being soft on crime and implied that he lacked patriotism. He blamed Dukakis for the pollution in Boston harbor. Dukakis lacked experience in national politics and failed to effectively counter Bush's assaults.

Bush had a number of advantages, and won the election with 48.9 million votes (53.4 percent of the votes cast) and Dukakis polled 41.8 million votes. Bush carried 40 states and took the Electoral College 426 to 112.

The campaign's harsh tone repelled voters, and the turnout was the lowest since 1924.
Social Changes of the 1990s

The population continued to grow to over 250 million by 1990. The total had nearly quadrupled in a century and was more than double the population during the first election of Franklin Roosevelt. Medical advances brought the life expectancy to a record high. The Hispanic population grew five times as fast as the rest of the population and began to emerge as a political force.

Left-over changes from the countercultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s were apparent. "Laid-back" attitudes toward dress, language, and sexual freedom were among these left-over changes. A new tolerance was especially prevalent in what had been historically the most sensitive of all problems for Americans - sex. Ninety-five percent of males and over 80 percent of females between 18 and 24 acknowledged premarital intercourse.

Drugs remained popular as well. While LSD fell out of fashion, marijuana remained popular. "Crack," a cheap and powerful derivative of cocaine, displaced heroin.

The rise of the Moral Majority continued - dismay over crimes, drugs, and drinking was widespread. States raised the drinking age and cracked down on drunk driving. The people revolted against cigarette smoking, and many states and communities began to ban smoking in public places.

The campaign against sexual promiscuity received unexpected support due to the discovery of AIDS. Most politicians were slow to devote resources to combating AIDS, in part because it was initially perceived as a "gay mans disease" which did not threaten other Americans.

The World Changes

The universal oppression in Communist nations and the failure of Communist economies led to growing disenchantment with Communism. Communist regimes began collapsing across the world. Under Mikhail Gorbachev, head of the Communist Party and later President of the USSR, the Soviet Union began to crumble. He was unable to prevent the secession of the Baltic states, and communist hard-liners led an unsuccessful coup that nonetheless demonstrated the loss of most of Gorbachev's stature. Boris Yeltsin, a leader in the resistance against the coup, later became president of the Russian Federation. The Soviet parliament soon adjourned forever, and Gorbachev resigned. The world was at last free of the Cold War.

With the Soviet Union out of Central America and the neutralization of Castro due to the Union's demise, Bush was slowly able to advance American objectives in that region.

The decline of the Soviet Union also left the United States with increased influence in the Middle East. Bush was eager to serve peace by persuading Israel to return the Arab lands it seized in 1967. The Administration was also committed to sustaining the flow of inexpensive oil from the Persian Gulf.

Desert Shield

Under Saddam Hussein, Iraqi forces invaded and quickly gained control of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Bush immediately denounced the invasion as "naked aggression" and banned trade with Iraq, froze all Iraqi assets within the United States, and dispatched an aircraft-carrier group to the Persian Gulf. The UN Security Council unanimously condemned the invasion and demanded the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. On August 15, with the first American soldiers on their way to the Persian Gulf, Bush told Americans that Operation Desert Shield was under way to protect "access to energy resources" and thus "our jobs, our way of life." Most Americans supported the war. American troops began to build up in Saudi Arabia. On November 29 the Security Council authorized the use of "all necessary means" to expel Iraqi troops if they had not left Kuwait by January 15, 1991. Bush was assailed by the media and Democrats for sending 400,000 troops to the Persian Gulf without consulting Congress, for making war seem unavoidable, and for creating crisis in order to draw attention from the faltering economy.
On January 12, 1991, in a largely partisan vote, both chambers - the House 250 to 183, the Senate 53 to 46 - authorized Bush "to use United States armed forces" pursuant to the UN Security Council resolution.

**Operation Desert Storm**

The U.S. and its coalition overwhelmed its enemy. From the start, the coalition had total command of the air. Within days, Iraqi communication systems, air bases, and antiaircraft defenses were obliterated by aircraft. Americans were quickly attacking strategic targets - power plants, bridges, and chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons facilities. From day eight, coalitions planes devastated the Iraqi army. On the second day, Hussein fired Scud missiles at Israel and Saudi Arabia, but none caused major damage. In late January the Iraqi release of thousands of gallons of Kuwaiti oil into the Persian Gulf polluted the waters of that area.

Bush warned Hussein that the coalition would force him out if he had not begun withdrawal by February 24. Coalition forces placed Iraqi forces in a squeeze they could not escape. After 100 hours of ground warfare, Kuwait had been liberated, and the Baghdad area was besieged. The coalition had destroyed some 4,000 Iraqi tanks, more than 1,000 armored vehicles, and about 3,000 artillery pieces. In comparison, the coalition had lost only 4 tanks, 9 other vehicles, and 1 cannon. About 100,000 Iraqi troops were killed, and the coalition had suffered less than 200 deaths.

However, Saddam was still in control. Soon after the cease-fire, the Iraqi army put down a Shiite rebellion and forced Kurds in Iraq to flee to Iran and Turkey. United Nations inspections began. The media did little to inform Americans about the destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure, the foundation of a modernizing society, or about the millions of people left without electricity, running water, or sewage.

**Back to Usual Politics**

Bush was closely aligned to Ronald Reagan in regard to social issues after his two terms as vice-president. As a Republican congressman from Texas, he was pro-choice, but when he ran for president, he opposed abortion, and he endorsed Supreme Court decisions weakening affirmative action in hiring and promotion. He consistently tried to make appointments to federal courts of judges that shared his own views about the First Amendment, abortion, and affirmative action. Bush named David Souter to replace Justice William Brennan on the Supreme Court, and he named Clarence Thomas to replace Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Bush called himself "the education president" and "the environment president." Bush called for a controversial program that would allow public money to follow children to public schools but it was not acted upon. Bush appointed performed and committed conservationists to the Environmental Protection Agency. At times he would take the side of business, and at other times he would take the side of ecologists. In 1989 he signed a law to ease the effects of acid rain, mandating a gradual 50 percent reduction in sulfur emissions from power plants burning coal, and it also required the automobile industry to increase gradually the production of cars using fuels other than gasoline or diesel oil. In 1991, Bush put forward an energy plan to open for exploration the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, some other Alaskan areas, and the continental shelf off the coasts of California and the Gulf of Mexico.

During 1989, economic growth in the United States slowed, and by the second half of 1990, most economists considered the economy in recession. Bush again proposed, as he had in 1989, lowering the capital gains tax, but Congressional Democrats balked. During talks, the White House backed down on capital gains and the two sides
agreed on a budget package that included a steep increase in excise taxes, a small increase in Medicare charges, and a cut in Medicare spending. However, members of both parties in Congress rejected the solution. Finally, on October 29, 1991, the Congress at last approved an acceptable compromise. It lifted the top surtax rate from 28 to 31 percent, gradually phased out income-tax exemptions for upper-income taxpayers, and raised the tax on gasoline, cigarettes, and beer. It also imposed a luxury tax on expensive automobiles, boats, furs, and jewelry, and raised Medicare premiums. The Democrats committed Congress for five years to reduce expenditures both for the military and domestically. After the quick victory in the Persian Gulf, the administration anticipated a quick return of national growth, but the GNP did not pick up. Unemployment reached a four year high.

The Election of 1992
Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas became the apparent leader among the Democratic candidates for the 1992 election. By late April, Clinton had a commanding lead and delegates and was running evenly with Bush in public opinion polls. Rioting in central Los Angeles arose following the verdict of a suburban jury that found Los Angeles policemen not guilty of using undue force in beating a black motorist they had arrested.

The polls showed extreme disenchantment with both candidates, and H. Ross Perot, a Texas billionaire, organized a run as a Reform Party nominee. Perot appealed to conservatives by speaking out against taxes, deficits, and adultery, but he was pro-choice and had a tolerant attitude toward homosexuality. He also appealed to traditionally Democratic voters by being an outspoken opponent of NAFTA (a free-trade agreement). He remained evasive about his economic and social agenda, and becoming uncomfortable with the probings of the media, he withdrew from the election, only to return in October. Perot's entrance into the race reflected the impatience of the electorate with politics and their dissatisfaction with the major parties. Perot was also able to gain such a level of support because he was allowed to participate in all three Presidential debates. Incumbents at every level were worried, and an unprecedented number of members of Congress chose not to seek reelection. Bush and Quayle stressed "family values." Bush called for across-the-board tax cuts, and public opinion polls revealed the closeness of the race.

The Clinton camp began to use the famous slogan "It's the economy, stupid!" and he was successful in presenting his theme of change. Clinton won an overwhelming majority in the Electoral College (370 to 168) but received only 43 percent of the popular vote.
William Jefferson Clinton

President of the United States of America. William Jefferson Clinton was born on August 19, 1946, in Hope, Arkansas, a small town with a population of about 8,000. His father, William Jefferson Blythe, died in a car crash several months before Clinton was born, leaving him in the care of his mother, Virginia Cassidy Blythe. In order to provide for her son, Virginia moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, to complete two years of nursing school, while Clinton stayed with his grandparents, Eldridge and Edith Cassidy. Clinton's grandparents were strict disciplinarians who instilled in him the importance of a good education. "My grandparents had a lot to do with my early commitment to learning," he later recalled. "They taught me to count and read. I was reading little books when I was three."

William Jefferson Clinton became the 42nd President of the United States in 1992, signalling a generational change. He was the first Democrat in over 50 years to win a second term and presided over the longest peace time economic expansion in history. He was an activist, progressive president (of a breed of politicians which he called the "New Democrats") who stayed constantly surrounded by controversy.

Bill Clinton was born William Jefferson Blythe in Hope, Arkansas and was raised in Hot Springs, Arkansas. In 1950, Clinton's mother remarried to Roger Clinton, Clinton's natural father having been killed in an automobile accident, three months before his son's birth. Roger Clinton was an alcoholic gambler who would beat his wife and Clinton's half-brother also named Roger.

Clinton's Domestic Agenda

Clinton had a very progressive agenda, which included ending the recession of the early 90s, health care reforms, and domestic reforms. Clinton, working with the Republican Congress, helped narrow the deficit by cutting spending and increasing taxes on the wealthiest Americans. On the issue of health care, Clinton wanted to stop the rising costs of health care and provide the estimated 39 million uninsured Americans with health insurance. He created a task force, headed by his wife, Hillary Clinton, to deal with the problem, but critics attacked the plan. They worried that the plan was too expensive and too complicated. Congress would never vote on Clinton's plan, and his health care effort would die.

Clinton was able to succeed in other efforts, though. Despite opposition, Clinton was able to pass the Brady Bill (named after James Brady, who was crippled after being shot in the Ronald Reagan assassination attempt), which created a mandatory waiting period in which gun vendors could check a buyer's criminal background before a buyer could receive his gun. A 1994 crime bill complemented the bill by banning 19 kinds of assault weapons and creating 100,000 new police jobs.

Clinton was also able to push Congress to pass the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), despite strong opposition from labor unions (which, ironically, are the strongest source of Democrat support). The agreement would provide lower costs for consumers in many markets, due to increased trading with Mexico and Canada.
The Third Way

Clinton is a supporter of the Third Way, or Radical center, a centrist political philosophy of governance that embraces a mix of market and interventionist philosophies. The Third Way rejects both socialism and laissez-faire approaches to economic governance, but chiefly stresses technological development, education, and competitive mechanisms to pursue economic progress and governmental objectives. Third way philosophies have been described as a synthesis of capitalism and socialism by its proponents.

In the United States, Third Way adherents emphasize fiscal conservatism, some replacement of welfare with workfare, and a stronger preference for market solutions to traditional problems (as in pollution markets), while rejecting pure laissez-faire economics and other libertarian positions. The Third Way style of governing was firmly adopted and partly redefined during the Administration of President Bill Clinton.

After Tony Blair came to power in the UK, Clinton, Blair and other leading Third Way adherents organized conferences to promote the Third Way in 1997 at Chequers in England. The Democratic Leadership Council are adherents of Third Way politics.

In 2004, several veteran U.S. Democrats founded a new Washington, DC organization entitled Third Way, which bills itself as a "strategy center for progressives." John Kerry of 2004 U.S. Democrats Presidential candidate is also considered to be third way politician, as are 2008 U.S. Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

Keeping Peace

During the Clinton administration, keeping peace in other parts of the world was a priority. When the President of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown by violent dictators, Clinton sent troops to Haiti to pressure the new dictators to step down and to help slow the tidal wave of Haitian refugees fleeing to Florida. They did step down, and Aristide's power was restored.

Another challenge to peace was a bloody civil war that had erupted in Yugoslavia, part of the Balkan peninsula in Europe. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Croatia all declared independence from Yugoslavia, but many Serbs (from Serbia, a part of Yugoslavia) still lived in those areas, and Yugoslavia fought to hold onto parts of Bosnia and Croatia. As America became aware of the atrocities of the war, Clinton arranged peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, and the Serbs, the Croats, and the Bosnians signed a peace agreement in December 1995. Eventually, another conflict would arise in the region during Clinton's second term.

1994 Midterm Elections

During the 1994 midterm Congressional elections, Republicans presented a plan called the "Contract with America." The contract detailed the actions Republicans would take upon becoming the majority party in Congress. This charge was led by Newt Gingrich. The GOP plan was a success, winning the Republicans a majority in the House for the first time in 40 years, and a Republican majority in the Senate. The massive success became known as the Republican Revolution.

In retrospect, the Republicans' dramatically large gains can be attributed to many things. A larger than average number of incumbents retired, and thus there was a larger number of open seat races, which are far easier to switch parties. Additionally, the previously Democratic-controlled House had been plagued by a scandal since before the 1992 election. The scandal implicated far more Democrats than Republicans and can in part be blamed for the large number of open seats. Historians and political scientists also point to President Clinton's resounding failure to pass his universal healthcare plan in a Democratic-controlled congress. The plan had been a large part of his 1992 campaign and was to be the cornerstone of his first-term agenda. The defeat likely demoralized Democratic voters, who ended up turning out in low numbers.
1996 Election

Clinton easily won Democratic renomination in 1996. His opponent was Kansas senator Bob Dole, who had served in Congress since 1961. Dole claimed that he could lower taxes by 15 percent and that Clinton was an unethical president. Clinton said that Dole would ruin the environment and reverse the progress that Clinton had made with medicare. Ross Perot ran again, and relying on infomercials, also claimed that Clinton was unethical.

Despite it all, Clinton won the election in a landslide, while Perot received a much smaller amount of votes than he did in the 1992 election. Even though the Democratic campaign for the presidency was successful, they didn't fare well in the congressional elections. Republicans gained 2 seats in the Senate, giving them a 55-45 majority. Even though Democrats gained 11 seats in the House, Republicans still held a 226-207 majority. Independents held two seats. Republicans had total control of Congress.

Conflict in Kosovo

After 1995, it seemed that things would stay relatively quiet in the Balkans. But a series of events would lead to rampant political instability within Yugoslavia and eventually a civil war. Kosovo, a province of Serbia (which was a part of Yugoslavia) was home to a large number of Albanians (from the neighboring Albania), who were actually the ethnic majority in the area. In the late eighties and early nineties, the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic passed laws that eliminated Kosovo's constitutional rights and oppressed Albanians. In 1991, Kosovo voted to break away from Yugoslavia. Although Yugoslavia claimed that the vote was illegal, things in the area stayed relatively quiet until April 1996, when a mysterious organization known as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began attacking Serbian civilians.

Eventually, the attacks on civilians caused hundreds of thousands of people to flee Kosovo. Serbians viewed the KLA as a group of terrorists, and retaliated. As the violence became bloodier and bloodier, more and more refugees began to flee into Macedonia, and tensions between the refugee Albanians and the native Macedonian Slavs grew, and a possible civil war loomed. A civil war in Macedonia would have been catastrophic to the already damaged stability and security of the area, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization concluded that intervention was needed. A coalition of NATO members, headed by the United States, began a bombing campaign on March 24, 1999. The goal of the campaign was to force the Serbs to leave Kosovo so that the Albanian refugees could return to their homes. Initially, the bombing caused a mass Albanian exodus from Kosovo, with the U.N. reporting that over 850,000 Albanians had fled from Kosovo to Albania or Macedonia. Milosevic would not step down until June, when Finnish and Russian negotiators convinced him that NATO was serious in its goal and that Russia (a long time protector of Slavic people) would not step in to protect Yugoslavia. On June 10, the bombings ended, and an occupation of the area by U.N. and NATO peacekeeping troops began. Kosovo lay in ruins and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

Oklahoma City Bombing

The Oklahoma City Bombing took place on April 19, 1995. The incident took place when a truck bomb exploded near the federal building. 169 people would die. At first many people thought it was a Middle Eastern terrorists. Timothy McVeigh, a native born American and a veteran of the Persian Gulf War, the suspected culprit, would be put on trial and sentence to death a few years after the incident. Planning his revenge for the second anniversary of the Waco disaster, McVeigh enlisted his friend Terry Nichols and several others to help him pull off his plan. In September 1994, McVeigh purchased large amounts of fertilizer (ammonium nitrate) and then stored it in a rented shed in Herington, Kansas. The ammonium nitrate was the main ingredient for the bomb. McVeigh and Nichols stole other supplies needed to complete the bomb from a quarry in Marion, Kansas.

On April 17, 1995, McVeigh rented a Ryder truck and then McVeigh and Nichols loaded the Ryder truck with approximately 5,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. On the morning of April 19th, McVeigh drove the Ryder truck to the Murrah Federal Building, lit the bomb's fuse, parked in front of the building, left the keys inside
the truck and locked the door, then walked across the parking lot to an alley, then started to jog.

On the morning of April 19, 1995, most employees of the Murrah Federal Building had already arrived at work and children had already been dropped off at the daycare center when the huge explosion tore through the building at 9:02 a.m. Nearly the entire north face of the 9-story building was pulverized into dust and rubble.

In took weeks of sorting through debris to find the victims. In all, 168 people were killed in the explosion, which included 19 children. One nurse was also killed during the rescue operation.

This was the worst terrorist attack on US soil until September 11.

Columbine High School Massacre

On April 20, 1999, Colorado's Columbine High School was the site of a deadly rampage by two students, who killed twelve classmates, a teacher, and themselves; approximately twenty-three others were injured. The assailants were eighteen-year-old Eric Harris and seventeen-year-old Dylan Klebold, who had reportedly planned the attack for a year with hopes of killing hundreds. This massacre would spark copycat incidents across the United States and cause concern over gun control.

The Monica Lewinsky Scandal

The Monica Lewinsky Scandal was a scandal involving President Bill Clinton and a young White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. Bill Clinton had a relationship that was sexual in nature with the intern and lied about it in court. The catalyst of the scandal were the tape recordings of Linda Tripp and Lewinsky discussing Lewinsky's relationship with Clinton, conversations recorded by Tripp.

Initially, the Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr was investigating President and Mrs. Clinton's role in the Whitewater scandal, which led to the investigation of the Lewinsky affair after Attorney-General Janet Reno granted Starr authority to probe the affair. The incident that led to the advancement of the scandal was the procurement of the tapes of Linda Tripp and Lewinsky discussing her relationship with Clinton, by Starr from Tripp. There doesn't appear to be any evidence that Starr sought the tapes out or knew of their existence, rather it was perhaps Linda Tripp who handed them over freely to Starr.

On February 12, 1999, the US Senate voted on the Articles of Impeachment requiring a two-thirds majority, or 67 votes, to convict. On Article I, which charged that the President wilfully provided perjurious, false and misleading testimony to the grand jury" in relation to the Paula Jones lawsuit, 45 Senators voted for guilty and removal from Office, and 55 for not-guilty and no removal from Office. On Article II, which charged that the President "prevented, obstructed, and impeded the administration of justice", 50 Senators voted for guilty and 50 for not-guilty.

Despite the scandal many still hold firm that Clinton's presidency was a success. He was the first president since the depression to have consecutive quarters without a deficit. His two terms were a success for the economy after George H.W. Bush's tenure. Clinton also kept us out of any major wars. Kosovo was one of the only acts of battle that happened during the Clinton administration. The combination of Clinton's success in domestic and foreign affairs is possibly the best job done by a president since the World War II. All of that is overshadowed and forgotten by the Lewinski scandal though.
Bill's Connection to the Hillary Campaign

In the course of the 2008 Democratic presidential primary campaign, Clinton vigorously advocated on behalf of his wife, Hillary Clinton, leading some observers and party members to question the appropriateness of his role in view of his status as a former president. Some felt that Clinton was overshadowing his wife in the campaign, with her presidential rival Barack Obama complaining that he sometimes "did not know which Clinton he was running against."

Top Democratic Party officials, including Rep. Rahm Emmanuel, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and a declared Clinton supporter, asked Clinton to tone down his attacks on Obama following the bitterly contested Nevada caucus, suggesting that Clinton could be damaging his own political capital and global stature. Some commentators even accused the former president of "playing the race card" against Obama, who is half-black, by suggesting he would understand if South Carolina's African Americans naturally would vote for the black candidate, but rejected suggestions that America was not ready for a black President. Many felt that by alienating black voters who had once overwhelmingly supported the Clintons, Clinton had tarnished his legacy as the so-called "first black president." In particular, Rep. James Clyburn (D-SC) suggested that Clinton's vocal attacks on Obama could damage the former President's legacy.
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