American Dream - Then and Now

THEN/PAST

The colonial period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1620</td>
<td>Voyage of Pilgrim fathers on the Mayflower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mayflower compact established (→ self-government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- more and more Puritans leave England to escape political persecution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1733</td>
<td>British own 13 separate colonies along the Atlantic coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pilgrims

History:

- Pilgrim saga began with a group of religious dissidents who believed it was necessary to separate from the Anglican Church of England during the reign of King James I
- they believed in strict adherence to the Word of Jesus Christ directly from the New Testament of the Bible
- persecuted in England => moved to the Netherlands in 1609
- they first moved to Leiden, Holland, but after eleven years, they wanted a place of their own => desire to travel to the `New World´
- received a permission (patent) to establish a colony in Virginia
- on September 6, 1620 the Mayflower left England carrying 102 passengers
  => 50 Saints (the Pilgrims), Strangers (non-Separatists), and the Crew
- it became evident to both saints and strangers that they needed to cooperate and sign an agreement to rule themselves, (as they were going to settle in an area that was not within the purview of their patent)
- agreed to sign an agreement before they landed to ensure self-government, by which all of them would be bound => Mayflower Compact
- in November 1620, 102 passengers approached Cape Cod, Massachusetts, but they did not settle until they arrived at New Plymouth where they decided to stay

Relationship between Pilgrims and Native Americans:

- after having suffered a harsh first winter and a loss of more than 70 of the original 120 people, the pilgrims got in contact with some native Americans (the Wampanoag Indians)
- in 1621 the Pilgrims and the native Americans signed an agreement that would allow the two groups to exist peacefully together
they enjoyed good relations with the neighbouring Indians mainly because of one Indian man named Squanto => taught them how to farm and fish and acted as an ambassador

a productive summer and a great harvest in fall as the reason for the first Thanksgiving

The Mayflower Compact

What happened?

- the first political agreement for self-government in America
- signed by forty-one new Settlers aboard the ship Mayflower arriving at New Plymouth in November 1620

Why was it drawn up?

- Pilgrims were about to settle in an area outside the jurisdiction of their permission (patent) issued by the Virginia Company of London
- needed to maintain order and establish a civil society
- to secure fair and equal laws, for the general good of the settlement => first written laws for the new land and framework of the government established in what is now called United States of America
- drafted to prevent dissent amongst Puritans and non-separatist Pilgrims, because core members of the Pilgrims immigrant group were Separatists, members of a Puritan sect that had split from the Church of England, the only legal church in England at that time

What did it say?

- the original document did not survive, but the writings of William Bradford and in Edward Winslow accepted as accurate:

"In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord, King James, by the Grace of God, of England, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, e&. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politic, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In Witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, King James of England, France and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620."
Fighting for independence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1751-65</td>
<td>- Several acts are passed by the British government to control economy of American colonise (e.g. Navigation Act, Stamp Act) → rising anger + opposition among colonists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td><strong>Boston Massacre</strong> (civilians killed → sparks rebellion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1773</td>
<td><strong>Boston Tea Party</strong>: colonists object to British Tea Act, destroy tea by throwing it in harbour from ships of British East India Trading Company → slogan: &quot;no taxation without representation&quot; (because Americans don't have a political voice in British parliament)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774</td>
<td><strong>First Continental Congress</strong> (1st American national government formed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>- Begin of <strong>War of Independence</strong> (American Revolutionary War) → George Washington = commander-in-chief, later: 1st president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July 76</td>
<td><strong>Declaration of Independence</strong>: announces freedom of British rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1783</td>
<td><strong>Treaty of Paris</strong>: Britain officially recognises its former colonies as an independent nation, the United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td><strong>Constitution</strong> of the US worked out → power to rule shared, representatives are elected (system of &quot;checks and balances&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td><strong>Bill of Rights</strong> (=1st 10 amendments to Constitution) issued (amendments ensure civil rights) → describes basic rights of the people, forbids government to violate these liberties (freedom of speech, religion, press..)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Boston Massacre

Background:
- British troops had been stationed in Boston in order to protect and support colonial officials who were trying to enforce a Parliamentary legislation
- the presence of British troops was increasingly unwelcome

What happened?
- street fight that occurred on March 5, 1770 in which British Army soldiers shot a few colonists
- a crowd of American colonists gathered around a small group of British soldiers guarding the Boston Customs House

[Text eingeben]
the soldiers became enraged after one of them had been hit by a snowball thrown by a colonist and they started firing into the crowd, even though they were under orders not to fire
- five men were killed and six others were injured

Outcome/ Aftermath:
- helped to unite the colonies against Britain
- what started as a minor fight became a turning point in the beginnings of the American Revolution => Revolutionary War
- highlighted the colonists’ desire for American independence, while the dead rioters became martyrs for liberty.

Boston Tea Party

Background:
- tea leaves weren’t grown much in the West and had to be harvested from East India
- to make a fortune, many rival companies sought tea leaves from the orient and imported it to the West
- British storehouses where almost empty because of their costly wars against France and India (Seven-Years’-War)
- upon realizing that Britain was technically on its lowest state even after a victory King George III decided to regain the money by taxing their American colonies and to reinstate their authority to a territory which they have neglected because of war

What happened?
- started to put taxes on many products sold in America, including tea
  => protests against the duty tax started
- Parliament monopolized and controlled all tea imported to the colonies
  => East India Company
- cheaper price than ever before => BUT if the colonies paid the duty tax on the imported tea, they would acknowledge the British Parliament’s right to tax them in general => decided to revolt against the British
- on December 16, 1773, after some officials in Boston refused to return three shiploads of taxed tea to Britain, a group of colonists boarded the ship and dumped the tea into Boston Harbour
  => “no taxation without representation” (citizens wanted to be taxed only by their own elected representatives and not by a British parliament in which they were not represented) => indirect rebellion against British power

=> important step towards American independence

[Text eingeben]
General characteristics of the American Dream

Political Dimension
– being free from government interference, as little government as possible (only just as much as indispensable)
– regulating one's own affairs as much as possible
– having a rightful (the best) system of government (government of the people by the people for the people)
– enjoying equality in terms of political participation, treatment by the judicial system, business opportunities

Philosophical + religious dimension
– being a people chosen by God
– America = New Canaan (Promised Land, God's own country)
– Manifest Destiny (U.S.'s fate predestined by god)
– country of incessant progress

Private + business dimension
– Manifest Destiny (having the right to discover/take into possession/use new areas of earth and universe)
– having the right and opportunity to pursue one's own personal happiness (develop one's self to the fullest degree, self-fulfilment)
– having the right and opportunity to embark on a personal success story by hard work (job opportunity, opening a business [“from rags to riches”])
– being a pioneer, always up against new frontiers/challenges

Abraham Lincoln – Gettysburg Address 1863
– interprets the Civil War (1861-1865) as a struggle to determine if any nation with America's ideals could survive
– famous quote: “government of the people, by the people, for the people”

James Truslow Adams' definition of the American Dream
((1878-1949), American writer and historian, the term “American Dream” was first mentioned in his history book “The Epic of America (1931))
– America as prosperous country, a land in which life should be richer, better, fuller for everyone
– opportunity for everyone to reach his full potential according to his ability or achievement
– be recognised by others for what they are, regardless of the circumstances of birth or position
– being able to grow the fullest development, unhampered by the barriers which
have existed in older civilisations, unhampered by social order

“Manifest Destiny”

- belief that America was predestined to expand from east to west (from Atlantic coast to Pacific ocean)

“from sea to shining sea”

- associated with the territorial expansion of the United States from 1815 to 1860, “Age of Manifest Destiny”
- explanation/justification for mission of westward movement, predestined to explore west, conquer unknown territory
- bring democracy, peace, stability, civilise/cultivate west

**John L. O'Sullivan on “Manifest Destiny”**

(1813-1895, American columnist, editor and advocate for the Democratic Party, term “Manifest Destiny” allegedly first used by him in order to promote the annexation of Oregon and Texas to the U.S.)

- **Past:**

  USA: many different nations
  (E pluribus unum)
  equality = foundation principle
  no connection to supremacy
  battlefields
  royalty
  persecutions

- **Future:**

  > mission: spreading freedom, establishing dignity and man's salvation everywhere
  > connection to future only
  > destiny: great nation of futurity: be an example to others

**Manifest Destiny – Frontier Thesis (1893)** (Frederick J. Turner)

- existence of an area of free land, continuous recession and advance of American settlement westward, bring civilisation
- return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line where American social development begins over again
- frontier = meeting point between savagery and civilisation, line of most rapid and effective Americanisation, transforms wilderness
- steady movement away from European influence, growth of American independence
- most important effect of the frontier: promotion of democracy

[Text eingeben]
Carina, Sarah, Verena

- now: frontier is gone, no free land in its original state left, but America “will demand a wider field for its exercise”

- Kennedy when having been nominated president 1960: defines e.g. the areas of science, space, peace as the “New Frontier”, so-to-say the “wider field” on which America can expand, frontier is not territorial any more

**Manifest Destiny in U.S. Foreign Policy**

> **Monroe Doctrine 1823**
> - isolationism, declaration by U.S. that European interference in western hemisphere (esp. Latin America) would not be tolerated → end of colonisation

> **Roosevelt Corollary 1904**
> - extension of Monroe Doctrine
> - problems in Latin American countries: governments stop to pay their debts to Europe
>   → Roosevelt Corollary justifies American intervention in those countries (to prevent European nations from intervening to collect their debts)
> - “dollar imperialism” → “chronic wrongdoings require intervention”
>   → preservation of prosperity/protection of life = U.S. task
>   “big-stick” diplomacy

> **Wilson, Peace without victory speech 1917**
> - peace terms (WW I) based on 14 points (e.g. League of Nations, self-determination)
>   “We must make the world safe for democracy”, justification for U.S. entry in WW I
> - calls for peace without victory (as victory is opposed to peace as one nation “takes over”

> **Truman Doctrine 1947**
> - military and economical support for countries threatened by a communist take-over → domino theory
> - U.S. Task: support of free people, keep up democracy (according to the American model)
>   → Containment
NOW

Welfare in the US
- social security first established during Great Depression in the 1930s (income for retired, disabled, unemployed)
- before: private charity only/local government
  → most programmes only for a short period of time
  → additional programs added since then, e.g. Medicare
- before: assistance limited to a starter period of time in the 1990s to prevent dependency on the state (immigrants were excluded)
- American Dream: individual is responsible for success, hard work is required, less government interference

System of checks and balances

Constitution

- Legislative
  Congress
  court
  → House of Representative
  → Senate

- Executive
  president
  → vice president

- Judicial
  supreme court

Debt Ceiling Compromise - Goals

- Democrats: raise debt-ceiling
  - protect social security system
  - increase taxes, especially for rich people
    → focus on people, "social"

- Republicans: cut spending, especially social security, health education
  - no tax increases
  → self-determinations

Attitudes towards Obama's presidency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporters</th>
<th>Opponents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- economy will improve</td>
<td>- he IS responsible for poor progress, expected faster/more change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Text eingeben]
- Obama not responsible for difficult circumstances (Bush's legacy?)  - Spent too much money without results
- his power is limited  - Not able to manage government
 - Does not share values

**Voters**
- women, liberal, (ethnic) minorities
- Democrats (democratic leaners)
- working class, young people
- older, conservative, religious people
- independent businesses

**ACLU**
- "American Civil Liberties Union"
  → non-governmental liberal organisation fighting for civil rights, freedom of speech, privacy, abortion + equality

**New Tea Party Movement**
- a Grassroots Movement
- mostly organised and active on local level
- => funded by individuals and donations
- network of independent groups
- no leading national figure
- “voice” pushing the conservative idea/ speak up/ become involved

**Commercial**
- less government => more freedom ( core belief)
  => criticize government
- Individuals, local leaders network
- **supporters:**
  => average Americans, various jobs and ethnic groups
  => want people to identify with the movement
- **criticism:**
  => angry, extreme, violent, egoistic , not well-informed
  => block the government, weaken Republican Party
  => demonize the government
    => terrorist acts might occur
    => radical theories may lead to increase in violence
    => convey message: government = threat

[Text eingeben]
The American Dream - Then and Now

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEN</th>
<th>NOW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- hope to build up a new kind of society, without repeating mistakes made in Europe → role model for the world</td>
<td>- restriction of (civil) liberties (f.ex. 9/11: Patriot Acts in 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- going to America to have religious + political freedom and equality</td>
<td>- still hope, but in reality: competition leaves “losers”, economic slump → shanty towns, foreclosures → escape from poverty difficult → little sympathy for unsuccessful (little welfare provisions) from rags to riches still possible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- starting new/better life in America by working hard → better, richer, fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to their ability/achievement (personal advancement)</td>
<td>- people can identify with AD → patriotism/pride → incentive to work hard → maintain old values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- religious dimension (chosen people, New Canaan, Manifest Destiny)</td>
<td>- America not so unique anymore, no idealistic concept (still: religious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- becoming independent from GB (common enemy, unity (patriotism/pride)</td>
<td>- self-fulfilment, pursuit of happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- economically independent to achieve highest level of self-fulfilment (not just about material plenty, but also about self-fulfilment, pursuit of happiness)</td>
<td>- for some only about: material plenty (getting rich/economically independent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- belief in value, dignity, equality of individuals</td>
<td>- Same values constant pressure of competition, not leading to happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- spreading freedom/democracy (NEW)</td>
<td>- “world police”, interfering in e.g. Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- political dimension:</td>
<td>- dependence on government → more difficult in times of global networking → world power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am. on road of incessant progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ AD still alive, but changed with times

but: debts, recessions, disappointments make it more difficult to uphold values