

**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA**

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**SHIFTS IN AMERICAN IDENTITY  
RESULTING FROM SIGNIFICANT EVENTS  
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Master Thesis**

**2017**

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**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA  
FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES**

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**Master Thesis**

**Study program:** Foreign Languages and Intercultural Communication

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**Consultation centre:** Department of Intercultural Communication

**Tutor:** PhDr. Mária Bláhová, PhD.

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**Affirmation**

**I hereby affirm that this thesis represents my own original research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate source materials.**

**Date:**

.....  
(student's signature)

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## **Abstrakt**

KARLUBÍKOVÁ, Michaela: *Zmeny v identite Američanov ako dôsledok významných udalostí 21. storočia*. – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie. – Vedúci záverečnej práce: PhDr. Mária Bláhová, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2017, 67 s.

Cieľom diplomovej práce je preskúmanie zmien americkej identity, ktoré sú dôsledkom významných udalostí dvadsiateho prvého storočia. Práca znázorňuje spôsob, akým sa štátni predstavitelia vysporiadali s hrozbou terorizmu, a ako táto hrozba ovplyvnila bezpečnostnú politiku, politickú tradíciu a otázku prisťahovalectva. Práca je rozdelená do štyroch kapitol. Kľúčovým aspektom prvej kapitoly je vysvetlenie významu Ústavy Spojených štátov amerických a jej odkazu. Druhá kapitola sa zameriava na prvotný dosah teroristických útokov z 11. septembra, a to hlavne na bezpečnostnú politiku. Základným cieľom tretej kapitoly je úloha politiky pred teroristickými útokmi a po nich, a tiež vplyv štátnych predstaviteľov na krízu identity v Spojených štátoch amerických. Posledná kapitola sa venuje otázke prisťahovalectva po 11. septembri 2001. Vysvetľuje zmeny postoja Američanov k prisťahovalcom a k myšlienke multikulturalizmu.

### **Kľúčové slová:**

**americká identita, strach z terorizmu, prisťahovalci, multikulturalizmus, Patriot Act, teroristické útoky**

## **Abstract**

KARLUBÍKOVÁ, Michaela: *Shifts in American Identity Resulting from Significant Events in the 21st century*. – University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. Tutor: PhDr. Mária Bláhová, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2017, 67 p.

The aim of the master thesis is to examine the shifts in American identity that resulted from significant events in the twenty-first century. The thesis depicts the way the state representatives and citizens dealt with the threat of terrorism and in what extent it influenced the security policy, political tradition and the issue of immigration in the United States. The thesis is divided into four chapters. A key aspect of the first chapter is to explain the importance of the United States Constitution and its legacy. The second chapter focuses on the initial impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, especially regarding the security policy. Primary concern of the third chapter is the role of the politics before and after the terrorist attacks and the way how the actions of the state representatives influenced the identity crisis in the United States of America. The last chapter is devoted to the issue of immigration upon 9/11. It explains the changes of the American attitude toward the immigrants and the concept of multiculturalism.

### **Key words:**

**American Identity, Fear of Terrorism, Immigrants, Multiculturalism, Patriot Act, Terrorist Attacks**

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## **Introduction**

The September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, left a continuing mark on Americans and they still remember it as a day that changed everything. The collapse of the World Trade Center revealed New York City's emotion. Everyone saw a photo of a man falling from the Twin Tower who decided to jump from the burning skyscraper. People were crying everywhere around Ground Zero, they desperately desired to find their family members alive. Americans witnessed one of the biggest rescue action in the modern history of the nation. The world had seen the unity of all Americans in order to help the victims and rebuild the city. However, no one could understand the motivation of the terrorists to kill 3,000 innocent people.

Prior to commencing the elaborating process of the master thesis, the definition of the main aim was needed. Therefore, the main aim of the thesis is to provide an analysis of the shifts in American identity resulting from significant events in the twenty-first century. The starting point of the analysis are the terrorist attacks in 2001 that influenced the future happening in the country. Their impact on crucial policies as security of the United States or immigration issues will be discussed, as well as the impact on the thinking of Americans and their attitude toward immigrants.

An initial step of the thesis is to introduce the background of the topic. The first chapter is concerned with the explanation of the importance of the American Constitution and the following Bill of Rights that built the fundamentals of American rights, liberties and values. The first chapter is further devoted to the explanation of crucial terms that will be used throughout the thesis and explains the notion of being an American.

The intention of the second chapter is to summarize the main facts about the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their impact on the thinking of Americans. The initial impact of the terrorism was the unity of the nation. However, it was transited into the fear and relying on the actions of the state representatives. The government introduced a new antiterrorist law – the Patriot Act. From the beginning on it was considered to be a controversial bill because it violated the civil liberties.

The central focus of the third chapter is on the role of politics in the twenty-first century. In other words, it will be investigated how the significant events and the following political action influenced the political values of the citizens. The 9/11 terrorist attacks are considered to be a challenge for all Presidents of the new millennium. The chapter analyses the speeches and opinions of the state representatives. Moreover, the shift from the

traditional perceiving of the political parties to the crisis of the Republicans and Democrats will be discussed.

Finally, the aim of the last chapter is to examine the issue of multiculturalism and ethnicity upon 9/11. The attention will be drawn to the distinctive immigration patterns. A fear of immigrants upon 9/11 has become a center of the national debate because Americans could not understand the reason for killing 3,000 innocent people in 2001. It resulted in questioning the concept of multiculturalism and reinventing the phrase “Nation of Immigrants.”

The main reason for choosing this topic is personal interest. It is a commonly held view that the terrorist attacks have changed everything in the United States. Therefore, there is a definite need for me to analyze the major changes. My personal experience of working with Americans has driven this research because I desired to find out more about the nature of Americans and their common values.

In order to achieve the aim of the thesis, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was applied. Although the qualitative approach to the thesis was preferred, an important quantitative method – the researching of various sources – was a starting point of the elaborating of the thesis. Due to the fact that the topic refers to the American history, a wide range of English documents was available. A number of studies have examined the changes in America upon 9/11. For instance, the afterword of Philip Zelickow “The 9/11 Commission Report” provided the crucial facts about the post 9/11 era. Moreover, the analysis of various speeches of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump provided important insights into the political scene in America.

The obtained data were primarily of textual character and not numerical. Therefore, in order to increase the reliability of the study, the qualitative methods were used. They offer an effective way of analyzing the events. The intention was to describe individual opinions on impact of the significant events by analyzing various speeches and statements of Americans, mostly politicians. Therefore, the descriptive method was used. The last part of the quantitative research was the personal interaction with Americans in order to be able to evaluate the American identity. The applied research methods will prove or reject the following hypothesis: The American identity underwent significant changes in the beginning of the twenty-first century.

# 1 American Values and Rights

Recently, there has been a growing interest in reinterpreting the original American values. The United States Constitution is a crucial document for the research of American values. This document provides a general framework for description of American core values and rights. The intention of the Constitution can be signified by its Preamble. It was created by “the people of the United States” (American Constitution Society for Law and Policy). The Constitution is therefore not a law of the sovereign states, but the governance of the people of the United States.

As the thesis will further explain, one of the core values of Americans is the value of liberty. The Preamble mentions the notion “Blessings of Liberty”. It criticizes the deprivation of liberty to anyone.

Moving toward the second important value of the Constitution, the notion of democracy will be further described. The aim of the Constitution was to avoid the exclusion of Americans from participating in law-making due to their race, wealth, or religion. They desired to cease the complaints about the British Crown and therefore required the chosen Representatives to be the citizens of the United States.

The establishment of the Constitution was followed by various amendments. The first one was called the Bill of Rights. The initial Constitution did not contain national bill of rights. The main reason for its omitting was the fear of not enumerating all rights. Moreover, the majority of people were persuaded that “it would merely affirm the natural existence of rights already in force” (American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, p.13). On the other hand, despite the importance of these facts, several states argued and did not ratify the Constitution without the bill of rights. Finally, after a long national debate, the Ninth Amendment was introduced: “The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.” (American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, p.14).

The Bill of Rights demonstrated several provisions such as the free exercise of religion mentioned in the First Amendment or the duty to provide trial rights to criminals. It is also necessary to mention several other rights such as the right to assembly and petition from the First Amendment, or freedom of speech, collective democratic activity and individual dignity. The Bill of Rights also protects the citizens against unreasonable seizures or searches.

A turning point in the American history was the Civil War and the notion of slavery. “Black soldiers earned for black people throughout the nation not only freedom from bondage, but also a new stature, a new sense of worth and potential, and an incontrovertible claim to be included among ‘We the People of the United States’.” (American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, p. 16).

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 provided that “all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed, are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States.” It further declared that all citizens “shall have the same right . . . to make and enforce contracts, to sue, be parties, and give evidence, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens, and shall be subject to like punishment, pains, and penalties, and to none other, any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, to the contrary notwithstanding.” (American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, p. 18).

The first mention of the term American identity is an important issue to be emphasized. The Fourteenth Amendment explained the idea of national citizenship for the first time. It was believed that Americans were all people either born or naturalized in the United States. Simultaneously, the nationalization of American identity was codified for the first time. There was no unanimous definition of national identity. The national identity was influenced by state identity. However, by the Fourteenth Amendment, a new identity “citizens of the United States” occurred and federal representatives became responsible for the most fundamental rights.

The American Constitution is the first message of government to its citizens. It is crucial to realize that there is the continental adaptation of the text meaning among Americans in order to face the events and challenges of new generations. That is the main reason why the values and also the notion of the American identity have undergone constant change.

## **1.1 Defining American Identity**

American history has been viewed as an identity with an ancestry from Europe. “America has been racially diverse since our very beginning on the Virginia shore, and this reality is increasingly becoming visible and ubiquitous.” (Railton, 2011, p. 2). The definition of the American identity was controversial from the beginning. In order to describe the

historical visions, it is crucial to mention that English was often unofficially referred to as national language of the United States. However, the country was believed to be multilingual from the start due to numerous immigrants from Europe or Africa. The languages of Native Americans should also be taken into consideration when explaining the fundamentals of American identity.

Another controversy is the religion. The word “God” is mentioned in various important documents. Even the American currency displays the statement “In God we trust”. The refusing of this religious approach is an important issue. Probably numerous multicultural narratives would ask: “Whose, and which, God? And what of Deists and atheists?” (Railton, 2011, p.4).

It is important to introduce the opinion of Barbara Herrnstein Smith: “There is no single, comprehensive microculture in which all or even most of the citizens of this nation actually participate, no numerically preponderant ‘majority’ culture in relation to which any or all of the others are minority culture, and no culture that, in Hirsch's terms, ‘transcends’ any or all other cultures.” (Railton, 2011, p.4). The liberating politics of difference became a keystone of the American identity.

On the other hand, there are numerous definitions of what it means to be an American that do not emphasize the multicultural view. “The old view [of what it means to be an American] was that, by recognizing and accepting man's natural rights, men found a fundamental basis of unity and sameness “. (Railton, 2011, p.5).

In the literature, several theories have been proposed to explain the American identity. The American identity is often explained as an attempt to respect ancestors and being proud of all the races. (Railton, 2011). It resulted into the nation that is able to tolerate each nation and individualities. On the other hand, cosmopolitan multiculturalism, often described as basic element of the American identity, opposed this idea. Basically, the core of this idea is the pattern of the “melting pot”. According to this concept, the American identity is united, it is believed to be a composition of various cultural differences (Railton, 2011). Many critics considered it dangerous, as “the alien shall be forcibly assimilated to that Anglo-Saxon tradition which they unquestionably label American” (Railton, 2011, p.7). One of the important examples of this danger is presented by the return of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.

Summing up the both approaches, it can be concluded that it is not an easy task to find an exact definition of the American identity. When it comes to the consideration of the geographical area of the United States, it is to be seen that it belongs to the largest countries

worldwide. Therefore, there exists no united opinion on American identity. However, both main approaches accept the multiplicity of the American nation. Some of them supports the united national identity, the others oppose this idea and emphasize the understanding of the individual cultures. Both admit that the American identity was achieved through the multiplicity.

## **1.2 Toward Disuniting of Americans**

There is some evidence to suggest that the concept of multiculturalism is not an ideal one. It is necessary to illustrate the happening at the end of the twentieth century, in order to be able to explain the reasons for the rising critique of multiculturalism. This concept started to be blamed for redefining the former national identity. Henry Louis Gates Jr. expressed the following: “Today, the mindless celebration of difference for its own sake is no more tenable than the nostalgic return to some monochrome homogeneity.” (Railton, 2011, p.7). Arthur Schlesinger observed the disunity: “If division into ethnic communities establishes the basic structure of American society and the basic meaning of American history, then instead of a transformative nation with an identity all its own, America in this new light is seen as preservative of diverse alien identities.” (Railton, 2011, p.7).

The American identity has undergone several shifts. The defining process started during the settlement and Revolutionary eras, through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' events. At the end of the twentieth century, all scholars hoped for a new and common American identity to be defined in the twenty-first century.

## **1.3 American Dream**

One of the key aspects of American identity is also the concept of American Dream. It unites all Americans, whether they were the Pilgrims, the Founding Fathers, or members of later generations. They strived for their goals, without knowing if they would ever reach them. James Truslow Adams defined American dream as: “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man” (Cullen, 2004, p. 7). It can be argued what he meant by “better, richer and fuller”. There are several theories. It can refer to the issue of money, religious and political freedom, educational attainment, or freedom of sexual expression.

The term American dream has different varieties. Firstly, small groups of English religious dissenters came to the new continent in order to gain freedom of religious

expression. Numerous historians consider this as the beginning of American Dream, as the people came to the new continent and desired to be treated equally. One of the famous definitions of the concept American Dream was the so called upward mobility. It means the economic and social changes. Abraham Lincoln embodied this dream. He can be quoted by the following words: “Although volume upon volume is written to prove slavery a very good thing, we never hear of the man who wishes to take the good of it, by being a slave himself. Most governments have been based, practically, on the denial of the equal rights of men, as I have, in part, stated them; ours began, by affirming those rights.” (Lincoln, 1858). He stressed the injustice of slavery, and also defined American dream.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that American Dream supports the issue of immigration. It presents an idea of America as a country where all people can live peacefully together – in other words, the idea of a “melting pot”. All nationalities should be fused into a new nation without abandoning their cultural diversities and customs, in order to create a better world in the United States.

To sum it up, the definitions described here illustrate the diversity of the meaning of American Dream. Some Americans connect it predominantly with materialism and becoming rich through hard work. However, the others see a meaning beyond the materialism. Equality and faith both play a significant role in achieving American Dream. They strive for a better, fulfilling and happier way of life.

According to Jim Cullen, American dream that dominates at the beginning of the twenty-first century, can be characterized by the culture of Hollywood. Fame and fortune became more alluring if achieved without obvious effort. This can be explained as a shift from the so called adventurers searching for their dream on the plantations of Virginia to the speculators mining money in several western cities of the United States.

The following simplification of Jim Cullen explains the changing of American national life: “One of the greatest ironies – perhaps the greatest – of the American dream is that its foundations were laid by people who specifically rejected a belief that they did have control over their destinies. In its broadest sense, you can say that it begins with people who denied their efforts could affect their fates, moves through successors who later declared independence to get that chance, to heirs who elaborated a gospel of self-help promising they could shape their fates with effort, and ends with people who long to achieve dreams without having to make any effort at all.” (Cullen, 2004, p.10).



## **1.4 Nation of Immigrants**

Central to the entire discipline of American identity is also the explanation of the phrase “Nation of Immigrants”. Throughout the years, people came to America due to the various reasons which were mentioned above. This shared way how they came to the United States and became Americans is also a fundamental part of the American identity.

For instance, the event of the Great Famine in Ireland in the nineteenth century forced Irish people to immigrate to the United States. A large portion of China's population came to the new continent due to the severe drought and starvation. Those early immigrants contributed to the development of railroads. Later, during the Industrial Revolution of the late nineteenth century, many immigrants were attracted by a growing number of businesses in the United States. Moreover, those businesses needed workers and therefore the demand for migrants grew. The end of the nineteenth century and the years before the World War I can be characterized by new immigrants coming from countries such as Hungary, Poland, Italy and Russia. The immigration process in the twentieth century brought some major changes. “By 1900, New York City had as many Irish residents as Dublin. It had more Italians than any city outside Rome and more Poles than any city except Warsaw. It had more Jews than any other city in the world, as well as sizeable numbers of Slavs, Lithuanians, Chinese, and Scandinavians.” (Lincoln, 1858). It was one of the first cosmopolitan cities. The majority of immigrants came there as Ellis Island was opened there – the aim was to check the immigrants before allowing them to enter the country. However, the Chinese Exclusion Act was introduced in 1892, it was the first official governmental document to limit the immigration into the country by race or nationality. From World War I on, 500 African Americans came to the United States every day. This process, called also as the Great Migration, continued until 1930.

Today, many people believe that migrants are a threat to the nation's security. On the other hand, no one denies the importance of the immigrants throughout the history. The immigration is believed to be a main aspect that made the country great. The phenomenon of “people on the move” is a characteristic element of the American identity and uniqueness. However, the twenty-first century brought some significant shifts in the immigration process and American attitude toward it.

## **2 Impact of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks**

### **2.1 Collapse of the World Trade Center**

The construction of the World Trade Center began in 1966 and it represented a unique complex in the planning of New York City and America. It consisted of seven buildings, including two towers – 1 WTC, or the North Tower, and 2 WTC, or the South Tower.

The uniqueness of the World Trade Center is demonstrated by the previous terrorist attacks in 1993, when the explosion of the van killed six people.

In order to analyze the impacts of the 9/11 attacks on the American identity, it is necessary to describe what exactly happened on September 11, the day that changed America. At 8:46:40 a.m., the hijacked American Airlines Flight 11, hit into the upper portion of the North Tower. Hundreds of civilians were killed immediately upon impact; others were trapped and unable to leave. Moreover, some people were forced to jump from the building.

At 9:03:11 a.m., the hijacked United Airlines Flight 175 flew into the South Tower. As a result, what looked like the largest rescue operation in the city history doubled in magnitude. The initial response was the mobilization of the largest rescue operation in New York City.

However, the rescue action was influenced by the lack of knowledge. According to one of the chiefs in the lobby of the North Tower: “One of the most critical things in a major operation like this is to have information. We didn't have a lot of information coming in. We didn't receive any reports of what was seen from the helicopters. It was impossible to know how much damage was done on the upper floors, whether the stairwells were intact or not.” (Zelikow, 2011, p. 413).

As a result of the collapse of both Towers, the nation suffered the largest loss of life. There were 2,973 victims of these terrorist attacks. The Fire Department of New York, Port Authority Police Department and New York Police Department suffered a significant number of fatalities – the largest one in the history. To illustrate the unity of the American nation after these attacks, it has to be mentioned that thousands of civilians, city, state, and federal employees devoted themselves to rebuild New York City over the coming days and weeks.

The terrorist transformed also other two planes into guided missiles. In the meanwhile, American Airlines Flight 77 hit the west side of the Pentagon military

headquarters at 9:45 a.m. The attack resulted in the immense death of 125 military personnel and 64 civilians on board, and in devastation of the Pentagon building.

Consequently, United Flight 93 was hijacked. However, the passengers received calls about the previous attacks before taking off. They tried to fight the terrorists and prevent them from hitting another building. Unfortunately, the aircraft crashed in a rural field in Western Pennsylvania at 10:10 a.m. and all 45 passengers were killed. The intended target of the terrorists is still unknown. The possible targets include the White House or one of several power plants on the east coast.

President George W. Bush returned to the White House and delivered speech to the horrified nation: "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America." (History, 2010). His words were followed by operation Enduring Freedom which aim was to destroy Osama Bin Laden's terrorist network in Afghanistan. Osama Bin Laden was finally killed by American forces in May 2011 under President Barack Obama.

## **2.2 Patriot Act**

The significance of the new antiterrorist law upon the attacks demonstrates the short period of time that was needed to draft a new piece of legislation. Only four days after the attacks, on September 15, President George W. Bush convened a meeting with the Cabinet in order to discuss the ideas about the threat of terrorism. American Attorney General John David Ashcroft, an important member of President's cabinet, expressed himself: "It is important to disrupt the terrorists right now, and in the immediate future... We need a long-term strategy for dealing with terrorism abroad, and a continuous, long-term program to go after terrorists in our own country, because that's the kind of strategy that they have in place." (Steffoff, 2010, p. 15). It was evident that the American public required some political action to fight against possible terrorist attacks in the upcoming days. That is the reason why the politicians enacted the Patriot Act. Subsequently, the debate has risen in the society whether it was a proper answer to the terrorism or not.

However, the final Patriot Act is not considered as the first legislative action upon 9/11. Just two days after the attacks, the Combating Terrorism Act of 2001 was introduced. The aim of this act was to allow the FBI to wiretap telephone and Internet communications between people and to gain access to the information about telephone and Internet use. That all should have helped the investigative process, as till that day the permission was needed.

The Patriot Act was about to become an effective method to fight the terrorist threat. The main reason of the legislators for the need of the Patriot Act was the assumption - if the authorities did not have to request the permission to check the privacy of the suspicious people, they could act faster, they could even prevent the 9/11 attacks (Steffoff, 2010).

The non-existence of the efficient antiterrorism act before 9/11 was the subject of criticism of many Americans. That is the reason why law enforcement officials proposed the need for greater freedom and flexibility in the Internet era. On the other hand, the majority of Americans feared the violation of their civil rights, the part of the Constitution that characterizes the notion of the American identity. Shortly after the worst terrorist attacks in the country, Americans faced a question, unable to answer: "Was the protection of the United States from terrorism more important than protecting the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?" The feeling of insecurity in the society upon 9/11 can be described as ubiquitous. Some Americans could not understand the FBI was unable to prevent the attacks. Rebecca Steffoff mentions in her book the typical reaction of Americans after the terrorist disaster: "Maybe the Senate wants to go ahead and adopt new abilities to wiretap our citizens. Maybe they want to adapt new abilities to go into people's computers. Maybe that will make us feel safer. Maybe. And maybe what the terrorist have done made us a little bit less safe. Maybe they have increased Big Brother in this country." (Steffoff, 2010, p. 19). Rebecca Steffoff mentions the concept of Big Brother that was introduced in George Orwell's novel "1984". George Orwell expressed there his fear that an all-powerful government is able to spy on every aspect of citizens' lives.

On the other hand, the underlying argument for the enacting of the new antiterrorism act, despite the possibility of threatening the civil liberties, was the fear of the new terrorist attack. The society was trying to recover from the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and could not imagine that the horrifying attacks would continue. Not only the public was afraid of the possibility of the new attacks. The state representatives also admitted this possibility and according to their opinion, the protection of American citizens from another attack was more important than the protection of private information or conversations.

### *2.2.1 Toward the Patriot Act*

Firstly, the Senate voted unanimously for the Combating Terrorism Act. In spite of the fact, it was approved, it was never valid, because more comprehensive antiterrorism bills were supported.

The fear became the component that influenced thoughts of the whole American society. That was the main reason why the political representatives did not want to let the fear to change the nature of Americans. American Senator Patrick Leahy, one of the co-workers of the new antiterrorism law, remembered seeing the same shock among Americans after the murder of President John F. Kennedy. He announced: “I saw the same shock [after 9/11], and I wanted to make sure our shock didn't turn into panic.” (Steffoff, 2010, p. 20).

Patrick Leahy was also afraid of some rash undetailed solution of antiterrorism law that would only create more problems. His aim was to propose a thoughtfully crafted bill, balancing the civil rights of American citizens and also giving the government the power to protect its people from terrorism.

### *2.2.2 Action of American Citizens*

In the United States, there are several significant agencies whose main duty is to act as watchdogs in American society. It means that they protect the civil liberties and privacy rights. The situation after 9/11 concerned groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Democracy and Technology, and the Electronic Privacy Information Center. They debated even before the attacks about the domestic surveillance and suspected American politicians from wanting to gain new rights to disrupt people's privacy without necessarily protecting them from new terrorist attacks.

Morton Halperin, a former head of the Washington, D.C. office of the American Civil Liberties Union, who worked in the Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Bill Clinton administration, declared that the society should be interested in protecting the civil liberties. According to his words, the civil liberties should be considered before enacting the new legislation (Steffoff, 2010).

Only few days after 9/11, the Center for Democracy and Technology and also the Electronic Privacy Information Center started to cooperate with Morton Halperin. Their common aim was to fight for civil liberties. The Americans gathered at the national headquarters of the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington determined to prepare the final version of the proposal.

Laura Murphy, the director of the national office, declared: “I had never seen that kind of turnout in 25 years. I mean, people were worried. They just knew this [9/11] was a recipe for government overreaching.” (Steffoff, 2010, p. 22).

The official statement was created at the meeting and later signed by representatives of more than 150 organizations, by 300 professors of law, by people via the Internet, and also by some government and public representatives. However, although the Americans feared new attacks more than ever before, the statement was not so popular. The possible reason to explain it is the fact that the United Nations still gathered around the ruins of 9/11, determined to help everywhere it was needed. Moreover, they desired the reasons for hijacking of the planes.

The fear of the new terrorist attack seemed to overcome the fight for civil liberties. According to the poll upon 9/11, 61 percent of Americans voted for the prioritizing of the national security over civil liberties. At this point, the first impact on the American identity short after 9/11 can be demonstrated. The majority of people was ready to tolerate such response to the threat of terrorism. It called out a significant debate in the society, the experts tried to explain why the terrorist attacks could change the thinking of Americans.

Short after the society partially agreed on approving the new antiterrorism law, there was a meeting in the Capitol Building. Among the attendees, there were both political parties of Congress, members of the Department of Justice, senators, members of the House of Representatives and President George W. Bush. Finally, a compromise bill was created, trying to balance both the security issues and giving access to the private information and emphasizing the importance of civil liberties.

In spite of the fact that the Patriot Act was almost considered as enacted, several Senators wanted to emphasize the importance of protection of civil liberties. Wisconsin Senator Feingold pronounced: "There is no doubt that if we lived in a police state, it would be easier to catch terrorists. If we lived in a country where the police were allowed to search your home at any time for any reason; if we lived in a country where the government was entitled to open your mail, eavesdrop on your phone conversations, or intercept your e-mail communications; if we lived in a country where people could be held in jail indefinitely based on what they write or think, or based on mere suspicion that they were up to no good, the government would probably discover and arrest more terrorists, or would-be terrorists, just as it would find more lawbreakers generally. But that would not be a country which we want to live... In short, that country would not be America." (Stafoff, 2010, p. 30).

Finally, the Patriot Act came into force on October 26, 2001, after long debates.

### *2.2.3 Criticism of the Patriot Act*

The public opinion plays a vital role in the shaping of the American identity after 9/11. That is the reason why it is necessary to analyze the reasons for the unpopularity of the Patriot Act.

To demonstrate the dissatisfaction with the proposed Patriot Act, it is necessary to mention the fact that the majority of people thought it came too late. The members of Islamic groups threatened the American population with intending to kill as many Americans as humanly possible much earlier as it actually happened. The citizens that were not afraid of the violation of civil liberties connected with the Act, were usually persuaded that such piece of legislation should have existed before the new millennium.

For several years, great effort has been devoted to the study of the consequences of the Patriot Act on American society. According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Patriot Act goes against the Constitution, especially against the First and Fourth Amendment. This fact introduces a new type of surveillance of Americans. Moreover, the required information by FBI increase significantly every year. Even though these activities should protect the public from terrorism, it can be perceived that the state collects private information about people that have no link to terrorism (Timm, 2011).

Quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to violation of human rights in democratic societies. The United States of America is believed to be a country with the most developed democracy system in the world. However, a significant change in perceiving the level of democracy was observed after the adoption of the Patriot Act. It has been found that the Patriot Act breaks numerous international documents. It is necessary to mention the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant and Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Nair, 2011).

### *2.2.4 The Violation of the Constitution*

The Patriot Act threatens the most important document for all Americans – the American Constitution. The following part of this chapter discusses the impact of the violation of the Constitution on American citizens.

In spite of the fact that the First Amendment emphasizes the freedom of political expression and secures the right to react on political issues, Americans felt unsecure after the adoption of the Patriot Act. The fact that they have to be careful when talking about

politics totally threatens the pursuit of democracy in the society. After passing of the Patriot Act, Americans became persuaded that it is restricted to talk freely about certain issues as the governmental structures obtained the right to observe the telephone or even Internet conversation.

The Patriot Act provided the authorities with the right to check people's privacy. However, according to the common opinion, the financial records of American citizens are still considered to be their privacy: they are “our personal documents and should be protected and not searched by law” (Nair, 2011, p. 167). The violation of the Fourth Amendment brings significant questions. People ask themselves why the government is interested in gaining personal information, such as their favorite activities or hobbies. Furthermore, the government limitation to people's liberties should not exceed the people's freedom stated in the Constitution.

After the Patriot Act took effect in October 2001, several cases of the violation of human rights were observed. It can be concluded that one of the biggest population group affected by the violation of human rights after 9/11 were Muslims. The novelist Nair describes in his book that Muslims that overstayed their visas were forced to stay in the prison for more than 48 hours and no access to the lawyer or family visits were allowed. Moreover, Muslims were not even informed about the reason of putting them into custody (Nair, 2011).

Another example of the violation of civil liberties after the Patriot Act came into force is the normalization of the “sneak-and-peek” warrants. It allowed the responsible employees to enter the suspect's house and to search for the information in private computers. There is evidence that only 0,8 percent of all times revealed potential terrorism (Timm, 2011).

Particular attention is paid to the way how the controversial piece of legislation came into force. The bill was available to read only few minutes before the vote. Due to the shortage of time, there was no place for long discussions.

It has been demonstrated that the Patriot Act was not an ideal piece of legislation in the United States of America. In conclusion, short after 9/11, it was necessary for the state representatives to prevent their citizens from another terrorist threat. The Patriot Act should have given the States the right to gain necessary pieces of information and act faster than ever before, in order to be able to stop the potential terrorists. However, it is not easy to enact a law limiting the civil liberties in a democratic country. Especially not in the United States, in the country with the most developed democratic system in the world. That is considered



to be the main reason for the unpopularity of the Patriot Act. It caused that Americans were afraid to speak freely with their family and friends because they were not sure if they were not eavesdropped. This analysis of the Patriot Act era has shown that the Constitution is still considered to be the most important document in the United States. As Abraham Lincoln said: the democratic government should be “government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Nair, 2011, p. 168). The rights of the citizens cannot be violated in any democratic country in the twenty-first century.

### **3 The Role of Politics in Influencing American Identity**

The political situation of a country always played an important role in influencing identity of its citizens. American citizens are therefore no exception. The political course of events in the United States still influences the lives and thinking of Americans. The following part of the thesis analyses what change the American politics goes through in the twenty-first century and which values and traditions remained unchanged till the present day.

The notion that always separated the United States of America from the rest of the world can be described as American exceptionalism. This phenomenon also includes the political happening in the country. Due to this fact, there are two major active political parties governing the country throughout the centuries – Democrats and Republicans. It is not common in numerous countries to have the same political parties for such a long period of time. However, it does not mean that the parties have not undergone changes. The events of the last decades influenced the strong tradition of Republicans and Democrats. The stability of a political party depends strongly on its politicians, especially on the role of its leaders. The image of the leaders influences also the nature of the political party and its perception by citizens. Therefore, the following part of the thesis will focus on the influence of various political leaders on the major political party, but more importantly, on the notion of the American identity in the twenty-first century.

#### **3.1 Political Parties in the Twentieth Century**

In this part of the chapter, the thesis centers at the political happenings in the twentieth century. The political trends of the late twentieth century had a significant influence on the future changes in the twenty-first century, that is the reason for mentioning several of them.

During the 1960s, several major events occurred. The neoconservative author Ben J. Wattenberg observed the political changes in the United States during the 1960s. He mentions terrifying events of that era such as the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy. A campaign within the Democratic party to dump President Johnson from office or bloody Democratic political convention in Chicago were also events that dominated in the 1960s. The war in Vietnam represented another characteristic feature of the past era.

Apart from the horrifying events, the 1960s can also be characterized as the period when the term social issues emerged. In order to understand this term that is nowadays

widely used, it is necessary to explain it. Simply explained, the society started to be interested less in economic figures, wages, taxes, deficits or unemployment. Ben J. Wattenberg explains the social issues as the phenomenon that is left over after economy and foreign policy have been taken off the table (Wattenberg, 2010). Words as multiculturalism, abortion, feminism, crime, homosexuality, drugs, or race became equally important as economic issues.

Another significant aspect emerging in the 1960s was the negative view of Americans on American society. The majority of people started to believe that America was not such an ideal country as often referred to. However, the citizens considered America to be “a racist, sexist, sexually repressed, environmentally retrograde, imperialist, corrupt, arrogant and guilty country” (Wattenberg, 2010, p. 20).

Various groups in the society commenced to reshape the traditional American values. The aim of these groups was to put an emphasis on numerous new trends that needed the attention of the whole society. Further analysis of these changes revealed that several new movements – such as feminist, gay, civil rights, environmental or consumer movement – extended the former American values.

The new trends confirmed that shift in the political program of the major political parties was necessary. The Democrats became unpopular because they did not support the changes in the society when abortion and amnesty became the central topics. They were against neighborhood school, against single-family homes, against prayer.

Flourishing liberalism defined the society of the late twentieth society. The Democrats became more liberal and Ronald Reagan criticized it: “Government is the problem, not the solution.” (Wattenberg, 2010, p. 32). It means that he criticized the government for being too liberal and noted that the government hurts Americans by some of their activities. Ronald Reagan also listed some of the harmful governmental activities: the most important mistake was that the Democratic candidates aimed their campaign at minorities, environmentalists, or arms controllers. His slogan still consisted of traditional words such as work, family, neighborhood, peace, and freedom.

The end of the millennium can be characterized as the beginning of the crisis of the political parties, especially the crisis of the Democrats. The words of Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas explain those changes in the politics. He admits that neither liberalism nor conservatism were working, according to his words, both parties were “brain dead” (Wattenberg, 2010, p. 42). The reform of both political parties was needed in order to gain the support of the citizens.

Finally, the Democrats have changed. They became moderate. They ceased to support the death penalty as they used to. It was no longer their priority to assuage the victims. Moreover, they commenced to be interested more in values. During the 1992 Democratic Convention in New York Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey introduced the changes in the attitude of the Democrats in his motivational speech: “Let America be America again. Let it be the dream it used to be.” (Wattenberg, 2010, p. 44). Except these famous words, his speech had a significant message. He spoke about the Americans that were free and this freedom could not be endangered neither by different social nor economic circumstances. Otherwise, those differences should be seen as a challenge to achieve a common goal. The aim of all Americans is to prove that it is possible to live together despite all racist, ethnic, gender, and religious differences. That has always been an important value of American citizens, a value that lost its significance before the beginning of the new millennium. That is the main reason why the Democrats tried to revive these values in order to “let America be the dream it can be” (Wattenberg, 2010, p. 44). With the approach of the twenty-first century, everybody hoped that American dream will be revived, although everyone was sceptic.

## **3.2 Politics in the Twenty-First Century**

The beginning of the new millennium is often associated with the terrorist attacks in 2001. Therefore, the following part of the thesis will focus on different opinions on how the political activities of the main state representatives upon 9/11 changed America and the American identity.

### ***3.2.1 Presidency of George W. Bush***

To start with, Dr. Muqtedar Khan in his article introduced a common opinion that the September 11 attacks changed everything. This can be considered as a strong announcement and also a starting point of the analysis of the political actions upon 9/11.

The slogan “everything has changed” upon 9/11 was ubiquitous. It also became a strong political tool to make administration changes. The following lines summarize the major effects of the terrorist attacks on American policy.

### *3.2.2 Reasons for the Rising of Anti-Americanism*

According to annual report of Amnesty International, the American government has changed the attitude toward conflicts abroad. It means that the state representatives decided to use military force whenever they considered it needed. This has been strongly criticized mainly abroad. To say something more about the foreign affairs of the United States upon 9/11, Dr. Muqtedar Khan points out that there were significant shifts in the observing of the international law. For instance, the United States disregarded the arguments of the allied states and decided to invade Iraq. Another significant point is the American withdrawal from Kyoto protocol which aim was to cease rapid climate change in the world.

Dr. Muqtedar Khan analyses also the change in the perception of the human rights in the United States. Before 9/11, the country was believed to be the leader in maintaining human rights. President George W. Bush decided to withdrew his country from the International Criminal Court. Another step that has been considered as a failure was the refusal of the Geneva Conventions on how to treat prisoners of war that were captured in Afghanistan or sentenced in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba (Khan, 2004). The American government announced that Guantánamo Bay detainees “were not on US soil and therefore not covered by the US Constitution, and that ‘enemy combatant’ status meant they could be denied some legal protections” (CNN Library, 2017).

Hence, it can be suggested that those above-mentioned shifts in the foreign policy of the United States played a significant role in the development of negative global image of Americanism and anti-Americanism. Invasion of Iraq has been considered to be one of the reasons for the increase of anti-Americanism in the world. The analysis has showed that the policy of George W. Bush's administration contributed to the negative attitude of other countries towards the invasion of Iraq. For instance, Turkey refused to allow American troops to use Turkish area as a base to invade Iraq in 2003 due to their refusal of the invasion. This happened despite the decades of close alliance. According to the survey from 2003, only 12 percent of Turkish population agreed with the American foreign policy. The attitude towards the United States has changed because of the fact that the year before more than 30 percent of the population were for the American policy (Lindberg, p. 23).

The evidence of anti-Americanism occurred also in Germany. Despite the fact that German government has always tried to maintain solid relationship with the United States, the priority of German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in 2003 was peace. He refused to join the war in Iraq. The thorough analysis of the public opinion in Germany has relieved that

between 2002 and 2003 the positive view of the United States disappeared – there was a decline from 78 percent to 45 percent (Lindberg, p. 23).

On the other hand, there were also positive responses toward the American invasion in Iraq. Prime Minister of Great Britain Tony Blair did not admit any rising anti-Americanism in the country toward the invasion of Iraq or toward his solid partnership with George W. Bush. He decided to join the war and help American troops. In his speech in 2003, Tony Blair talked about the division of world powers into two poles. According to his words, the United States and Britain were in one corner and France, Germany and Russia in the other corner. He named this phenomenon as “resentment of US predominance” (Guardian, 2003). He further defended the policy of George W. Bush: “There is fear of US unilateralism. People ask: do the US listen to us and our preoccupations? And there is perhaps a lack of full understanding of US preoccupations after 11<sup>th</sup> September. I know all of this. But the way to deal with it is not rivalry but partnership. Partners are not servants but neither are they rivals. I tell you what Europe should have said last September to the US. With one voice it should have said: we understand your strategic anxiety over terrorism and WMD [weapons of mass destruction] and we will help you meet it.” (Guardian, 2003). Prime Minister Tony Blair committed himself with these words to support the United States not only during the invasion of Iraq but also during their war on terrorism.

### *3.2.3 George W. Bush and His Administration*

In the light of the third millennium, the United States elected their new President. However, the 2000 Presidential election was controversial. It means that the new President was not designated until the United States Supreme Court approved him - George W. Bush. The way he was elected, the controversial way, presented a difficult task and challenge for him since the first day. He had to prove the public his ability to rule the country. Michael Genovese from Loyola Marymount University mentions some significant successful measures taken by George W. Bush during his first phase of Presidency. For instance, he cut taxes or introduced a new education reform. Those attempts could be an interesting subject for a discussion. However, the events of terrorist attacks in 2001 changed the perception of George W. Bush's Presidency. It is possible to hypothesize that 9/11 influenced his administration and started a wave of criticism. Apart from the evaluation of the President George W. Bush, there is a question: Would the United States be the same country as they

are today, if there were no attacks? Would America be perceived differently by foreigners? And finally, would the American identity remain unchanged?

The day before 9/11, no one believed that George W. Bush will be more than one-term president. However, as Michael Genovese explains, the President is granted a wide range of powers in the crisis that can help him to act differently (Genovese, p. 7). As mentioned above, the events of the terrorist attacks were considered to be a starting point of the crisis in the country. It became a primary duty of George W. Bush to ensure the public that the terrorists would be captured and to minimize the threat of further terrorism in the country. Upon 9/11, the new President George W. Bush stood before a lifetime challenge. Everybody relied on their President, on the most responsible person in the United States. Not only the public expected his actions, he obtained power also from Congress, from Democratic opposition and from representatives of foreign countries. How he dealt with this overwhelming responsibility and in what extent it influenced the future of the country and the attitude of Americans will be analyzed in the following lines.

Firstly, the 9/11 terrorist attacks have united Americans. The moment when they saw the buildings going down, the chaos dominated everywhere. These kinds of situations always require special measures to be taken and unity of the nation in order to be able to deal with the danger and fear. The single goal of Americans but also the goal of the majority of nations was to capture the enemy - the terrorists. It can be concluded that one day changed the thinking of Americans, no one could imagine that high sense of unity without the attacks. Professor Gary Gregg adds that George W. Bush gained the support of his people mainly because of his fearless attitude. Instead of finding a safe hiding place immediately upon the attacks, he spoke to American people. That reassured them that there was someone in charge of the future of the country. According to the polling agencies, upon the attacks, 90 percent of Americans supported his presidency. This made him the most popular President for a short period of time upon 9/11 (Gregg, 2017).

Michael Genovese presented the fact that the popularity of George W. Bush upon 9/11 rose up to 80 percent (Genovese, p. 8). This fact is rather controversial because various people refused the phenomenon of President's popularity. Moreover, "the public needed to believe that he had grown" (Genovese, p. 8). The immediate impact of the attacks on the public was that they were shocked and frightened. To analyze it psychologically, the public needed to be comforted and assured that someone would deal with the chaos and return the normality of everyday life. Americans chose George W. Bush to be the person in control of the negative events. This identification of the people with George W. Bush underlines the

role of the President in American society. The importance and psychological role of the President can be summed up in the following quotation of the playwright Arthur Miller: “What we want from leading men is quite the same thing as we demand of our leaders, the reassurance that we are in the hands of one who has mastered events and his own uncertainties. Human beings, as the poet said, cannot bear very much reality, and the art of politics is our best proof.” (Genovese, p. 9). The identification with the President was one of the specific feature of the American identity.

The result of the extreme fear of the public after 9/11 was an Administrative Presidency. It means that the President possesses the power – this system is also called president-centric power. President George W. Bush separated the typical power system of checks and balances. Basically, he was allowed to act without the approval of the Congress. Michael Genovese criticizes these events; he does not agree with the separation of powers. He thinks that the war against terrorism upon 9/11 initiated the improper use of power. The war became the tool to rule the everyday life and the country. “Under this notion, the president is the government!” (Genovese, p. 11).

As has been noted, the second phase of the George W. Bush's Presidency, the period upon 9/11, can be characterized by his words: “...either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (Genovese, p. 12).

As the months have passed, George W. Bush entered his third phase of Presidency when the Republicans gained the majority of seats in both Chambers of Congress. During his fourth phase of Presidency, by that we understand the era after 2002, George W. Bush introduced new formulation “The National Security Strategy of the United States of America”. Michael Genovese explains what has changed. According to the new document, the United States can, when it determines that another nation might sometime in the future, threaten the United States or their allies, attack them before they engage in any act (Genovese, p. 14). The period can be also characterized by the increasing number of weaponry in order to outspend all potential enemies.

In the final analysis, George W. Bush is still considered as a controversial President. On the one hand, he was a competent crisis leader and his words upon the 2001 terrorist attacks supported the nation and united it. It can be speculated how the attacks would affect Americans if George W. Bush had fear to combat the terrorism. On the other hand, the following invasion of Iraq divided Americans. Firstly, the majority of the population agreed with the war. Unfortunately, the war did not end during the long period of George W. Bush's Presidency and the antagonism toward the war became ubiquitous. The negative result of



the war which was the death of more than 4,000 Americans affected lives of numerous citizens (Gregg, 2017). The unpopularity of the war led to the dissatisfaction with the Presidency of George W. Bush and consequently to the victory of the Democrats in 2008.

Although the Democrats and Republicans cooperated upon the terrorist attacks and presented themselves as a unity, it did not last for a longer period of time. However, emotions upon 9/11 played a more significant role in the lives of Americans than the evaluation of the political actions. Justin Engel admits that people still talk about the attacks emotionally rather than politically (Engel, 2011). While the emotions when talking about breaking the national security and values still occur till the present day, the unity between the main political parties has not survived.

### *3.2.4 Presidency of Barack Obama*

The 2008 presidential election brought a new phenomenon into American politics. Barack Obama won the election collecting 365 votes but more significantly, he became the first African American President in the history of the United States. This fact is no longer perceived with astonishment, as Barack Obama was elected also for his second Presidency. However, when considering the past American identity and the unequal position of the African Americans throughout the American history, it can be concluded that the first Presidency of Barack Obama is a shift in American identity. The following part of the thesis will focus on the reasons for election of the first African American President.

To start with, one of the most important reason for the election of Barack Obama and also the change of the party in charge was the dissatisfaction of the nation with the George W. Bush's Presidency. The image of the Republican party was damaged. The majority of population needed a change, a fresh start. The United States were politically tired and desired a leader with new ideas who would possess the ability to lead them into the new decade. To put it differently, the public was divided due to the invasion to Iraq. The initial positive expectations disappeared and were followed by negative feelings. The majority of the citizens commenced to refer to the invasion as to a mistake of George W. Bush. Barack Obama identified himself with those feelings and launched the anti-war campaign: "I do not believe that most of us who voted to give the president authority thought he would so misuse the authority we gave him," he said (Whitesides, 2007). As a result of his speech, he quickly gained the supporters among voters and intended to cease the American engagement in Iraq.

His message when inaugurated was clear. Despite the events of 9/11 and the following war against Iraq that included various decisions and insecurities, he pointed out that people were still considered to be the most important value of the country. He spoke also to the Muslim community, his aim was “mutual interest and mutual respect” (Phillips, 2009). He said: “To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy.” (Phillips, 2009).

### *3.2.5 Evaluation of Barack Obama's Presidency*

This section will present the evaluation of Barack Obama's Presidency. Political analyst Bill Schneider calls his Presidency as “New America” (Borosage, 2016). By that we understand rise of the new potential electorate of people of color. That can be considered as a significant shift toward the new globalized values. Barack Obama did not ignore the needs of the society; he took the new globalized movements into consideration. Importantly, some groups demanded the rights to have a same-sex marriage, the right for women to decide about their own bodies and undergo an abortion or new rights regarding the guns. According to the Reuters Agency, it was a symbol of marching social liberalism (Borosage, 2016). These liberal themes were used to be a characteristic feature of the program of the Republican party. However, the Democratic leader Barack Obama began to defend these new social liberal values. By taking the needs of the society into consideration, he accelerated the change in the society and led it into the new decade of the third millennium.

It is always a significant task to respond to the question if President has changed the course of the nation. In other words, if he can be referred to as a transformational President or only conventional. Robert L. Borosage writes about a transformational responsibility of the President in his article. He emphasizes that Presidents are in charge of showing the public the way out of the ideological crisis. Barack Obama was aware of this fact and his aim could be described as “to change the culture of Washington”. He desired to unite the nation and find common values.

In order to evaluate the two terms of President Barack Obama, the survey conducted by Gallup prior to his farewell speech in January 2017 can be used. It releases the piece of information about the change in the perceiving of the policy of Barack Obama by public. While during his first Presidency and early stage of the second Presidency he was not referred to as a popular President, after he finished in the Presidential office, nearly half of

the American population (47 percent) admits that he will be remembered as an “outstanding” rather or “above average” President, while only 35 percent is still persuaded that he will be evaluated as “below average” or “poor” (Jones, 2017). The Barack Obama's Presidency is often blamed for causing the political polarization. It means that during his Presidency, the crisis of the traditional parties has risen. As the researched material has shown, the majority of Democrats would mark Barack Obama as a suitable and appropriate President, while the Republicans mostly disagreed with his policy due to the fact that they did not want to identify with the Democratic label.

Since 1946, the Gallup Agency has regularly conducted a survey among Americans with the aim to announce the most admirable man of the year in the world. They found out that 22 percent of Americans voted for Barack Obama as the most admirable man of the year 2016 (Jones, 2016).

On the other hand, in the democratic country as the United States are, it is necessary to admit also the faults and negative aspects of the policy of the President. The image of America that Barack Obama inherited was not ideal. Gary Younge from the Guardian cited some of the most important challenges that waited for Barack Obama in 2008. The war in Afghanistan was not successful. Moreover, many family members expected that Barack Obama would withdraw the troops from Afghanistan and bind families together. Gary Younge further describes the situation in 2008. According to his article, the overall poverty rose and it was also the beginning of the world banking crisis with the effect on the world economy. Another significant aspect that can be used in order to describe the situation in 2008 was the crisis of the American identity. All those above-mentioned aspects caused that in a poll of 19 countries, two thirds had a negative view of the United States. But not only the foreign countries did not identify themselves with the policy of America. Americans did not have a better opinion about themselves. Gary Younge also writes about the percentage of Americans with a negative attitude towards the country. He presents the results of a survey. Almost 13 percent of the citizens thought that the country was not moving in the right direction.

Additionally, Barack Obama commenced his Presidential path with the words: “Yes, we can.” Throughout the years, people's opinion has changed into “Could be worse.” (Younge, 2016).

The nation's first African American President Barack Obama delivered his farewell speech in January 2017. The aim of his speech was to warn the society from the upcoming threats and also to defend his policy during his Presidency. He also mentioned the current

political crisis when he spoke about the responsibility of the voters – the American citizens: “... when we sit back and blame the leaders we elect without examining our own role in electing them” (Landler, 2017). With these words he appealed to the public that even the deepest ideological differences can be eliminated. That he considers as a challenge toward the future of the country.

Upon the Presidential election 2016, Barack Obama called for a smooth transition between the new Presidents. He recalled the early days of his first Presidency, when President George W. Bush succeeded in helping him as a new President. Barack Obama warned the society that without the successful presidential transition, the democracy system of the United States could be threatened. In other words, as Obama stated: “the peaceful transition of power is one of the hallmarks of our democracy.” Barack Obama feared the end of the American unity and democracy. He conveys a message: “We're not Democrats first. We're not Republicans first. We are Americans first. We're patriots first.” (Time, 2016).

George Younger came up with the opinion that the thesis that only strong individuals can rule the world is deeply flawed. He admits that Americans are taught from an early age that one man, the leader of the country, has the ability to fix everything (Younger, 2016). But that is a wrong perception of the politics' task. Barack Obama's aim was to put the emphasis on the real needs of the United States. First of all, it is the sense of unity. The phenomenon that began to fade in the last decades of the twentieth century. And only the horrible events of 9/11 revived the American unity. Barack Obama also pointed out that the unity should be remembered every day because it is something that the Americans should be proud of. According to Obama's analysis of the modern society, it is the challenge of the state representatives and also of all citizens to respect the American institutions, the American way of life and respect each other. It can be concluded that if some typical American aspects have changed during the twenty-first century, even had been endangered, the democracy system should continue to function. It is one of the fundamental values of the Americans and should not be eliminated by any events of the last two decades. Barack Obama also feared that the internet era can potentially harm the nature of democracy in the United States. He spoke directly to the young generation with the words not to take democracy for granted. Freedom cannot be assured if young people are not involved. “If you're tired of arguing with strangers on the internet,” he said, “try to talk with one in real life.” (Landler, 2017).

Barack Obama also emphasizes in his speech upon the presidential election 2016 the importance of the candidate Hillary Clinton. According to his words, her nomination is considered as historic and has a significant message for future generations: “...her candidacy

sends a message to our daughters all across the country that they can achieve at the highest levels of politics.” (Time, 2016). The candidacy of Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election is a major change at the political scene. The acceptance of a woman at the highest post in the country, even though she did not win, is a shift in the American identity of the last years. It could not be possible in the twentieth century.

Gary Younge sums up the Presidency of Barack Obama in his article for the Guardian by noting that the end of Barack Obama's term means the loss of the President who did not underestimate the power of his citizens. Gary Younge supported his mission for Americans: “This is the end of the line for a leader who believed that facts mattered, that Americans were not fools, that their democracy meant something and that government had a role: that America could be better than this.” (Time, 2016).

Taking a closer look at the Presidency of Barack Obama, it can be assumed that it had several positive and negative aspects on American society. Whether he will be remembered positively or negatively is the question that can be answered in the following years. His evaluation depends also on the Presidency of his successor – Donald Trump – elected in the 2016 Presidential election. The change that came with the unusual campaign of the new President Donald Trump is a possible reason for the eclipse of failures of Barack Obama. It can be expected that more citizens will appreciate later Obama's Presidency.

### *3.2.6 The 2016 Presidential Election and Victory of Donald Trump*

The end of Barack Obama's term leads to the analysis of the changes that came with the 2016 Presidential election and victory of Donald Trump. As the day of election approached, a new element appeared in the American society. It was fear and paranoia. The reason for that was the fact that Americans have lost faith in political happening of their country. The campaign of the candidate Donald Trump has shown them that the democracy system and political institutions became more vulnerable than anyone realized. Gorana Grgic from University of Sydney claims that Donald Trump won because he “broke every rule of politics” (Grgic, 2016). That is considered to be a strong announcement and therefore the aim of the following part of the chapter is to provide an outlook of the major changes that Donald Trump brought.

Firstly, he targeted minorities and races and did not consider illegal immigrants' groups as equal. His policy regarding the immigration rules will be examined in the next chapter of the thesis. To say more about the policy of Donald Trump, it is necessary to

mention his campaign full of scandals including the sexual assaulting of women and countless lies. In his speech after the successful election, he pronounced: "I will be president for all Americans." However, as the research of the Pew Research Center has shown, early 60 percent of the voters is persuaded that Trump divided Americans more than they were ever before (Grgic, 2016). Kumuda Simpson, a lecturer in international relations at La Trobe University, also agrees with the thesis that the victory of Donald Trump only confirms that America is divided. Moreover, there is an evidence of insecurities even among the Republican party. Kumuda Simpson continues with a warning: "The Republican and Democratic Parties can no longer ignore just how much their policies of the past two decades have hurt a significant number of Americans." (Grgic, 2016).

There are several challenges waiting for the new President-elect Donald Trump to deal with and to stabilize the potential deeper division of the country. Naturally, the military challenge belongs probably to the most important duties. After the farewell speech of President Barack Obama, there still remain 8,400 American troops in Afghanistan. It depends on Donald Trump's decision if the troops will be withdrawn. He is also in charge of the image of the United States in the world regarding their attitude towards America's longest war.

Another significant aspect is Donald Trump's attitude toward various international treaties and organizations. He questioned the American membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which is still considered as the most important western cohesion. No experts are able to predict how such a presidential act would influence the future of the country or even the military stability worldwide. Importantly, it can have a potential effect on Americans' perception by foreigners and also the American identity.

Immediately after the presidential election 2016, the public was shocked by the results. No one believed that a candidate whose campaign was full of insults and racial comments would get to the White House. Everyone commenced to analyze the reasons for the victory of Donald Trump. Americans supporting Hillary Clinton did not believe that Donald Trump could be elected in America, the most democratic country in the world. However, Americans voted for him, but what happened that persuaded the masses to vote for a person with undemocratic values in the twenty-first century?

One of the possible reasons for the victory of Donald Trump is his status as an outsider within the Republican party. He did not act only against the Democratic party but sometimes also against the Republicans. This status as an outsider helped Donald Trump to

obtain supporters that did not identified themselves neither with Democrats nor Republicans. This new trend of reviling Washington will be analyzed later in this chapter.

Donald Trump represented the change that Americans decided to vote for. It can be concluded without doubt that he is unconventional. Americans desired a change and Donald Trump represented it. For instance, his campaign consisted of massive rallies instead of the usual activities as door-knocking or spending on pollsters. His behavior during the political debates was not always appropriate. Moreover, he insulted numerous people. It influenced the public opinion: “He says what he thinks and I like that. I’m sick of political correctness.” (Alberici, 2016).

Despite those unconventional ways how he won the support of the voters, he succeeded and became a new phenomenon on the American political scene. But more importantly, Americans decided for a different, untraditional and even more aggressive person to lead the country. They desired someone different. Not as his opponent Hillary Clinton who has worked for the United States for many years. The question for future analysis in the upcoming years remains if 61 million voters have really identified themselves with the campaign of Donald Trump or if they were so indecisive because of the current political crisis in America and voted out of despair.

### **3.3 Change of the Tradition of Republicans and Democrats**

Rafiell Jones, an American citizen, stated: “I believe that the two-party system does not work anymore. I usually vote for an independent candidate at elections, but this year I simply abstained as no one really stood out to me.” (Marsh, 2016).

The fundamental changes of two major political parties in the United States in the third millennium were put at the center of the debate among Americans during last years. The following part of this chapter will therefore focus on the analysis of the changing tradition of Republicans and Democrats.

Firstly, it is interesting to observe the trends in the party affiliation. According to the study material used for the elaborating of this thesis it can be concluded that the third millennium introduces a new trend. Research by the authors of the Pew Research Center supports this trend by publishing data regarding the changing party affiliation of Americans. According to their survey, the proportion of independents is becoming higher than ever before. The numbers from 2012 showed that 38 percent of Americans described themselves as independents. The more updated research showed that this trend continues also prior to

the Presidential election in 2016. The number of independents rose to 43 percent in 2014 (Jones, 2015). Compared to 32 percent in 2008 and 30 percent in 2004, it is obvious that Americans do not identify themselves with the program or leaders neither of the Republicans nor Democrats as they used to (Pew Research Center, 2012). In order to have a better idea of how the party affiliation developed in the last century, it is necessary to mention the data from the twentieth century. The number of Americans with no party identification in 1940 was below 20 percent and in 1970 below 30 percent (Pew Research Center, 2015).

The rising numbers of the independents initiate the necessary analysis of this new trend. That is why we will list significant reasons for the changes on the American political scene. The most frequently listed reason for no party affiliation is the negative attitude towards the policy of both political parties. However, a significant part of Americans with no political affiliation finally decide to lean towards one of the traditional parties. The basic reason is not to ignore the ability to influence the country's future by participating in the election. But more importantly, as cited by the Pew Research Center, the more frequent reason for deciding to vote for either Republicans or Democrats is “the harm caused by the opposing party's policies” (Smith, 2016). It means that those leaners consider the policy of the opposite party as harmful for the United States and therefore rather lean towards the other party.

It can be suggested that due to the existence of the leaners, the numbers of the independents did not rise as much as they could in the last decade. A majority of Republican leaners (55 percent) and Democratic leaners (51 percent) voted for the political party because of this reason. By contrast, only 30 percent of Republican leaners and 34 percent of Democratic leaners voted for the party in order to support their policy.

The reasons for not identifying as a Republican or Democrat are various. Most American independents are frustrated by leaders of the party. This reason was stated by more than 52 percent of Republican leaners and 28 percent of Democratic leaners. The Pew Research Center also describes other reasons, the following are the opinions that they disagree with the party's policies or do not desire to identify with the label of Democrats or Republicans. Most importantly, the last reason represented the fact that the independents were not interested in politics at all.

It can be concluded that the third millennium has not risen the ignorance of the political scene of the United States. Only a small percentage of Americans does not participate in the election because of the simple fact that they are not interested in it. However, the present crisis of the tradition of the Democrats and Republicans exists mainly



because of the negative attitude of the public toward the conducting of policy of the leaders. People disagree with the war in Iraq or with the surveillance of the American privacy as analyzed in the previous parts of the thesis. This admits also the phenomenon that the majority of the leaners do not identify themselves with the opposing party. Moreover, sometimes they do not identify with the members of the party they lean to. This indicates a political problem rising in the American society. If this trend continues, it is possible that the majority of the voters will vote only because they do not want to let the others to decide for them. The primary aim to participate in the election will no longer be the support of the candidate of the traditional party that the voter identifies with as it used to be in the last century.

## **4 Ethnicity and Multiculturalism After 9/11**

The events of 9/11 changed the concept of multiculturalism in the United States. The United States of America is a specific country, especially concerning the issue of immigration. From the terrorist attacks on, the changes of the position of immigrants in the society have become a subject of great public concern. The migration process launched to be perceived more negatively, even though it is still believed to be the greatest in the world.

Concerning the shifts in the attitude of Americans toward the immigrants, it is necessary to mention that the first negative attitude toward them launched at the end of the nineteenth century. It was the era when various immigrant groups started to come to the country. They came from various non-English-speaking countries. In addition, most of them were not Protestants, the fear of the domestic Americans was often based on anti-Catholicism. A significant part of the old stock Americans lived in the countryside and did not have contact with the immigrants. Although the country has been a nation of immigrants from its earliest days, as the slogan “We are all immigrants” displays, this characteristic feature of the American society, started to fade during the twentieth century.

On the other hand, till the present day, the United States are referred to as a country with a positive attitude toward immigrants. Especially when compared to the current migration crisis in Europe which started in 2015. In general, they tolerate the immigrants better as anyone else as all of them have their ancestors outside the United States.

However, the terrorist attacks led to the fear of losing the tolerance for cultural differences. On the one hand, there was the legislative regulation in the form of the Patriot Act which was explained in the second chapter of the thesis. The aim of the new law was to protect Americans from another national tragedy. On the other hand, no law can cease the thinking of Americans, they had to cope with the potential risk of immigrants on their own. Of course, not everyone reacted negatively. Some Americans still proclaim that their country is a multicultural society. However, as will be further depicted, the pure multicultural outlook of America has changed.

Tamar Jacoby outlines the essence of American multiculturalism and the notion of being an American. To be an American, it means to arrive as a newcomer and start over to live a new life. The whole process commenced in the era of Pilgrims and continued to the era when immigrants came to Ellis Island in New York City. This shared history can be considered as one of the core elements of the American identity (Jacoby, 2009).

## 4.1 Immigration Patterns and Changing Trends

In order to explain the transformation of migration process in the United States, the analogy with food will be used. Americans can be characterized by their passion for food. Although it presents only limited image of the deep developed American identity, it is a good starting point for the purpose of explaining the immigration changes in the country. For instance, Americans love pizza, sushi, Chinese or Thai food. When a tourist enters the country, it offers him a scale of possibilities to try new world cuisines. During the researching phase in order to elaborate this thesis, it was not an easy task to find specific purely American meals that were not influenced by any food preferences or eating customs of immigrants. In order to explain it historically, the ancestors of Americans came from different countries and formed the modern American cuisine.

For several years, great effort has been devoted to the study of immigration process in America and its patterns. Previous studies indicate that “*melting pot*” is one of them. Leana B. Gloor provided an interesting explanation of this pattern: “In the case of the melting pot the aim is that all cultures become reflected in one common culture, however this is generally the culture of the dominant group – *I thought this was mixed vegetable soup but I can only taste tomato.*” (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing). The melting pot pattern was introduced in the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a term used by the English playwright Israel Zangwill in his work “The Melting Pot”. The main idea of his play was to show the audience a utopian vision of America as a nation that melted all the nationalities together and made a single nation – new American people (Jacoby, 2009, p. 33). On the other hand, this concept never existed in real world. The immigrants never “melted” and never lost all of their origins. Therefore, assimilation reflected the real process of immigration in the twentieth century.

Another significant migration pattern is called “*salad bowl*”. Leana B. Gloor explains it by the following words: “In the case of the salad bowl, cultural groups should exist separately and maintain their practices and institutions, however, *Where is the dressing to cover it all?*” (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing).

In early America, the idea that divergent cultural contributions would enrich the dominant culture was considered to be unrealistic. The situation from the beginning of the twentieth century can be summed up by the quotation of Sarah Simons: “In brief, the function of assimilation is the establishment of homogeneity within the group; but this does not mean that all variation shall be crushed out. In vital matters, such as language, ideals of

government, law, and education, uniformity shall prevail; in personal matters of religion and habits of life, however, individuality shall be allowed free play. Thus, the spread of “consciousness of kind” must be accompanied by the spread of individuality” (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing). To say it differently, the aim was the “Anglo-conformity” of the American society.

However, the typical feature of the twenty-first century is experiencing a “multicultural backlash” (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing). According to the thesis of Sarah Simons, it can be concluded that there is a trend to relegate cultural divergences into private sphere so that they do not influence the dominant American culture.

The position of the immigrants in the American society nowadays is therefore not easy to describe. In the center of the debates, there are Americentric policies. They require support of English-only education, strict rules for the immigrants, nationalistic requirements for citizenship or less programs with the aim to help minorities (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing). Proposing of these measures may worsen present ideological turning point in the American society. There is a possibility that this trend will accelerate more intolerance within the nation.

Moreover, there are also some voices for return of the assimilation process from the era of World War I. Arizona Congressman J. D. Hayworth thinks that those practices should be retransformed into the new millennium. The early twentieth century can be also characterized by “humiliating Americanization programs”. Characteristic features of the era were national concerns. The aim of the assimilation process was not to identify only with American democratic deals, but also be able to speak American English, and agree with political and social ideologies. In simple terms, the aim was to perceive immigrants as more “American” than “foreign”.

Sarah Simons presented the new trend after 9/11: “If this assimilation thinking proceeds towards its logical conclusion, America will move backwards socially and become a truly bland melted pot of cultures that is willing to sacrifice everything under a misplaced paradigm of patriotism.” (Gloor, Hohonu – A Journal of Academic Writing).

## **4.2 Fear of Immigrants**

The immigration policy is a specific part of American politics. As explained before, Americans are all either immigrants or descendants of immigrants. Today, it is estimated that almost 60 million people are immigrants or children of immigrants (Hirschman, 2008).

It is more than one fifth of the total population of the country. Despite the fear of new foreign influences, immigration into the United States grows. This hypothesis can be a starting point of a debate. The aim of the following lines is therefore to explain the reasons for prevailing of xenophobia and fear of new immigrants in the new millennium.

Upon 9/11, the immigrants became the target of the national fear. Suspicion instantly grew for Arab and Muslim communities. As a result of the fear, costly security measures were introduced in order to prevent potential terrorist danger. The immigration policies were not only the result of the governmental debates, the disaffection of several immigrant groups was reflected in the speeches, or in the mass media.

People are not comfortable with newness and change. That is why many Americans feel more comfortable when they do not feel the consequences of the immigration process in the United States. They fear that the immigrants are too reluctant to the American way of life.

#### *4.2.1 Attitude Toward Muslims*

“I was born in Palestine. I live in San Francisco and graduated from Notre Dame. I am running for Congress because I'm concerned about our foreign policy.” (Abdo, 2006, p. 2). With these words of a Muslim living in the United States, the changes of the position of Muslims in America upon 9/11 can be described.

Muslim Americans were considered to be an equal community living in the United States for a long period of time. However, as Geneive Abdo presents in her book “Mecca and Main Street”, a different opinion was widespread upon 9/11: “Muslims are terrorists; Islam is a religion of violence; Muslims are backward; Muslims are vengeful toward the West.” (Abdo, 2006, p. 3). From the terrorist attacks on, Muslims were no longer an invisible community. Their presence in the United States became a center of national debate. The surveillance of Muslims commenced to be a priority of the government in the upcoming war on terrorism.

The events of terrorist attacks in 2001 ceased the assimilation process of Muslims. Nowadays, it is common that the Muslim community requires to maintain greater level of independence. Geneive Abdo mentions numerous new-established minarets across the United States as a sign of demanding their rights. Moreover, women in headscarves are an increasingly common sign in shopping malls, offices, or schools. The recent survey showed that Muslims demand time to take off for prayer within their working time (Abdo, 2006).

These changes are only a part of all that happened and altered the Muslim American community upon 9/11.

Geneive Abdo calls this phenomenon as a “rejectionist movement” (Abdo, 2006, p.3). It means that apart from numerous other ethnic and religious groups living in America, the majority of Muslim Americans refused to become fully Americanized. They try to maintain their own values. Despite the fact that they are a part of the American workforce, they do not support American way of life.

When mentioning the assimilation process in the new millennium, many young Muslim Americans identify themselves more with the Islamist values as they used to during the twentieth century. The Islamic identity became a priority of the Muslim community, especially of the second generation of Muslims. By that we understand young people that were born in America and spent their childhood there. This important feature of the Muslim community influences also the American identity, as numerous Muslims living there are citizens of the United States. However, they did not assimilate themselves. One of the possible reason for this refusal of the assimilation is the attitude of the other Americans toward the Muslim community after 9/11.

After the attacks, FBI agents commenced to check Muslim homes and mosques. They assumed that every Muslim is a terrorist, even though most of them were highly tolerated in the society before the attacks. Media supported this negative image of Muslims by broadcasting programs portraying Muslims as enemies. That is the main reason why Muslims decided to withdraw from the mainstream society. They commenced to gather more in their mosques, their children attend mostly Islamic schools. In the late twentieth century, the mosque played a single role in the life of Muslims. The aim was to gather there and have time for worshipping. This changed due to the terrorist attacks. The mosque became a place for social activities and Muslims activated rather there instead of facing the increasingly negative attitude of other Americans toward them. According to the survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in summer 2004, early three years after the attacks, the opinion of more than half of Americans was that Islam is more likely than other religions to promote violence, compared to one quarter of Americans two years earlier (Abdo, 2006). Geneive Abdo, who spent a part of his career studying the culture of Islamic countries, comments that many Americans do not tolerate Muslim American citizens only because of their own fear. They do not understand the notion of their culture. For instance, they cannot explain the central principles of Islam. On the other hand, Muslims tolerated the Jewish and Christian prophets who came before the Prophet Muhammed.

The role of media also played a significant role in perceiving Muslims in the country upon 9/11. Despite the fact that the majority of Islamic organizations within America condemned the terrorist attacks, the media displayed Muslims as possible danger. The majority of journalists informed about the danger in order to get more readers. That is one of the reasons for shifting of the Muslim American identity. Geneive Abdo sums up major changes after the terrorist attacks in one sentence: “As an Arab American who also woke up on September 11 to a new, imposed identity that is more Arab and less American...” (Abdo, 2006, p.10). She is also an American citizen that shares American values. However, the shift in the perceiving of the Muslim community by other Americans caused that Muslims started to identify themselves more with their Islamic identity rather than American one.

“The events of September 11<sup>th</sup> were our fault, it was our failure to understand Islam that led to so many deaths and so much destruction.” (Rubin, 2009, p. 7). That were the words of Lynne Cheney, the wife of the Vice-President and former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, within a month upon 9/11.

The events of terrorist attacks were a turning point for the ongoing debate over multiculturalism, diversity, and national identity. Cheney also presented an opinion that the American society should concern more national issues than deal with different ethnicities. It has been debated whether these shifts in the perceiving of the multiculturalism somehow changed the American identity. By all means, the fact that Muslims were responsible for the attacks led to reevaluation of the assimilation process and immigration rules in the country. This new trend is nowadays present not only in the United States but also in other Western countries. The term of multiculturalism is often associated with the presence of Muslims and understanding of Islam.

### **4.3 Challenge of Multiculturalism in the Twenty-First Century**

Samuel Huntington described multiculturalism as “immediate and dangerous challenge to the American creed and Western civilization which, if left unopposed, could lead to the end of the United States of America as we have known it” (Rubin, 2009, p. 9). Significantly, multiculturalism has been the center of the debate since the foundation of the United States. On the other hand, it always represented one of the key values – the right to be equal. Through the history, the concept of multiculturalism was reinterpreted. The events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, especially the moment when the buildings of the World Trade Center collapsed, were the starting point of reshaping the concept of multiculturalism. The complex

of building in lower Manhattan was a working site for the mixture of people that was not homogenous. The data appears to suggest that the three thousand people who worked and died there were of “every color and both sexes, they believed in all of the major religions and they worked in every capacity from cleaning floors to trading stocks” (Jacoby, 2009, p. 283). It really was “World Trade Center”. However, the aftermath of 9/11 launched a debate in the society. Everyone asked if multiculturalism was the appropriate pattern for the twenty-first century. Thus, the polarization of the society has occurred.

The opinion of Paul Lauter is: “Multiculturalism and immigration, rather than serving as a catalyst for change in the dynamics of multiculturalism itself, the events of 9/11 highlight a dramatic shift that had begun earlier, from multiculturalism's concern with identity to the issue of immigration and the attendant problems of separation and integration, which now constitute the main changes to Western societies.” (Rubin, 2009, p.11). Most importantly, the struggle over multiculturalism has numerous cultural implications. Some of them will only become clear later.

On the surface, the context of multiculturalism has been at risk since the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>. The disfavored immigrant groups, especially the Muslim community, had to fight for their rights and mostly decided to activate more within their communities. The question is, if this is the starting point of the end of multiculturalism, or if the American society cannot survive without this specific feature of their identity.

The words of President George W. Bush: “This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood up enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.” (Rubin, 2009, p. 67). The initial respond to his words was the unity of the nation and American flags were displayed everywhere. It was not common before 9/11. The unity was shown by numerous Americans gathered near Ground Zero, many of them holding up photographs of their family members or friends. Everyone was equal and tried to help the others. One of the reasons for the initial unity of Americans is the fact that the events of 9/11 killed around 3,000 people regardless their religion, gender, class, race or ethnicity.

People coming from Latin American countries are also an example of the unity within the United States. M. Barone writes about many Latin American immigrants that watched the World Cup games and referred to the U.S. team as the team of “todos los nosotros – the team of all of us” (Jacoby, 2009, p. 265). They also enlisted themselves into the military. In



September 2001, there were over a hundred thousand Hispanic Americans enlisted into the army, representing about 9,5 percent of active-duty military personnel.

The differences in the society can be demonstrated by the debate on the famous photo from 11<sup>th</sup> of September. A photo of a man who decided to rather jump from the upper part of the World Trade Center than to get captured by fire became known worldwide. The identity of the falling man was unknown. The trails led to the three different potential relatives, each one belonging to different ethnic group. It was found out that every potential relative had different opinion on this act of jump. For instance, the first potential relatives, members of a Catholic immigrant family from Latin America, did not accept the decision of the falling man to jump from the building where he worked as a restaurant worker. They considered his act as a betrayal of love. Suicide, as they interpreted his decision, was something unacceptable according to their religion. The reaction of a woman from Connecticut was different. On September 11<sup>th</sup>, she lost her two sons who worked for an investment firm. She interpreted their decision as a loss of hope to live. The third potential relatives of the falling man were the members of the family of a black preacher from Mount Vernon. His sister said: "I never thought of the falling man as Jonathan, I thought of him as a man that just took his life in his hands for just a second. Did that person have so much faith that he knew that God would catch him or was he afraid to experience the end up there? I hope we're not trying to figure out who he is and more to figure out who we are through watching it." (Rubin, 2009, p.76). By these words she did not only uttered her sorrow for the falling man, but she questioned also the notion of the changing American identity.

Another controversy after the attacks was the decision to display a statue of three firefighters in order to commemorate their hard work during 9/11. The statue should have consisted of three white firefighters raising the American flag at Ground Zero. However, the public protested, they desired a statue depicting racial diversity of the fire department and New York City. They requested one white, one Hispanic, and one Afro-American firefighter. Some people considered it only as an attempt to reach political correctness. To tell the truth, Hispanic and black firefighters constituted only less than four percent during the rescue actions. The "equal" representation of the races only misrepresented the purpose – to commemorate the fire department. The aim of displaying this statue was to show the strength of American people during the event of emergency. Due to the controversy that surrounded the statue, the prototype was destroyed. People protested: "Where have we come as a nation that this quest for political correctness has led us to believe that it is unacceptable for three white firemen to be shown as white? Where have we come that we will put reality under the

knife lest the simple conveyance of that innocuous reality offend some? And those who would be offended by reality, how can they not see that a large segment of society is greatly insulted and offended by the removal of the two white firefighters? Is it not permissible to ask them to practice a little sensitivity and acceptance of their own?" (Rubin, 2009, p. 114).

Generally speaking, the initial unity of the nation upon 9/11 was followed by questioning the notion of multiculturalism. Taking a closer look at the reaction of state representatives and citizens upon 9/11, it cannot be easily estimated when this transition has started. It would be inappropriate to conclude that the unity of the nation transited into division, as till present day there is a debate on this issue – whether Americans are united or divided into various ethnic groups.

On the one hand, it can be argued that the concept of multiculturalism was not denied by state representatives. E. Wagner claims that President George W. Bush himself increased tolerance of Muslims and their culture in the country. The "corporate multiculturalism" and diversity became "an administrative instrument where it seems to come down to the rather trivial matter of one's Christmas menu, which is to say that cultural difference is nothing much more serious than a set of innocuous consumer choices" (Rubin, 2009, p. 81).

On the other hand, a Newsday columnist James P. Pinkerton described the society before 9/11 as ironic and cynic, supporting the concept of liberal multiculturalism. He continued: "That day taught us all the importance of belief that there's more to life than nothing, that some things really matter." (Rubin, 2009, p.88). The society changed after 9/11 and brought back the importance of values such as sincerity and patriotism. According to his words, patriotism was saved by the crisis of 9/11 and emphasized the almost forgotten values of Americans.

To sum up the situation regarding the unity of the nation upon 9/11, it is important to quote several Americans. The fact that the initial successful concept of multiculturalism transited into the culture wars presented a challenge for all of them. Numerous Americans uttered themselves negatively toward multiculturalism: "Sadly, when it comes to the raging priority of advancing the multiculturalist agenda, nothing is sacred – not even a hallowed memorial to our national heroes and victims." (Rubin, 2009, p.115). It is obvious from this quotation that the controversy of the statue can be a turning point of disuniting of the United States of America, even though many Americans wanted to stay united: "There are no African Americans. There are no Irish Americans. There are no African Americans. We are Americans. One nation, one language, one flag. That is what America is about, not catering to each little diverse group, for it breeds resentment and division." (Rubin, 2009, p. 114).

Equally important became the representation of American national identity outside the country. It was argued whether American children should learn about other cultures. Multiculturalists thought teaching Americans the fundamental information about cultures and countries can help them understand the attacks from different perspectives. On the other hand, there were critics of this education concept who favored textbooks presenting only American history, values and heroes. They refused the attempt to understand the attacks from the view of a different culture. The fact that the explanation of the attacks is subjective and Americans should remember the diversity and different viewpoints when evaluating it should also be taken into consideration. However, it was not an easy task for all Americans because the attacks abhorred the values of American society. They tried to respect the diversity of their country but prioritized freedom – a value that was destroyed by the attacks.

To sum it up, the events of 9/11 and following years brought a shift in perceiving the concept of multiculturalism. It can be described as a shift toward conservative approach. However, multiculturalism did not disappear from the society. Many Americans claim that the presentation of controversial themes cannot be successful without concerning interethnic relations and differences. As Dana Heller writes in her book, the term 9/11 attained “the cultural function of a trademark, one that symbolizes a new kind of national identification” (Rubin, 2009, p. 182). It was a turning point for a modern discussion about multiculturalism and national identity. Simultaneously, it was a shift from well-established concept of multiculturalism toward a renewed patriotism. President George W. Bush tried to renew the patriotism and emphasize the importance of self-identification. He desired to unite the nation on political level by supporting the idea “We are all Americans.” Conversely, it was not an easy task to unite the nation on cultural level.

#### **4.4 Barack Obama and Multiculturalism**

Another important change in the twenty-first century was the election of Barack Obama in 2008. President Barack Obama is a son of a black man from Kenya and a white woman from Kansas. He symbolizes the victory of equality by being elected as the first African American President: “If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our Founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.” (Barreto, 2013, p. 70). The election of Barack Obama was a significant moment in the history

of the United States. It confirmed the transcendent possibilities of the life in America. This event brought back the concept of equality, opportunity and democracy.

Barack Obama's candidacy brought back the fundamental values, in other words, it reshaped them. The shift can be described by the words of Nelson: "It seems that many people are pinning their hopes for identity transcendence, or identity incorporation, on Obama... Obama is the slate onto which our racial, and other identity-based, hopes and phobias are transferred." (Barreto, 2013, p. 71). Barack Obama himself admitted that as a son of a Kenyan immigrant, he would not be able to be elected for a President in any other country except the United States. With these words, he pointed out the endless possibilities of America. His election supported the minorities and their unescapable and unequal position in the country. The fact is that also in the twenty-first century, there exist economic and social disparities in the country that can demonstrate the categorization of American society. By being inaugurated, Barack Obama embodied a positive change regarding the perception of different races in American society.

#### **4.5 Donald Trump and Trends since 2016**

Eight years later, the presidential campaign of Donald Trump denounced the concept of multiculturalism. He, as many other conservatives, refused the diversity. Victor Davis Hanson, a scholar at Stanford University, proclaimed: "Multicultural societies usually end up mired in nihilistic and endemic violence." (Chapman, 2016).

One of the key points of the Donald Trump's campaign was his controversial attitude toward immigrants and minorities, especially Muslims. The attitude of Donald Trump and his supporters toward Muslim community can be described as Islamophobia. It is estimated that two-thirds of his voters have a negative attitude toward Muslims. However, only one-third of all Americans expressed themselves to have fear of Muslim community. Speaking about the attitude toward Muslims in 2016, a lot has changed since 9/11. In general, people are more open-minded and tolerable toward Muslims and other immigrants. Even Muslim Americans think that the situation has changed after 9/11, but is still improving.

Despite the xenophobia and fear of the terrorists, the survey has found out that 59 percent of Americans has a positive view of immigrants. The figures show also that the young generation considers immigrants as asset into the society, as 76 percent of young people supports them (Chapman, 2016). Comparatively, according to the Pew Research Center, in 1994, it was reported that 63 percent of Americans did not tolerate the immigrants.

The irrelevancy of ethnic and racial lines in the twenty-first century can be shown by the figures of newlyweds. In 2010, 15 percent of all marriages occurred between partners of different ethnic or race.

Despite some positive changes in perceiving the immigrants, America decided to vote for a President who campaigned against immigrants. In the attempt to find a description of the current perceiving of the immigrants and multiculturalism, it has to be concluded that the society is undergoing a constant change. The reason why millions of Americans decided to vote for Donald Trump, in other words for xenophobia and undervaluation of different races, can show us the ideological crisis of the new millennium. The frustration of people due to the events occurring in the twenty-first century leads to the change of values and polarization of the society.

The following part of the chapter will introduce key points of Donald Trump's positions on immigration. He claims that immigrants working in the United States of America are taking off job opportunities for Americans. That is why he proposed to offer jobs primarily to Americans.

Donald Trump would also like to alter the immigration process by selecting immigrants coming to the country. He aims to let come only those immigrants that fit the likelihood of success and have the ability to become successful and efficient for the country.

He emphasized the importance of the security of the United States and plans to suspend the ongoing immigration from possible terrorist countries.

Moreover, as the number of illegal immigrants in the country is high, he does not support the catch-and-release strategy. His aim is to deport anyone who illegally crosses the borders. He proclaimed: "That is what it means to have laws and to have a country." (Trump Pence, 2016).

Finally, he decided to build a wall on the southern border with Mexico in order to stop illegal immigrants and keep immigration levels within historic norms.

The fact that 61 million of Americans voted for a candidate that is decided to select who is appropriate to come to the country and who not, can be characterized as a great change. On the other hand, the majority of Americans does not agree with the immigration policy of President Donald Trump. At this point, it is necessary to mention the migration crisis in Europe that began in 2015. Millions of refugees came to European countries in order to seek a hiding place because of the war in Syria. There are negative voices against those refugees in many European countries. However, the American society is still opened to admitting new immigrants. According to Washington Post, 59 percent of Americans would

accept Middle East conflict refugees (Telhami, 2016). The majority of Americans is also not afraid of Muslims, in October 2016, 70 percent of Americans expressed themselves to tolerate them as a part of the American society. However, also some negative opinions occurred. P. D. Salins says that Americans in recent years are not quite sure how they feel about immigration. Moreover, they feel guilty about aggressively promoting assimilation (Jacoby, 2009). To put it differently, Americans are still considered to be open toward the immigrants more than any other nation, even though the new millennium and especially the new decade brought new trends. It was possible for generations of newcomers that they had been able not only to join the American society, but also to feel that they belong there. This is one of the most significant challenge of American multiculturalism nowadays. Hopefully, the positive attitude toward immigrants will overcome the anti-immigrant trends. It is one of the American traditions, the positive attitude should remain. It was emphasized also by the ideology of President John F. Kennedy who pronounced that America is “a nation of immigrants” (Jacoby, 2009, p. 266).

## Conclusion

The aim of the master thesis was to investigate the shifts in American identity resulting from significant events in the twenty-first century. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in order to prove or reject the hypothesis set during the first phase of elaborating the thesis.

The first chapter of the master thesis provided a brief overview of the significant American documents – the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights – which build the fundamental basis of American rights and values. It also examined important terms used throughout the thesis – American identity, American Dream and Nation of immigrants.

The second chapter of the thesis was devoted to the description of the 9/11 aftermath regarding the national security. The starting point was the description of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The collapse of the World Trade Center in New York City and attack on Pentagon brought fear and chaos to the country. The initial answer was the unity of all Americans, a phenomenon that almost disappeared at the turn of the millennium. However, the displaying of American flags and gathering at Ground Zero were followed by the fear and the struggle to understand the terrorists' motivations for the attacks. The state representatives decided to vote for a new antiterrorist law – the controversial Patriot Act – in order to prevent any terrorist threat. Unfortunately, the Patriot Act violated the Constitution of the United States – especially the human rights and civil liberties of Americans.

The third chapter of the master thesis focused on the role of the politics in influencing the American identity in the twenty-first century. It provided a chronological analysis of Administration of three Presidents – George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. In order to elaborate this part of the thesis, Presidents' speeches were analyzed. It can be concluded that all three Presidents tried to deal with the changes and challenges of the new millennium and their Administrations influenced the development of the American identity. President George W. Bush was responsible for uniting the nation upon 9/11. The psychological effect of his Administration calmed millions of Americans, despite several negative steps as the war in Iraq. The election of his successor, Barack Obama, presented another shift in America – the election of the first African American President. It supported the position of African Americans in the United States, as they used to be perceived unequally. Barack Obama is considered to be a transformational President that desired to deal with the identity crisis and define common values. The observations of the political scene in the twenty-first century suggested that there is an increasing polarization of political

parties. Moreover, many Americans do not identify themselves with the political parties any more. It was demonstrated also by the victory of the new President Donald Trump in 2016.

The purpose of the last chapter of the master thesis was to explain the changes in the attitude of Americans toward the immigrants in the twenty-first century. At the beginning of the new millennium, the concept of American diversity received considerable critical attention. A key aspect of American identity was the accommodation of diversities among Americans. By investigating of the events in the twenty-first century concerning the racial diversity and perceiving of the immigrants, it can be concluded that the new millennium has brought a shift. This chapter introduced various voices from America's diverse population. It is almost certain that the image of Americans has changed. The unity of the nation upon 9/11 and the continuing open-minded attitude toward immigrants still rank America among the most welcoming and tolerating countries. However, it is the question of future if the country will be still associated with slogan “nation of immigrants” in the following years. The 9/11 terrorist attacks introduced new kind of fear of immigrants and struggle to understand their thinking and motivation to kill innocent people. This remains a challenge that launched at the turn of the millennium and continues till the present day.

The set hypothesis can be partially proved by the analysis of impact of terrorist attacks on the thinking and attitudes of Americans. The key research question of this study was whether or not the American identity underwent significant changes in the twenty-first century. The respond to the 9/11 attacks in form of the “war on terror” prioritized the security over the citizens' liberties. Moreover, Americans also underwent political crisis because of the changing tradition of the Republicans and Democrats. Americans often do not identify themselves with their political leaders anymore – the reasons are the war in Iraq and the surveillance of American privacy. The aftermath of all of the analyzed events and reasons was the election of President Donald Trump. He is a new phenomenon on the political scene in the United States. However, his undemocratic opinions, especially considering the position of immigrants in the country, is a subject to considerable debate. His election demonstrates a change in the society.

Taken together, the results of this thesis suggest that the significant events in the twenty-first century caused a shift in the American identity. The future will answer the question if the politically and ideologically divided American society will be able to share common identity.



## Resumé

Cieľom diplomovej práce je charakterizovanie hlavných zmien v identite Američanov v dvadsiatom prvom storočí. Tieto zmeny sú následkom niekoľkých významných udalostí v novom tisícročí. Hlavným zámerom práce je poukázať na ich vplyv na vnímanie hrozby terorizmu a s ním spojených zmien v bezpečnostnej politike Spojených štátov amerických, ako aj vplyv na tradíciu republikánov a demokratov a vnímanie postavenia prisťahovalcov v krajine. Napriek tomu, že práca sa podrobnejšie zaoberá až analýzou zmien americkej identity v dvadsiatom prvom storočí, korene jej vývoja siahajú hlbšie do histórie. Prvýkrát sa koncept americkej identity spomínal v štrnástom dodatku Ústavy Spojených štátov amerických, kde stálo, že Američanmi sú všetci tí, ktorí sa narodili alebo naturalizovali v Amerike. Práca poukazuje na hodnoty, ktoré spájajú všetkých Američanov. Mnohé z nich vychádzajú práve z Ústavy. Preambula začína slovami „My, ľud Spojených štátov...“. Tieto slová zdôrazňujú dôležitosť občanov v krajine, ktorým Ústava garantuje viacero základných práv. Medzi najhlavnejšie môžeme zaradiť slobodu a demokraciu. Žiadny Američan nesmie byť znevýhodnený na základe rasy, náboženského vyznania alebo peňažných prostriedkov, ktorými disponuje. Existuje niekoľko základných čŕt americkej identity. Jednou z nich je pojem americký sen. Američania sú na neho hrdí aj v súčasnosti. Od vzniku Spojených štátov amerických sem ľudia emigrovali s nádejou na lepší život. Mnohí si lepší život spájali s materiálnym bohatstvom, iní hľadali šťastie a osobnostné naplnenie. V súčasnosti sa výraz americký sen často spája s kultúrou Hollywoodu a drahým životným štýlom bez väčšej námahy.

Spojené štáty americké už od svojho vzniku lákali mnoho prisťahovalcov. Z tohto dôvodu sa im často hovorí aj krajina prisťahovalcov. Medzi prvými prišli obyvatelia Európy. V devätnástom storočí imigrovali do krajiny najmä Íri, ktorí utekali pred veľkým hladomorm. Číňania sa tiež chceli zachrániť pred hladom a suchom. Idea lepšieho života a nových možností za „veľkou mlákou“ je niečo, čo spája Američanov aj v súčasnosti. Vedia, že ich predkovia emigrovali do Spojených štátov, aby sa vyhli istej smrti alebo životu v neľudských podmienkach. V dvadsiatom storočí našli milióny prisťahovalcov domov vo veľkých amerických veľkomestách, v mnohých je ich podiel väčší ako počet obyvateľov, ktorí žijú v hlavnom meste ich pôvodnej krajiny. Nové tisícročie však zmenilo postoj k prisťahovalcom. Následkom udalostí na začiatku dvadsiateho prvého storočia často prichádza k netolerancii niektorých skupín ľudí, ktorí tiež chcú zažiť svoj americký sen na území Spojených štátov amerických.

V prvej kapitole sa venujeme dôsledkom teroristických útokov z 11. septembra 2001. Všetko odštartoval pád Svetového obchodného centra v New Yorku, a to severnej a južnej veže, ktoré mnohí nazývali aj americké dvojčiky. Teroristi nemajú na svedomí iba tragédiu a chaos v centre New Yorku, ale aj poškodenie sídla Ministerstva obrany Pentagónu. Členovia militantnej islamskej organizácie al-Káida pripravili o život takmer 3000 ľudí, okrem pasažierov unesených lietadiel a pracovníkov uväznených v horiacich budovách obetovalo svoj život aj niekoľko stoviek príslušníkov záchranných a policajných jednotiek. Tento tragický deň zmenil celú americkú spoločnosť. Nikto si nedokázal vysvetliť dôvod, prečo sa teroristi rozhodli pripraviť o život toľko nevinných ľudí. Všade vládol chaos a strach z ďalšieho útoku. Ak však porovnáme povahu Američanov pred týmto tragickým dňom a krátko po ňom, môžeme tvrdiť, že ich teroristické útoky zmenili. Na prelome milénia bol americký patriotizmus na bode mrazu. Dokonca aj americké vlajky bolo vidieť čoraz zriedkavejšie. Avšak vystúpenie prezidenta Georgea W. Busha v podvečer útokov zjednotilo všetkých Američanov. Mnohí sa zhromaždili na mieste zdevastovaných dvojčiek a pomáhali pri najväčšej záchrannej akcii. Neskôr si uctili obeť útokov. Nasledoval strach z ďalších teroristických útokov. Toto si uvedomovali aj americkí politici, a preto sa rozhodli hlasovať za „zákon o patriotizme“, tzv. Patriot Act. Jeho cieľom bolo chrániť občanov pred terorizmom. Patriot Act mal umožniť vláde, polícii a agentom FBI získavať informácie o potenciálne nebezpečných osobách, aby mohli konať rýchlejšie a efektívnejšie v prípade teroristickej hrozby. Krátko po predstavení návrhu nového zákona vypukla v spoločnosti debata. Niektorí Američania považovali Patriot Act za zásah do súkromia. Báli sa, že FBI bude odpočúvať ich hovory a sledovať ich internetovú komunikáciu. Situácia vyvrcholila až protestami proti kontroverznému zákonu. Spoločnosť sa rozdelila na tých, ktorí so zákonom súhlasili a na tých, ktorí ho považovali za porušenie základných ľudských slobôd. Napriek nutnosti zavedenia opatrení pred teroristickou hrozbou sa mnohí Američania cítili podvedení, nechápali, ako sa mohol schváliť zákon, ktorý priamo odporuje základným demokratickým hodnotám Američanov.

Tretia kapitola sa venuje úlohe politiky po 11. septembri 2001. Politická situácia každej krajiny sa aktívne podieľa na ovplyvňovaní národnej identity. Inak tomu nie je ani v prípade identity Američanov v dvadsiatom prvom storočí. Začiatok tretej kapitoly v krátkosti opisuje meniacu sa tradíciu dvoch politických strán v Spojených štátoch amerických – republikánov a demokratov. Klasické sympatizovanie s jednou alebo druhou politickou stranou sa začalo meniť už na konci dvadsiateho storočia. Američania sa začali viac sústreďovať na sociálne problémy, dovtedy prevažoval záujem o ekonomické problémy,

akými sú výška daní, miezd alebo nezamestnanosť. Tieto vystriedal záujem o rovnoprávnosť žien, postavenie homosexuálov alebo aj environmentálny konzumentarizmus. Koniec storočia volal po reforme programu oboch politických strán. Kríza politických strán sa presunula aj do nového tisícročia a zatienili ju až teroristické útoky v roku 2001.

Diplomová práca sa ďalej zaoberá analýzou krokov jednotlivých prezidentov Spojených štátov amerických po teroristických útokoch. George W. Bush, Barack Obama a iba nedávno zvolený Donald Trump ovplyvnili vývoj novodobej americkej identity. George W. Bush vyšiel ako víťaz prezidentských volieb v roku 2000, ale nikto nečakal, že bude natoľko úspešný, aby ho národ zvolil aj druhýkrát. Všetko však zmenili teroristické útoky, keď bol postavený pred jednu z najťažších úloh, akým môže prezident demokratickej krajiny čeliť. Bol zodpovedný za upokojenie Američanov a ubezpečenie, že nepríde k ďalším teroristickým útokom. Táto úloha nie je jednoduchá, a preto čelil aj vlne kritiky. Jeho hlavnou zásluhou je tzv. Patriot Act. Taktiež rozhodol o invázii do Iraku. Mnohí kritizujú toto rozhodnutie, pretože počas vojny prišlo o život viac ako 4000 amerických vojakov. Prezidentské voľby v roku 2008 môžeme charakterizovať ako obrovský posun smerom k rovnoprávnosti Američanov, pretože ich vyhral prvý afroamerický prezident Barack Obama. Americká spoločnosť sa posunula bližšie smerom ku globalizovaným hodnotám. Barack Obama niesol so sebou zodpovednosť za transformáciu politickej situácie v krajine a jeho cieľom bolo zmeniť politickú kultúru v Bielom dome. Napriek jeho úsiliu prieskumy ukázali, že počas jeho prezidentského pôsobenia sa ešte viac prehĺbila polarizácia politických strán. Taktiež nestiahol vojská z Afganistanu a mnoho rodín ostalo naďalej rozdelených. Dôležitým faktom je aj skutočnosť, že Spojené štáty americké začali byť vnímané negatívnejšie, čo vyplynulo z prieskumu verejnej mienky v devätnástich krajinách. Na druhej strane, hodnotenie pôsobenia Baracka Obamu sa zlepšilo hlavne po skončení jeho druhého funkčného obdobia. Mnohí ho vnímajú ako transformačného prezidenta, ktorý stále dúfal v lepšiu budúcnosť Ameriky. Počas svojho záverečného príhovoru v januári 2017 varoval spoločnosť pred nadchádzajúcimi hrozbami, jednou z nich je práve kríza identity a hodnôt.

Prezidenta Baracka Obamu vystriedal Donald Trump, ktorý vyhral voľby v novembri 2016. Jeho súperkou bola žena, politická predstaviteľka Hillary Clintonová. Dôležitosť kandidatúry tejto ženy zdôraznil už Barack Obama – jej politický vzostup by mal byť príkladom pre americké ženy a zdôrazňuje ich rovnoprávnosť v demokratickej krajine. Donald Trump bol však úspešnejším kandidátom a to aj napriek mnohým znakom nedemokratického správania. Počas svojej volebnej kampane verejne vystupoval proti

niektorým skupinám prisťahovalcov, nevyhol sa ani klamstvám a sexuálnym narážkam na ženy. Na druhej strane, mnohí Američania sa prestali stotožňovať s politikou republikánov a demokratov a Donald Trump často vystupoval ako nezávislý kandidát. To je jedným z dôvodov prečo oslovil toľkých Američanov. Spoločnosť taktiež túžila po zmene a tú Donald Trump predstavoval. Otázkou zostáva, čo spôsobí rozhodnutie takmer 61 miliónov Američanov hlasovať za kandidáta, ktorý sa netají svojimi nedemokratickými názormi. Jeho nekonvenčné príhovory zožali úspech a Donald Trump sa stal novým fenoménom na americkej politickej pôde. Či jeho voľba odzrkadľuje skutočné rozhodnutie Američanov alebo len voľbu z čistého zúfalstva spôsobeného politickou krízou v krajine je otázne.

Hlavným cieľom poslednej kapitoly diplomovej práce je poukázanie na zmeny vnímania prisťahovalcov a myšlienky multikulturalizmu v Spojených štátoch amerických po 11. septembri 2001. Napriek tomu, že imigráciu do krajiny považujeme za jednu z najväčších na svete a mnohí sem prichádzajú za lepšími životnými podmienkami, či splnením si svojho amerického sna, teroristické útoky poznačili postavenie prisťahovalcov v spoločnosti. A to aj napriek sloganu „Všetci sme Američania.“ Avšak tieto negatívne hlasy proti prisťahovalcom nie sú úplnou novinkou v spoločnosti. Prvé obavy sa objavili, keď na konci devätnásteho storočia začali prichádzať ľudia z krajín, kde materským jazykom nebola angličtina, a obyvatelia sa nehlásili výhradne k protestantom.

Kontroverzný zákon Patriot Act schválený po teroristických útokoch v roku 2001 bol jedným z krokov k postupnému negatívneému vnímaniu prisťahovalcov. Jeho cieľom bolo ochrániť občanov pred potenciálnym teroristickým nebezpečenstvom. Pravdou však ostáva fakt, že žiaden zákon nedokáže ubezpečiť občanov. Američania sa museli s teoretickým nebezpečenstvom, aké predstavovali prisťahovalci z vybraných krajín, vyrovnáť sami. Každý sa s tým vysporiadal iným spôsobom. Niektorí naďalej obhajovali myšlienku multikulturalizmu a rozmanitosti. Predstavovalo to pre nich základ identity Američanov, na ktorom by mali aj naďalej stavať. Na druhej strane, mnohí prepadli strachu z niektorých skupín obyvateľov. Asi najobávanejšiu skupinu obyvateľov Spojených štátov amerických, ako aj prisťahovalcov, predstavovali moslimovia. Pred teroristickými útokmi sa považovali za rovnoprávnú skupinu žijúcu v krajine. Mešity pre nich plnili hlavne jednu úlohu – predstavovali miesto pre každodenné modlenie. Následkom útokov sa začali viac vyčleňovať zo spoločnosti a preferovať vlastné školy a kultúrne inštitúcie. Svoju rolu v tom zohrali aj médiá, ktoré začali moslimov vykresľovať ako potenciálne nebezpečenstvo. A to bez rozdielu. Preto sa viac a viac moslimov žijúcich v Spojených štátoch začalo hlásiť k islamským hodnotám.

Napriek tomuto negatívnemu vnímaniu moslimov zo strany Američanov stále platí, že Američania sú buď prisťahovalci alebo predkovia prisťahovalcov. A preto imigrácia do Spojených štátov amerických neustále rastie. Xenofóbia a strach z prisťahovalcov však predstavuje výzvu nového tisícročia, tak ako aj myšlienka multikulturalizmu. Otázne však je, či Amerika ostane „národom prisťahovalcov“ aj po zvolení nového prezidenta Donalda Trumpa v roku 2016, ktorý sa netají svojím negatívnym postojom k určitým skupinám prisťahovalcov, a to najmä k moslimom a Mexičanom.

Diplomová práca potvrdzuje hypotézu, ktorú sme si zadali na začiatku spracovania tejto témy. Hypotéza znie: Americká identita prešla viacerými významnými zmenami na začiatku dvadsiateho prvého storočia. Američanov poznačili teroristické útoky na začiatku tisícročia a následná vojna proti teroru a úsilie ochrániť Američanov proti terorizmu, ktoré z časti odporovalo základným slobodám vyplývajúcim z Ústavy. Dôležitou zmenou je aj strácajúca sa tradícia republikánov a demokratov a nestotožňovanie sa Američanov s politickými stranami. Toto všetko vyvrcholilo zvolením nového prezidenta Donalda Trumpa, ktorý vystupuje proti prisťahovalcom v krajine. Iba budúcnosť nám ukáže, či bude súčasná politicky a ideologicky rozdelená Amerika schopná zdieľať spoločnú identitu a hodnoty aj naďalej.

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