**Chapter 31: Confronting Global and National Dilemmas, 1989-present**

**[[BIG IDEA:** How has globalization affected American politics, economics, and society?]]

What comes to mind when you think of globalization? In your own life, it might mean that the clothes you wear were made in China; that your computer was made in Japan; and that you can keep track of friends overseas on Facebook.

But if you think about what you’ve learned in this course, you’ll remember that we’ve encountered periods of “globalization” before. Think of for example the 18th century Atlantic World, with its densely interconnected world of trade, slavery, and agricultural production that crisscrossed the Atlantic among four different continents.

Globalization – or global interconnectedness – is not new in human history. But several important things were new about the kind of globalization that took shape in the 1990s. Investment capital, managed by ever larger multinational corporation, came to move around the world at lightning speed. Integrated manufacturing became possible across great scales, so that products made in China could be on American shelves within days. Cell phones and the internet quickened communication and allowed people to stay connected across far flung distances. But above all, the new era of globalization was an economic one, in which manufacturing, investment, labor migration, and the buying and selling of goods happened just as often across national borders as within them.

As the United States adjusted to the challenges of globalization, it confronted the rise of a radical version of Islam whose practitioners successfully attacked the United States on its own shores on 9-11. An equal challenge was the divisive partisanship that came to define American politics in this era. There had always been partisan competition and even rancor in the nation’s political give and take. But by the turn of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, some American began to wonder if the political system had not become so dysfunctional that it could no longer respond to the nation’s pressing needs.

In this final chapter of *America’s History*, we survey these broad developments.