

D. The Revolutionary Rejection of Monarchy

1. One of the reasons why it is important to highlight the unification of Egypt c.3000 BC in *American* history is that a proper understanding of America's place in history is only possible when one knows how special America's government is compared to all the others that came before it in history.
2. People in nearly every part of the world for 5000 years of history had believed that monarchy (the rule of one) was the only proper kind of government. They accepted that one person should *have power over all* others. They had no notion of individual rights.
3. The unification of Egypt by Menes/Narmer is not just the creation of the first notable country in history, but the establishment of the first example in a pattern that is repeated in every culture for thousands of years until America.
4. Then the Founding Fathers of the United States rebelled against this accepted notion in 1776, declaring that each individual has a right to their own "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness," and they created a government to protect those rights.
5. The measure of how radical (and wonderful) a concept this was is shown by the meteoric rise of the United States to the first rank among the civilizations of the world.

E. The Ancient Roots of American Government

1. Although the American government was the first government ever made explicitly to defend individual rights, two ancient societies had taken important steps to repudiate monarchy long ago and establish more benevolent governments, providing important examples of how to do it. America's Founding Fathers learned a great deal from their stories.
2. The people of the ancient Greek city of Athens had rejected monarchy c.508 BC and created the first "democracy." In their government, all individuals had an equal voice in the government and voted in creating the laws. In their government the rule of one was replaced by the rule of the majority.
3. The people of the ancient Italian city of Rome had also rejected monarchy c.509 BC (apparently just one year before Athens!) and created the first "republic." In their government, not everyone had an equal voice in the making of the laws, but special methods were used to protect people's rights *from the power of their own government* such as the implementation of a set of laws — a constitution — that no one could overturn, and the alignment of some branches of government in direct opposition to each other so that no one would have too much power.
4. When the Founding Fathers created the American government in 1776, its design was anchored in the historical understanding they had of the ancient governments of Athens and Rome. They rejected the European version of monarchy as well as democracy, and created a *republic*.

F. Christianity and the Christian Calendar in an America-Centric World

1. Another important aspect of the world we live in today is the presence of the religion of Christianity in modern culture.
2. The modern calendar measures all events relative to the birth of the central figure in Christianity, Jesus Christ, approximately 2014 years ago.
3. All events before the year of Jesus's birth are marked "BC" — "before Christ."
4. All events after are marked "AD" — short for "Anno Domini" — a Latin expression that means "in the year of our Lord." (Christians sometimes refer to their God as "the Lord" and to the man many believe was his son, Jesus, as "the Lord" as well.)
5. Jesus was born and died inside the Roman Empire. Rome had changed from a republic into an empire with a monarch known as an "emperor." It had swallowed up the Mediterranean world, including Greece, which was no longer a democracy also. (Sadly the positive examples of ancient Athens and Rome were short-lived.)
6. Jesus lived in a small corner of the huge Roman empire called Judea, and the story of his life was known to very few people. It took centuries for his teachings to become widely known, and for Christianity to become an important religion in and around the Roman Empire.
7. Working backward, early Christians developed a tradition of a certain year being the year of Jesus's birth, which they called year "1," but it was never known with certainty. The research of modern scientific historians shows us that the best guess for his actual year of birth is in fact 4 BC, but since there is no way to know for sure, given the obscurity of Jesus's life, this has not resulted in a change of the calendar. (What matters to history in the end is not the precise timing of Jesus's birth, but rather the importance of Christianity in world culture.)
8. Christianity was eventually so widely accepted in Europe that even when the Roman Empire collapsed in 476 AD, Christianity survived as an organized religion. Most Romans had become Christians by that point, and the European barbarians who conquered them either were or became Christians too. (Some students will recall the story of the conversion of Clovis, the king of the Franks, from European history.)
9. By the time of Christopher Columbus, over a thousand years later still, almost everyone in Europe was Christian.
10. In America today, and in the America-centric world, religion is not nearly as important as it was in Roman and early European times. Also although Christianity is the most important of the major religions in the world, it is only one of them, accepted by some 30% of the people in the world. Nonetheless, it was European Christians who enacted globalization, creating empires on every continent in the world, it was the European Christian calendar that came to be used as a standard calendar around the world, and that calendar continues to be in use today.

G. The Most Recent Chapter in History

1. We live in the final chapter (so far) in a five-thousand year story that begins in ancient Egypt, flows through Greece and Rome, to Europe, and ultimately to modern America and the America-centric world.
2. Along the way, approximately a hundred years ago, America emerged as the most powerful and culturally influential nation in the history of the world, taking over from Europe as the main civilization of the world.
3. Although it started as a republic seeking independence from the rest of the world, the United States has become a world police power fighting to “make the world safe for democracy” (to use the famous phrase of an American president).
4. In a world of many different cultures and forms of government, America’s efforts to police the globe have made it many enemies. In particular, in the region called the “Middle East” (between Europe and East Asia), many have been angered by America’s power and influence.
5. The vast majority of the people of that region wish for a world that is Islam-centric — a world centered around the religion of Islam — and America’s power is the greatest obstacle they see to this religious goal.
6. Since America’s military power is so overwhelmingly great, some Muslims (the name for people who follow the religion of Islam) have adopted the method of terrorism to try to reduce America’s power over them. This means they do not attack America’s military, but civilians instead, to terrorize them and their leaders into reducing America’s control of the world.
7. On September 11, 2001, Muslim terrorists attacked America and destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City, as well as other locations.
8. Instead of withdrawing from the world, America retaliated. The attacks of 9-11 led to the United States conquering the countries of Afghanistan and Iraq and attempting to create democratic governments there as part of the “War on Terror,” which continues to this day.
9. Years later, headlines in the news today illustrate that the outcome of America’s actions are not easy to decipher. On the one hand, there have not been major terrorist attacks on America since 2011. Iraq and neighboring Syria, however, are being picked apart by a new terrorist organization called ISIL (the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”) and Afghanistan is teetering on disintegration. More threats from Islamic terrorism abound, and acts of terror are still a common feature of the news in the world. There is no apparent end in sight to the “War on Terror.”