

United States of America

Type of Government: Federal Presidential – strong states, strong executive. Note UN representation follows the President’s policy.

Head of Government: President Barack Obama (term ends 2016)

Capital City: Washington, D.C

Ideology: Centre-right; strong libertarian and capitalist tendencies. Current president is centre-left.

Region: North America

Neighbours: Canada, Mexico, Cuba



DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Population:** 315 million. America is the third-largest nation by both land area and population.
- **Religion:** Officially secular but deeply religious. 59% of Americans say religion plays an ‘important’ role in their lives. 78.4% of adults identify themselves as Christian.
- **Age:** Average life expectancy 78.64 years.
- **Ethnicities:** 72% White, 13% Black American, 5% Asian, 16% Hispanic.
- **Languages:** English is the de facto national language. Spanish is the second most popular language, spoken by 12% of the population.

ECONOMY

- The USA has the largest and most technologically powerful economy in the world with a GDP of \$15.66 trillion, and inflation at 2%, lower than 190 other nations. The economy has abundant natural resources, well-developed infrastructure and high productivity.
- The US dollar is the world’s primary reserve currency but the US has an extremely high level of government debt (\$4.8 trillion), primarily serviced by China.

Major Industries

- Agriculture makes up 1.2% of GDP; Manufacturing and mining 19.1% and services 79.7%

Exports

- America is the world’s second largest exporter of goods, behind China
- **Major Export Partners:** Canada 19%, Mexico 13.3%, China 7%, Japan 4.5%
- Major exports include: Capital goods (transistors, aircraft, motor vehicle parts) 49%, agricultural products 9%, Industrial supplies 27%, consumer goods (cars, medicine) 15%

Imports

- The USA is the world’s largest importer of goods, with 18% of imports from China, 14% from Canada, 12% from Mexico, 6% from Japan, and 4% from Germany.
- Major Imports: Industrial supplies 33%, agricultural products 5%, Consumer goods 32%. US demand is a key reason for China’s strong export performance.

Natural Resources

- Fertile soil, oil and mineral deposits and forests.
- The USA has the world's largest coal reserves, accounting for 27% of the world's supply.



MILITARY

Size: Around 1.45 million in active duty, with another 850,000

reservists. More than 15,000 aircraft, and the world's largest navy with 10 aircraft carriers in active service. Defence budget of \$682.0 billion (4.4% of GDP), and is larger than the next top 10 countries combined.

Deployment: Over 240,000 troops posted in bases in every time zone of the world, including large deployments in Japan, Germany, South Korea, and the Middle East.

Current Deployments: Iraq (50,000 support service members as part of Operation New Dawn), Afghanistan (66,000, reducing by up to 20,000 in 2014)

POLITICS

Domestic Politics

- American domestic politics is deeply polarised; Republicans and Democrats agree on almost no major issues and progress is impossible without cross-party consensus.
- Politics (somewhat) “stops at the waters’ edge” – both parties strongly support the War on Terror, drone strikes, and doing basically anything to kill terrorists.

Foreign Policy Concerns

- US promotes liberalism (free markets, free peoples) throughout the world; frequently sponsors pro-human rights resolutions and democracy. Women's rights are key concern.
- National Security is otherwise the US's dominant national security lens: Barack Obama has claimed the power to unilaterally execute by drone strike anyone he thinks is a terrorist.
- With the world's largest army, and richest treasury, the US is generally needed to launch any major intervention, and after Iraq and Afghanistan is very reluctant to do so.
- Presently in hot water over domestic and international snooping; again predicated on beating terrorism. US controls most of the world's Internet infrastructure and won't give this up.
- US often supports UN peacekeeping missions but dislikes contributing American troops; they prefer their troops to stay under their commanders in their military rather than have an internationally-operated force.
- Famously US is reluctant to fund foreign aid or the UN, and tries to cut these budgets.
- Major allies include Europe (UK especially). Relations are strained with China and Pakistan. China resents US's “pivot to Asia” (where the US puts more armed forces in Asia); Pakistan resents US sending unmanned drones into their territory to kill their citizens.

More Information

Wiki: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States

CIA: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1217752.stm

US Department of State: <http://www.state.gov/>

It is very easy to read about USA foreign policy news; we recommend the **New York Times**

(<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/index.html>), and the **Economist** (<http://www.economist.com/topics/united-states>).