

TRUMAN AND THE COLD WAR, 1945–1952

Communism holds that the world is so deeply divided into opposing classes that war is inevitable. Democracy holds that free nations can settle differences justly and maintain lasting peace.

President Harry S. Truman,

Inaugural Address, January 20, 1949

World War II dramatically changed the United States from an isolationist country into a military superpower and a leader in world affairs. After the war, most of the Americans at home and the millions coming back from military service wished to return to normal domestic life and enjoy the revitalized national economy. However, during the Truman presidency, the growing conflict between the Communist Soviet Union and the United States—a conflict that came to be known as the Cold War—dampened the nation’s enjoyment of the postwar boom.

Postwar America

The 15 million American soldiers, sailors, and marines returning to civilian life in 1945 and 1946 faced the problem of finding jobs and housing. Many feared that the end of the war might mean the return of economic hard times. Happily, the fears were not realized because the war years had increased the per-capita income of Americans. Much of that income was tucked away in savings accounts, since wartime shortages meant there had been few consumer goods to buy. Pent-up consumer demand for autos and housing combined with government road-building projects quickly overcame the economic uncertainty after the war and introduced an era of unprecedented prosperity and economic growth. By the 1950s, Americans enjoyed the highest standard of living achieved by any society in history.

GI Bill—Help for Veterans

The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill of Rights, proved a powerful support during the transition of 15 million veterans to a peacetime economy. More than half the returning GIs (as the men and women in uniform were called) seized the opportunity afforded by the GI Bill to continue their education at government expense. Over 2 million GIs attended college,

which started a postwar boom in higher education. The veterans also received over \$16 billion in low-interest, government-backed loans to buy homes and farms and to start businesses. By focusing on a better educated workforce and also promoting new construction, the federal government stimulated the postwar economic expansion.

Baby Boom

One sign of the basic confidence of the postwar era was an explosion in marriages and births. Younger marriages and larger families resulted in 50 million babies entering the U.S. population between 1945 and 1960. As the *baby boom* generation gradually passed from childhood to adolescence to adulthood, it profoundly affected the nation's social institutions and economic life in the last half of the 20th century. Initially, the baby boom tended to focus women's attention on raising children and homemaking. Nevertheless, the trend of more women in the workplace continued. By 1960, one-third of all married women worked outside the home.

Suburban Growth

The high demand for housing after the war resulted in a construction boom. William J. Levitt led in the development of postwar suburbia with his building and promotion of Levittown, a project of 17,000 mass-produced, low-priced family homes on Long Island, New York. Low interest rates on mortgages that were both government-insured and tax deductible made the move from city to suburb affordable for even families of modest means. In a single generation, the majority of middle-class Americans became suburbanites. For many older inner cities, the effect of the mass movement to suburbia was disastrous. By the 1960s, cities from Boston to Los Angeles became increasingly poor and racially divided.

Rise of the Sunbelt

Uprooted by the war, millions of Americans made moving a habit in the postwar era. A warmer climate, lower taxes, and economic opportunities in defense-related industries attracted many GIs and their families to the Sunbelt states from Florida to California. By transferring tax dollars from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, military spending during the Cold War helped finance the shift of industry, people, and ultimately political power from one region to the other.

Postwar Politics

Harry S. Truman, a moderate Democratic senator from Missouri, replaced the more liberal Henry Wallace as FDR's vice president in the 1944 election. Thrust into the presidency after Roosevelt's death in April 1945, Truman matured into a decisive leader whose basic honesty and unpretentious style appealed to average citizens. Truman attempted to continue in the New Deal tradition of his predecessor.

Economic Program and Civil Rights

Truman's proposals for full employment and for civil rights for African Americans ran into opposition from conservatives in Congress.

Employment Act of 1946 In September 1945, during the same week that Japan formally surrendered, Truman urged Congress to enact a series of progressive measures, including national health insurance, an increase in the minimum wage, and a bill to commit the U.S. government to maintaining full employment. After much debate, the watered-down version of the full-employment bill was enacted as the Employment Act of 1946. It created the Council of Economic Advisers to counsel both the president and Congress on means of promoting national economic welfare. Over the next seven years, a coalition between Republicans and conservative Southern Democrats, combined with the beginning of the Cold War, hindered passage of most of Truman's domestic program.

Inflation and Strikes Truman urged Congress to continue the price controls of wartime in order to hold inflation in check. Instead, southern Democrats joined with Republicans to relax the controls of the Office of Price Administration. The result was an inflation rate of almost 25 percent during the first year and a half of peace.

Workers and unions wanted wages to catch up after years of wage controls. Over 4.5 million workers went on strike in 1946. Strikes by railroad and mine workers threatened the national safety. Truman took a tough approach to this challenge, seizing the mines and using soldiers to keep them operating until the United Mine Workers finally called off its strike.

Civil Rights Truman was the first modern president to use the powers of his office to challenge racial discrimination. Bypassing southern Democrats who controlled key committees in Congress, the president used his executive powers to establish the Committee on Civil Rights in 1946. He also strengthened the civil rights division of the Justice Department, which aided the efforts of black leaders to end segregation in schools. Most importantly, in 1948 he ordered the end of racial discrimination throughout the federal government, including the armed forces. The end of segregation changed life on military bases, many of which were in the South.

Recognizing the odds against passage of civil rights legislation, Truman nevertheless urged Congress to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission that would prevent employers from discriminating against the hiring of African Americans. Southern Democrats blocked the legislation.

Republican Control of the Eightieth Congress

Unhappy with inflation and strikes, voters were in a conservative mood in the fall of 1946 when they elected Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. Under Republican control, the Eightieth Congress attempted to pass two tax cuts for upper-income Americans, but Truman vetoed both measures. More successful were Republican efforts to amend the Constitution and roll back some of the New Deal gains for labor.

Twenty-second Amendment (1951) Reacting against the election of Roosevelt as president four times, the Republican-dominated Congress proposed a constitutional amendment to limit a president to a maximum of two full terms in office. The 22nd Amendment was ratified by the states in 1951.

Taft-Hartley Act (1947) In 1947, Congress passed the probusiness Taft-Hartley Act. Truman vetoed the measure as a “slave-labor” bill, but Congress overrode his veto. The one purpose of the Republican-sponsored law was to check the growing power of unions. Its provisions included

- outlawing the closed shop (contract requiring workers to join a union *before* being hired)
- permitting states to pass “right to work” laws outlawing the union shop (contract requiring workers to join a union *after* being hired)
- outlawing secondary boycotts (the practice of several unions supporting a striking union by joining a boycott of a company’s products)
- giving the president the power to invoke an 80-day cooling-off period before a strike endangering the national safety could be called

For years afterward, unions sought unsuccessfully to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act. The act became a major issue dividing Republicans and Democrats in the 1950s.

The Election of 1948

As measured by opinion polls, Truman’s popularity was at a low point as the 1948 campaign for the presidency began. Republicans were confident of victory, especially after both a liberal faction and a conservative faction in the Democratic party abandoned Truman to organize their own third parties. Liberal Democrats, who thought Truman’s aggressive foreign policy threatened world peace, formed a new Progressive party that nominated former vice president Henry Wallace. Southern Democrats also bolted the party in reaction to Truman’s support for civil rights. Their States’ Rights party, better known as the Dixiecrats, chose Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as its presidential candidate.

The Republicans once again nominated New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey, who looked so much like a winner from the outset that he conducted an overly cautious and unexciting campaign. Meanwhile, the man without a chance toured the nation by rail, attacking the “do-nothing” Republican Eightieth Congress with “give-’em-hell” speeches. The feisty Truman confounded the polling experts with a decisive victory over Dewey, winning the popular vote by 2 million votes and winning the electoral vote 303 to 189. The president had succeeded in reuniting Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition, except for four southern states that went to Thurmond and the Dixiecrats.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, 1948



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*

The Fair Deal

Fresh from victory, Truman launched an ambitious reform program, which he called the *Fair Deal*. In 1949, he urged Congress to enact national health care insurance, federal aid to education, civil rights legislation, funds for public housing, and a new farm program. Conservatives in Congress blocked most of the proposed reforms, except for an increase in the minimum wage (from 40 to 75 cents an hour) and the inclusion of more workers under Social Security.

Most of the Fair Deal bills were defeated for two reasons: (1) Truman's political conflicts with Congress, and (2) the pressing foreign policy concerns of the Cold War. Nevertheless, liberal defenders of Truman praised him for at least maintaining the New Deal reforms of his predecessor and making civil rights part of the liberal agenda.

Origins of the Cold War

The Cold War dominated international relations from the late 1940s to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The conflict centered around the intense rivalry between two superpowers: the Communist empire of the Soviet Union and the leading Western democracy, the United States. Superpower competition usually was through diplomacy rather than armed conflict, but, in several instances, the Cold War took the world dangerously close to a nuclear war.

Among historians there is intense debate over how and why the Cold War began. Many analysts see Truman's policies as a reasonable response to Soviet efforts to increase their influence in the world. However, some critics argue that Truman misunderstood and overreacted to Russia's historic need to secure its borders. Other critics have attacked his administration as being weak or "soft" on communism.

U.S.-Soviet Relations to 1945

The wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union against the Axis powers was actually a temporary halt in their generally poor relations of the past. Since the Bolshevik Revolution that established a Communist

government in Russia in 1917, Americans had viewed the Soviets as a threat to all capitalistic countries. In the United States, it led to the Red Scare of 1919. The United States refused to recognize the Soviet Union until 1933. Even then, after a brief honeymoon period of less than a year, Roosevelt's advisers concluded that Joseph Stalin and the Communists could not be trusted. Confirming their view was the notorious Nonaggression Pact of 1939, in which Stalin and Hitler agreed to divide up Eastern Europe.

Allies in World War II In 1941, Hitler's surprise invasion of the Soviet Union and Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor led to a U.S.–Soviet alliance of convenience—but not of mutual trust. Stalin bitterly complained that the British and Americans waited until 1944 to open a second front in France. Because of this wait, the Soviets bore the brunt of fighting the Nazis. By some estimates, half of all deaths in World War II were Soviets. The postwar conflicts over Central and Eastern Europe were already evident in the negotiations between Britain, the Soviet Union, and the U.S. at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945. Roosevelt hoped that personal diplomacy might keep Stalin in check, but when Truman came to power, he quickly became suspicious of the Soviets.

Postwar Cooperation and the U.N. The founding of the United Nations in the fall of 1945 provided one hopeful sign for the future. The General Assembly of the United Nations was created to provide representation to all member nations, while the 15-member Security Council was given the primary responsibility within the U.N. for maintaining international security and authorizing peacekeeping missions. The five major allies of wartime—the United States, Great Britain, France, China, and the Soviet Union—were granted permanent seats and veto power in the U.N. Security Council. Optimists hoped that these nations would be able to reach agreement on international issues. In addition, the Soviets went along with a U.S. proposal to establish an Atomic Energy Commission in the United Nations. They rejected, however, a plan proposed by Bernard Baruch for regulating nuclear energy and eliminating atomic weapons. Rejection of the Baruch Plan was interpreted by some American leaders as proof that Moscow did not have peaceful intentions.

The United States also offered the Soviets participation in the new International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) created at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944. The bank's initial purpose was to fund rebuilding of a war-torn world. The Soviets, however, declined to participate because they viewed the bank as an instrument of capitalism. The Soviets did join the other Allies in the 1945–1946 Nuremberg trials of 22 top Nazi leaders for war crimes and violations of human rights.

Satellite States in Eastern Europe Distrust turned into hostility beginning in 1946, as Soviet forces remained in occupation of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Elections were held by the Soviets—as promised by Stalin at Yalta—but the results were manipulated in favor of Communist candidates. One by one, from 1946 to 1948, Communist dictators, most of them loyal to Moscow, came to power in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Apologists for the Soviets argued that Russia needed buffer

states or satellites (nations under the control of a great power), as a protection against another Hitler-like invasion from the West.

The U.S. and British governments were alarmed by the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe. They regarded Soviet actions in this region as a flagrant violation of self-determination, genuine democracy, and open markets. The British especially wanted free elections in Poland, whose independence had been the issue that started World War II.

Occupation Zones in Germany At the end of the war, the division of Germany and Austria into Soviet, French, British, and U.S. zones of occupation was meant to be only temporary. In Germany, however, the eastern zone under Soviet occupation gradually evolved into a new Communist state, the German Democratic Republic. The conflict over Germany was at least in part a conflict over differing views of national security and economic needs. The Soviets wanted a weak Germany for security reasons and large war reparations for economic reasons. The United States and Great Britain refused to allow reparations from their western zones because both viewed the economic recovery of Germany as important to the stability of Central Europe. The Soviets, fearing a restored Germany, tightened their control over East Germany. Also, since Berlin lay within their zone, they attempted to force the Americans, British, and French to give up their assigned sectors of the city.

Iron Curtain “I’m tired of babying the Soviets,” Truman told Secretary of State James Byrnes in January 1946. News of a Canadian spy ring stealing atomic secrets for the Soviets and continued Soviet occupation of northern Iran further encouraged a get-tough policy in Washington.

In March 1946, in Fulton, Missouri, Truman was present on the speaker’s platform as former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared: “An iron curtain has descended across the continent” of Europe. The iron curtain metaphor was later used throughout the Cold War to refer to the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe. Churchill’s “iron curtain” speech called for a partnership between Western democracies to halt the expansion of communism. Did the speech anticipate the Cold War—or help to cause it? Historians still debate this question.

Containment in Europe

Early in 1947, Truman adopted the advice of three top advisers in deciding to “contain” Soviet aggression. His containment policy, which was to govern U.S. foreign policy for decades, was formulated by the secretary of state, General George Marshall; the undersecretary of state, Dean Acheson; and an expert on Soviet affairs, George F. Kennan. In an influential article, Kennan had written that only “a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” would eventually cause the Soviets to back off their Communist ideology of world domination and live in peace with other nations.

Did the containment policy attempt to do too much? Among the critics who argued that it did was journalist Walter Lippmann, who had coined the term “Cold War.” Lippmann argued that some areas were vital to U.S. security, while others were merely peripheral; some governments deserved U.S. support, but others did

not. American leaders, however, had learned the lesson of Munich (when leaders had given into demands by Hitler for land in 1938) and appeasement well and felt that Communist aggression, wherever it occurred, must be challenged.

The Truman Doctrine

Truman first implemented the containment policy in response to two threats: (1) a Communist-led uprising against the government in Greece, and (2) Soviet demands for some control of a water route in Turkey, the Dardanelles. In what became known as the Truman Doctrine, the president asked Congress in March 1947 for \$400 million in economic and military aid to assist the “free people” of Greece and Turkey against “totalitarian” regimes. While Truman’s alarmist speech may have oversimplified the situation in Greece and Turkey, it gained bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats in Congress.

The Marshall Plan

After the war, Europe lay in ruins, short of food and deep in debt. The harsh winter of 1946–1947 further demoralized Europeans, who had already suffered through years of depression and war. Discontent encouraged the growth of the Communist party, especially in France and Italy. The Truman administration feared that the western democracies might vote the Communists into power.

In June 1947, George Marshall outlined an extensive program of U.S. economic aid to help European nations revive their economies and strengthen democratic governments. In December, Truman submitted to Congress a \$17 billion European Recovery Program, better known as the Marshall Plan. In 1948, \$12 billion in aid was approved for distribution to the countries of Western Europe over a four-year period. The United States offered Marshall Plan aid to the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, but the Soviets refused it, fearing that it would lead to dependence on the United States.

Effects The Marshall Plan worked exactly as Marshall and Truman had hoped. The massive infusion of U.S. dollars helped Western Europe achieve self-sustaining growth by the 1950s and ended any real threat of Communist political successes in that region. It also bolstered U.S. prosperity by greatly increasing U.S. exports to Europe. At the same time, however, it deepened the rift between the non-Communist West and the Communist East.

The Berlin Airlift

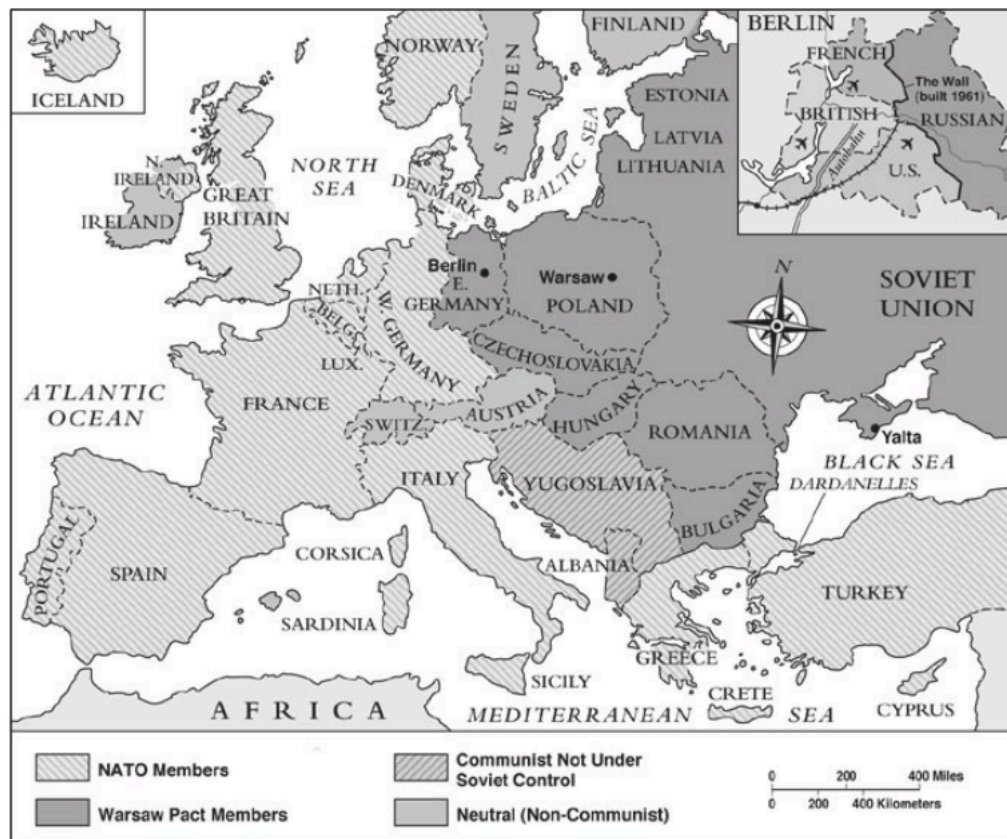
A major crisis of the Cold War focused on Berlin. In June 1948, the Soviets cut off all access by land to the German city. Truman dismissed any plans to withdraw from Berlin, but he also rejected using force to open up the roads through the Soviet-controlled eastern zone. Instead, he ordered U.S. planes to fly in supplies to the people of West Berlin. Day after day, week after week, the massive airlift continued. At the same time, Truman sent 60 bombers capable of carrying atomic bombs to bases in England. The world waited nervously for the outbreak of war, but Stalin decided not to challenge the airlift. (Truman’s stand on Berlin was partly responsible for his victory in the 1948 election.)

By May 1949, the Soviets finally opened up the highways to Berlin, thus bringing their 11-month blockade to an end. A major long-term consequence of the Berlin crisis was the creation of two Germanies: the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, a U.S. ally) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, a Soviet satellite).

NATO and National Security

Ever since Washington's farewell address of 1796, the United States had avoided permanent alliances with European nations. Truman broke with this tradition in 1949 by recommending that the United States join a military defense pact to protect Western Europe. The Senate readily gave its consent. Ten European nations joined the United States and Canada in creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance for defending all members from outside attack. Truman selected General Eisenhower as NATO's first Supreme Commander and stationed U.S. troops in Western Europe as a deterrent against a Soviet invasion. Thus, the containment policy led to a military buildup and major commitments abroad. The Soviet Union countered in 1955 by forming the Warsaw Pact, a military alliance for the defense of the Communist states of Eastern Europe.

EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II: THE COLD WAR



National Security Act (1947) The United States had begun to modernize its military capability in 1947 by passing the National Security Act. It provided for (1) a centralized Department of Defense (replacing the War Department) to coordinate the operations of the army, navy, and air force; (2) the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) to coordinate the making of foreign policy in the Cold War; and (3) the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to employ spies to gather information on foreign governments. In 1948, the Selective Service System and a peacetime draft were instituted.

Atomic Weapons After the Berlin crisis, teams of scientists in both the Soviet Union and the United States were engaged in an intense competition—or *arms race*—to develop superior weapons systems. For a period of just four years (1945–1949), the United States was the only nation to have the atomic bomb. It also developed in this period a new generation of long-range bombers for delivering nuclear weapons.

The Soviets tested their first atomic bomb in the fall of 1949. Truman then approved the development of a bomb a thousand times more powerful than the A-bomb that had destroyed Hiroshima. In 1952, this hydrogen bomb (or H-bomb) was added to the U.S. arsenal. Earlier, in 1950, the National Security Council had recommended, in a secret report known as NSC-68, that the following measures were necessary for fighting the Cold War:

- quadruple U.S. government defense spending to 20 percent of GNP
- form alliances with non-Communist countries around the world
- convince the American public that a costly arms buildup was imperative for the nation's defense

Evaluating U.S. Policy Critics of NATO and the defense buildup argued that the Truman administration intensified Russian fears and started an unnecessary arms race. Regardless, NATO became one of the most successful military alliances in history. In combination with the deterrent power of nuclear weapons, NATO effectively checked Soviet expansion in Europe and thereby maintained an uneasy peace until the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Cold War in Asia

The successful containment policy in Europe could not be duplicated in Asia. Following World War II, the old imperialist system in India and Southeast Asia crumbled, as former colonies became new nations. Because these nations had different cultural and political traditions and bitter memories of Western colonialism, they resisted U.S. influence. Ironically, the Asian nation that became most closely tied to the U.S. defense system was its former enemy, Japan.

Japan

Unlike Germany, Japan was solely under the control of the United States. General Douglas MacArthur took firm charge of the reconstruction of Japan. Seven

Japanese generals, including Premier Hideki Tojo, were tried for war crimes and executed. Under MacArthur's guidance, the new constitution adopted in May 1947 set up a parliamentary democracy. It retained Emperor Hirohito as the ceremonial head of state, but the emperor gave up his claims to divinity. The new constitution also renounced war as an instrument of national policy and provided for only limited military capability. As a result, Japan depended on the military protection of the United States.

U.S.-Japanese Security Treaties With the signing of two treaties in 1951, Japan surrendered its claims to Korea and islands in the Pacific, and the United States ended formal occupation of Japan. One of the treaties also provided for U.S. troops to remain in military bases in Japan for that country's protection against external enemies, particularly Communists. Japan became a strong ally and prospered under the American shield.

The Philippines and the Pacific

On July 4, 1946, in accordance with the act passed by Congress in 1934, the Philippines became an independent republic, but the United States retained important naval and air bases there throughout the Cold War. This, together with U.S. control of the United Nations trustee islands taken from Japan at the end of the war, began to make the Pacific Ocean look like an American lake.

China

Since coming to power in the late 1920s, Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jie-shi) had used his command of the Nationalist, or Kuomintang, party to control China's central government. During World War II, the United States had given massive military aid to Chiang to prevent all of China from being conquered by Japan. As soon as the war ended, a civil war dating back to the 1930s was renewed between Chiang's Nationalists and the Chinese Communists led by Mao Zedong. The Nationalists were losing the loyalty of millions of Chinese because of runaway inflation and widespread corruption, while the well-organized Communists successfully appealed to the poor landless peasants.

U.S. Policy The Truman administration sent George Marshall in 1946 to China to negotiate an end to the civil war, but his compromise fell apart in a few months. By 1947, Chiang's armies were in retreat. Truman seemed unsure of what to do, after ruling out a large-scale American invasion to rescue Chiang. In 1948, Congress voted to give the Nationalist government \$400 million in aid, but 80 percent of the U.S. military supplies ended up in Communist hands because of corruption and the collapse of the Nationalist armies.

Two Chinas By the end of 1949, all of mainland China was controlled by the Communists. Chiang and the Nationalists had retreated to an island once under Japanese rule, Formosa (Taiwan). From there, Chiang still claimed to be the legitimate government for all of China. The United States continued to support Chiang and refused to recognize Mao Zedong's regime in Beijing (the People's Republic of China) until 30 years later, in 1979.

In the United States, Republicans blamed the Democrats for the “loss of China” to the Communists. In 1950, the two Communist dictators, Stalin and Mao, signed a Sino-Soviet pact, which seemed to provide further proof of a worldwide Communist conspiracy.

The Korean War

After the defeat of Japan, its former colony Korea was divided along the 38th parallel by the victors. Soviet armies occupied Korean territory north of the line, while U.S. forces occupied territory to the south. By 1949 both armies were withdrawn, leaving the North in the hands of the Communist leader Kim Il Sung and the South under the conservative nationalist Syngman Rhee.

Invasion On June 25, 1950, the North Korean army surprised the world, possibly even Moscow, by invading South Korea. Truman took immediate action, applying his containment policy to this latest crisis in Asia. He called for a special session of the U.N. Security Council. Taking advantage of a temporary boycott by the Soviet delegation, the Security Council under U.S. leadership authorized a U.N. force to defend South Korea against the invaders. Although other nations participated in this force, U.S. troops made up most of the U.N. forces sent to help the South Korean army. Commanding the expedition was General Douglas MacArthur. Congress supported the use of U.S. troops in the Korean crisis but failed to declare war, accepting Truman’s characterization of U.S. intervention as merely a “police action.”

Counterattack At first the war in Korea went badly, as the North Koreans pushed the combined South Korean and American forces to the tip of the peninsula. However, General MacArthur reversed the war with a brilliant amphibious assault at Inchon behind the North Korean lines. U.N. forces then proceeded to destroy much of the North Korean army, advancing northward almost as far as the Chinese border. MacArthur failed to heed China’s warnings that it would resist threats to its security. In November 1950, masses of Chinese troops crossed the border into Korea, overwhelmed U.N. forces in one of the worst defeats in U.S. military history, and drove them out of North Korea.

Truman Versus MacArthur MacArthur stabilized the fighting near the 38th parallel. At the same time, he called for expanding the war, including bombing and invading mainland China. As commander in chief, Truman cautioned MacArthur about making public statements that suggested criticism of official U.S. policy. The general spoke out anyway. In April 1951, Truman, with the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recalled MacArthur for insubordination.

MacArthur returned home as a hero. Most Americans understood his statement, “There is no substitute for victory,” better than the president’s containment policy and concept of “limited war.” Critics attacked Truman and the Democrats as appeasers for not trying to destroy communism in Asia.

Armistice In Korea, the war was stalemated along a front just north of the 38th parallel. At Panmunjom, peace talks began in July 1951. The police action dragged on for another two years, however, until an armistice was finally

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signed in 1953 during the first year of Eisenhower's presidency. More than 2.5 million people died in the Korean conflict, including 54,000 Americans.

Political Consequences From the perspective of the grand strategy of the Cold War, Truman's containment policy in Korea worked. It stopped Communist aggression without allowing the conflict to develop into a world war. The Truman administration used the Korean War as justification for dramatically expanding the military, funding a new jet bomber (the B-52), and stationing more U.S. troops in overseas bases.

However, Republicans were far from satisfied. The stalemate in Korea and the loss of China led Republicans to characterize Truman and the Democrats as "soft on communism." They attacked leading Democrats as members of "Dean Acheson's Cowardly College of Communist Containment." (In 1949, Acheson had replaced George Marshall as secretary of state.)

The Second Red Scare

Just as a Red Scare had followed U.S. victory in World War I, a second Red Scare followed U.S. victory in World War II. The Truman administration's

tendency to see a Communist conspiracy behind civil wars in Europe and Asia contributed to the belief that Communist conspirators and spies had infiltrated American society, including the U.S. State Department and the U.S. military.

Security and Civil Rights

In 1947, the Truman administration—under pressure from Republican critics—set up a Loyalty Review Board to investigate the background of more than 3 million federal employees. Thousands of officials and civil service employees either resigned or lost their jobs in a probe that went on for four years (1947–1951).

Prosecutions Under the Smith Act In addition, the leaders of the American Communist party were jailed for advocating the overthrow of the U.S. government. In the case of *Dennis et al. v. United States* (1951), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Smith Act of 1940, which made it illegal to advocate or teach the overthrow of the government by force or to belong to an organization with this objective.

McCarran Internal Security Act (1950) Over Truman’s veto, Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act, which (1) made it unlawful to advocate or support the establishment of a totalitarian government, (2) restricted the employment and travel of those joining Communist-front organizations, and (3) authorized the creation of detention camps for subversives.

Un-American Activities In the House of Representatives, the Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), originally established in 1939 to seek out Nazis, was reactivated in the postwar years to find Communists. The committee not only investigated government officials but also looked for Communist influence in such organizations as the Boy Scouts and in the Hollywood film industry. Actors, directors, and writers were called before the committee to testify. Those who refused to testify were tried for contempt of Congress. Others were blacklisted from the industry.

Cultural Impact The Second Red Scare had a chilling effect on freedom of expression. Creators of the gritty crime dramas in the film noir style, and playwrights, such as Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*, 1949) came under attacks as anti-American. Rodgers and Hammerstein’s musical, *South Pacific* (1949), was criticized, especially by southern politicians, as a communistic assault on racial segregation. Loyalty oaths were commonly required of writers and teachers as a condition of employment. The American Civil Liberties Union and other opponents of these security measures argued that the 1st Amendment protected the free expression of unpopular political views and membership in political groups, including the Communist party.

Espionage Cases

The fear of a Communist conspiracy bent on world conquest was supported by a series of actual cases of Communist espionage in Great Britain, Canada, and

the United States. The methods used to identify Communist spies, however, raised serious questions about whether the government was going too far and violating civil liberties in the process.

Hiss Case Whittaker Chambers, a confessed Communist, became a star witness for the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1948. His testimony, along with the investigative work of a young member of Congress from California named Richard Nixon, led to the trial of Alger Hiss, a prominent official in the State Department who had assisted Roosevelt at the Yalta Conference. Hiss denied the accusations that he was a Communist and had given secret documents to Chambers. In 1950, however, he was convicted of perjury and sent to prison. Many Americans could not help wondering whether the highest levels of government were infiltrated by Communist spies.

Rosenberg Case When the Soviets tested their first atomic bomb in 1949, many Americans were convinced that spies had helped them to steal the technology from the United States. Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist who had worked on the Manhattan Project, admitted giving A-bomb secrets to the Russians. An FBI investigation traced another spy ring to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in New York. After a controversial trial in 1951, the Rosenbergs were found guilty of treason and executed in 1953. Civil rights groups charged that anticommunist hysteria was responsible for the conviction and punishment of the Rosenbergs.

The Rise of Joseph McCarthy

Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, used the growing concern over communism in his reelection campaign. In a speech in 1950, he charged that 205 Communists were still working for the State Department. This sensational accusation was widely publicized in the American press. McCarthy then rode the wave of anticommunist feelings to make himself one of the most powerful men in America. His power was based entirely on people's fear of the damage McCarthy could do if his accusing finger pointed their way.

McCarthy's Tactics Senator McCarthy used a steady stream of unsupported accusations about Communists in government to keep the media focus on himself and to discredit the Truman administration. Working-class Americans at first loved his "take the gloves off" hard-hitting remarks, which were often aimed at the wealthy and privileged in society. While many Republicans disliked McCarthy's ruthless tactics, he was primarily hurting the Democrats before the election of Eisenhower in 1952. He became so popular, however, that even President Eisenhower would not dare to defend his old friend, George Marshall, against McCarthy's untruths.

Army-McCarthy Hearings Finally, in 1954, McCarthy's "reckless cruelty" was exposed on television. A Senate committee held televised hearings on Communist infiltration in the army, and McCarthy was seen as a bully by millions of viewers. In December, Republicans joined Democrats in a Senate censure of McCarthy. The "witch hunt" for Communists (McCarthyism) had played itself out. Three years later, McCarthy died a broken man.

Truman in Retirement

The second Red Scare, the stalemate in Korea, the loss of China, and scandals surrounding several of Truman's advisers made his prospects of reelection unlikely. Truman decided to return to private life in Missouri—a move that he jokingly called his “promotion.” In the election of 1952, Republicans blamed Truman for “the mess in Washington.” In time, however, even Truman's critics came to respect his many tough decisions and admire his direct, frank character.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHO STARTED THE COLD WAR?

Among U.S. historians, the traditional, or orthodox, view of the origins of the Cold War is that the Soviet government under Stalin started the conflict by subjugating the countries of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s. Historians who share this view criticize FDR for failing to understand the Soviets' aggressive intentions and for the agreement at Yalta. The traditional view holds that the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, and NATO finally checked Soviet expansion in Europe. The United States in the Cold War (as in both world wars) was viewed as the defender of the “free world.”

In the 1960s, during the time of public unhappiness over the Vietnam War, revisionist historians began to argue that the United States contributed to starting the Cold War. These historians praised Roosevelt for understanding Russia's historical needs for security on its eastern borders. On the other hand, they blamed Truman for antagonizing the Soviets with his blunt challenge of their actions in Poland and the Balkans. Gar Alperovitz (*The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 1995) concluded that Truman had dropped atomic bombs on Japan primarily to warn Stalin to remove his troops from Eastern Europe. Other revisionists have also argued that U.S. capitalism's need for open markets in Europe and Asia was the main reason for the U.S. government's anti-communist policies.

In the 21st century, John L. Gaddis (*The Cold War: A New History*, 2005), recognized by some as “the dean of Cold War historians,” argued that the causes of the Cold War were rooted in the Big Three's failure “to reconcile divergent political objectives even as they pursued a common military task” during World War II. Gaddis suggested that objective observers would not have expected a different outcome given that great power rivalries are the normal pattern in history. However, he credits both Truman and Stalin for recognizing how atomic weapons changed the context of war and making decisions that avoided a nuclear war. Gaddis concluded that the most important aspect of the Cold War is what did not happen—a nuclear holocaust.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Postwar Society (WXT, CUL)

Servicemen's Readjustment Act (GI Bill) (1944)
 early marriages
 baby boom
 suburban growth
 Levittown
 Sunbelt
 Harry Truman
 Employment Act of 1946
 Council of Economic Advisers
 inflation and labor unions
 Committee on Civil Rights
 racial integration of military
 22nd Amendment
 Taft-Hartley Act (1947)

Election of 1948 (POL)

Progressive party
 Henry Wallace
 States-Rights party (Dixiecrats)
 J. Strom Thurmond
 Thomas Dewey
 Fair Deal

Origins of the Cold War (WOR)

Cold War
 Soviet Union
 Joseph Stalin
 United Nations
 Security Council
 World Bank
 Communist satellites
 Occupation zones
 Iron Curtain
 Winston Churchill
 historians: traditionalists vs. revisionists

Containment in Europe (WOR)

George Kennan
 Dean Acheson
 containment policy
 Truman Doctrine
 Marshall Plan
 Berlin airlift
 East Germany
 West Germany
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization
 National Security Act (1947)
 Nuclear arms race
 NSC-68

Cold War in Asia (WOR)

U.S.-Japanese Security Treaty
 Douglas MacArthur
 Chinese civil war
 Chiang Kai-shek
 Taiwan
 Mao Zedong
 People's Republic of China
 Korean War
 Kim Il Sung
 Syngman Rhee
 U.N. police action
 38th parallel
 "soft on communism"

Second Red Scare (POL, CUL)

Loyalty Review Board
 Smith Act (1940)
Dennis et al. v. United States
 McCarran Internal Security Act (1950)
 House Un-American Activities Committee
 Hollywood blacklists
 freedom of expression in arts
 Alger Hiss
 Whittaker Chambers
 Rosenberg case
 Joseph McCarthy
 McCarthyism

THE EISENHOWER YEARS, 1952–1960

*We conclude that in the field of public education
the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place.
Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.*

Earl Warren, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, May 17, 1954

The 1950s have the popular image of the “happy days,” when the nation prospered and teens enjoyed the new beat of rock-and-roll music. This nostalgic view of the fifties is correct—but limited. The decade started with a war in Korea and the incriminations of McCarthyism. From the point of view of African Americans, what mattered most about the 1950s was not so much the music of Elvis Presley but the resistance of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. to segregation in the South. While middle-class suburbanites enjoyed their chrome-trimmed cars and tuned in to *I Love Lucy* on their new television sets, the Cold War and threat of nuclear destruction loomed in the background.

Eisenhower Takes Command

Much as Franklin Roosevelt dominated the 1930s, President Dwight (“Ike”) Eisenhower personified the 1950s. The Republican campaign slogan, “I Like Ike,” expressed the genuine feelings of millions of middle-class Americans. They liked his winning smile and trusted and admired the former general who had successfully commanded Allied forces in Europe in World War II.

The Election of 1952

In 1952, the last year of Truman’s presidency, Americans were looking for relief from the Korean War and an end to political scandals commonly referred to as “the mess in Washington.” Republicans looked forward with relish to their first presidential victory in 20 years. In the Republican primaries, voters had a choice between the Old Guard’s favorite, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, and the war hero, Eisenhower. Most of them liked “Ike,” who went on to win the Republican nomination. Conservative supporters of Taft balanced the ticket by persuading Eisenhower to choose Richard Nixon for his running mate. This young California senator had made a name for himself attacking Communists in the Alger Hiss case.

The Democrats selected popular Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson, whose wit, eloquence, and courage in confronting McCarthyism appealed to liberals.

Campaign Highlights A nonpolitician, Eisenhower had a spotless reputation for integrity that was almost spoiled by reports that his running mate, Richard Nixon, had used campaign funds for his own personal use. Nixon was almost dropped from the ticket. However, he saved his political future by effectively defending himself using the new medium of television. In his so-called Checkers speech, Nixon won the support of millions of viewers by tugging at their heartstrings. With his wife and daughters around him, he emotionally vowed never to return the gift of their beloved dog, Checkers.

What really put distance between the Republicans and the Democrats was Eisenhower's pledge during the last days of the campaign to go to Korea and end the war. The Eisenhower-Nixon ticket went on to win over 55 percent of the popular vote and an electoral college landslide of 442 to Stevenson's 89.

Domestic Policies

As president, Eisenhower adopted a style of leadership that emphasized the delegation of authority. He filled his cabinet with successful corporate executives who gave his administration a businesslike tone. His secretary of defense, for example, was Charles Wilson, the former head of General Motors. Eisenhower was often criticized by the press for spending too much time golfing and fishing and perhaps entrusting important decisions to others. However, later research showed that behind the scenes Eisenhower was in charge.

Modern Republicanism Eisenhower was a fiscal conservative whose first priority was balancing the budget after years of deficit spending. Although his annual budgets were not always balanced, he came closer to curbing federal spending than any of his successors. As a moderate on domestic issues, he accepted most of the New Deal programs as a reality of modern life and even extended some of them. During Eisenhower's two terms in office, Social Security was extended to 10 million more citizens, the minimum wage was raised, and additional public housing was built. In 1953, Eisenhower consolidated welfare programs by creating the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) under Oveta Culp Hobby, the first woman in a Republican cabinet. For farmers, a soil-bank program was initiated as means of reducing farm production and thereby increasing farm income. On the other hand, Eisenhower opposed the ideas of federal health care insurance and federal aid to education.

As the first Republican president since Hoover, Eisenhower called his balanced and moderate approach "modern Republicanism." His critics called it "the bland leading the bland."

Interstate Highway System The most permanent legacy of the Eisenhower years was the passage in 1956 of the Highway Act, which authorized the construction of 42,000 miles of interstate highways linking all the nation's major cities. When completed, the U.S. highway system became a model for

the rest of the world. The justification for new taxes on fuel, tires, and vehicles was to improve national defense. At the same time, this immense public works project created jobs, promoted the trucking industry, accelerated the growth of the suburbs, and contributed to a more homogeneous national culture. The emphasis on cars, trucks, and highways, however, hurt the railroads and ultimately the environment. Little attention was paid to public transportation, on which the old and the poor depended.

Prosperity Eisenhower's domestic legislation was modest. During his years in office, however, the country enjoyed a steady growth rate, with an inflation rate averaging a negligible 1.5 percent. Although the federal budget had a small surplus only three times in eight years, the deficits fell in relation to the national wealth. For these reasons, some historians rate Eisenhower's economic policies the most successful of any modern president's. Between 1945 and 1960, the per-capita disposable income of Americans more than tripled. By the mid-1950s, the average American family had twice the real income of a comparable family during the boom years of the 1920s. The postwar economy gave Americans the highest standard of living in the world.

The Election of 1956

Toward the end of his first term, in 1955, Eisenhower suffered a heart attack and had major surgery in 1956. Democrats questioned whether his health was strong enough for election to a second term. Four years of peace and prosperity, however, made Ike more popular than ever, and the Eisenhower-Nixon ticket was enthusiastically renominated by the Republicans. The Democrats again nominated Adlai Stevenson. In this political rematch, Eisenhower won by an even greater margin than in 1952. It was a personal victory only, however, as the Democrats retained control of both houses of Congress.

Eisenhower and the Cold War

Most of Eisenhower's attention in both his first and second terms focused on foreign policy and various international crises arising from the Cold War. The experienced diplomat who helped to shape U.S. foreign policy throughout Eisenhower's presidency was Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

Dulles' Diplomacy

Dulles had been critical of Truman's containment policy as too passive. He advocated a "new look" to U.S. foreign policy that took the initiative in challenging the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. He talked of "liberating captive nations" of Eastern Europe and encouraging the Nationalist government of Taiwan to assert itself against "Red" (Communist) China. Dulles pleased conservatives—and alarmed many others—by declaring that, if the United States pushed Communist powers to the brink of war, they would back down because of American nuclear superiority. His hard line became known as "brinkmanship." In the end, however, Eisenhower prevented Dulles from carrying his ideas to an extreme.

Massive Retaliation Dulles advocated placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons and air power and spending less on conventional forces of the army and navy. In theory, this would save money (“more bang for the buck”), help balance the federal budget, and increase pressure on potential enemies. In 1953, the United States developed the hydrogen bomb, which could destroy the largest cities. Within a year, however, the Soviets caught up with a hydrogen bomb of their own. To some, the policy of massive retaliation looked more like a policy for mutual extinction. Nuclear weapons indeed proved a powerful deterrent against the superpowers fighting an all-out war between themselves, but such weapons could not prevent small “brushfire” wars from breaking out in the developing nations of Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. However, Eisenhower refused to use even small nuclear weapons in these conflicts.

Unrest in the Third World

Decolonization, or the collapse of colonial empires, after World War II may have been the single most important development of the postwar era. Between 1947 and 1962, dozens of colonies in Asia and Africa gained their independence from former colonial powers such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands. In Asia, India and Pakistan became new nations in 1947, and the Dutch East Indies became the independent country of Indonesia in 1949. In Africa, Ghana threw off British colonial rule in 1957, and a host of other nations followed. These new Third World countries (in contrast to the industrialized nations of the Western bloc and the Communist bloc) often lacked stable political and economic institutions. Their need for foreign aid from either the United States or the Soviet Union often made them into pawns of the Cold War.

Covert Action Part of the new look in Eisenhower’s conduct of U.S. foreign policy was the growing use of covert action. Undercover intervention in the internal politics of other nations seemed less objectionable than employing U.S. troops and also proved less expensive. In 1953, the CIA helped overthrow a government in Iran that had tried to nationalize the holding of foreign oil companies. The overthrow of the elected government allowed for the return of Reza Pahlavi as shah (monarch) of Iran. The shah in return provided the West with favorable oil prices and made enormous purchases of American arms.

In Guatemala, in 1954, the CIA overthrew a leftist government that threatened American business interests. U.S. opposition to communism seemed to drive Washington to support corrupt and often ruthless dictators, especially in Latin America. In addition, the CIA, acting in secret and under lax control by civilian officials, planned assassinations of national leaders, such as Fidel Castro of Cuba. CIA operations fueled anti-American feelings, especially in Latin America, but the long-term damage was to U.S. relations with Iran.

Asia

During Eisenhower’s first year in office, some of the most serious Cold War challenges concerned events in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

Korean Armistice Soon after his inauguration in 1953, Eisenhower kept his election promise by going to Korea to visit U.N. forces and see what could be done to stop the war. He understood that no quick fix was possible. Even so, diplomacy, the threat of nuclear war, and the sudden death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953 finally moved China and North Korea to agree to an armistice and an exchange of prisoners in July 1953. The fighting stopped and most (but not all) U.S. troops were withdrawn. Korea would remain divided near the 38th parallel, and despite years of futile negotiations, no peace treaty was ever concluded between North Korea and South Korea.

Fall of Indochina After losing their Southeast Asian colony of Indochina to Japanese invaders in World War II, the French made the mistake of trying to retake it. Wanting independence, native Vietnamese and Cambodians resisted. French imperialism had the effect of increasing support for nationalist and Communist leader Ho Chi Minh. By 1950, the anticolonial war in Indochina became part of the Cold War rivalry between Communist and anticommunist powers. Truman's government started to give U.S. military aid to the French, while China and the Soviet Union aided the Viet Minh guerrillas led by Ho Chi Minh. In 1954, a large French army at Dien Bien Phu was trapped and forced to surrender. After this disastrous defeat, the French tried to convince Eisenhower to send in U.S. troops, but he refused. At the Geneva Conference of 1954, France agreed to give up Indochina, which was divided into the independent nations of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Division of Vietnam By the terms of the Geneva Conference, Vietnam was to be temporarily divided at the 17th parallel until a general election could be held. The new nation remained divided, however, as two hostile governments took power on either side of the line. In North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh established a Communist dictatorship. In South Vietnam, a government emerged under Ngo Dinh Diem, whose support came largely from anticommunist, Catholic, and urban Vietnamese, many of whom had fled from Communist rule in the North. The general election to unite Vietnam was never held, largely because South Vietnam's government feared that the Communists would win.

From 1955 to 1961, the United States gave over \$1 billion in economic and military aid to South Vietnam in an effort to build a stable, anticommunist state. In justifying this aid, President Eisenhower made an analogy to a row of dominoes. According to this *domino theory* (later to become famous), if South Vietnam fell under Communist control, one nation after another in Southeast Asia would also fall, until Australia and New Zealand were in dire danger.

SEATO To prevent South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from "falling" to communism, Dulles put together a regional defense pact called the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Agreeing to defend one another in case of an attack within the region, eight nations signed the pact in 1954: the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan.

The Middle East

In the Middle East, the United States tried to balance maintaining friendly ties with the oil-rich Arab states while at the same time supporting the new state of Israel. The latter nation was created in 1948 under U.N. auspices, after a civil war in the British mandate territory of Palestine left the land divided between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Israel's neighbors, including Egypt, had fought unsuccessfully to prevent the Jewish state from being formed.

Suez Crisis Led by the Arab nationalist General Gamal Nasser, Egypt asked the United States for funds to build the ambitious Aswan Dam project on the Nile River. The United States refused, in part because Egypt threatened Israel's security. Nasser turned to the Soviet Union to help build the dam. The Soviets agreed to provide limited financing for the project. Seeking another source of funds, Nasser precipitated an international crisis in July 1956 by seizing and nationalizing the British- and French-owned Suez Canal that passed through Egyptian territory. Loss of the canal threatened Western Europe's supply line to Middle Eastern oil. In response to this threat, Britain, France, and Israel carried out a surprise attack against Egypt and retook the canal.

Eisenhower, furious that he had been kept in the dark about the attack by his old allies the British and French, sponsored a U.N. resolution condemning the invasion of Egypt. Under pressure from the United States and world public opinion, the invading forces withdrew.

Eisenhower Doctrine The United States quickly replaced Britain and France as the leading Western influence in the Middle East, but it faced a growing Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria. In a policy pronouncement later known as the *Eisenhower Doctrine*, the United States in 1957 pledged economic and military aid to any Middle Eastern country threatened by communism. Eisenhower first applied his doctrine in 1958 by sending 14,000 marines to Lebanon to prevent a civil war between Christians and Muslims.

OPEC and Oil In Eisenhower's last year in office, 1960, the Arab nations of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran joined Venezuela to form the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Oil was shaping up to be a critical foreign policy issue. The combination of Western dependence on Middle East oil, Arab nationalism, and a conflict between Israelis and Palestinian refugees would trouble American presidents in the coming decades.

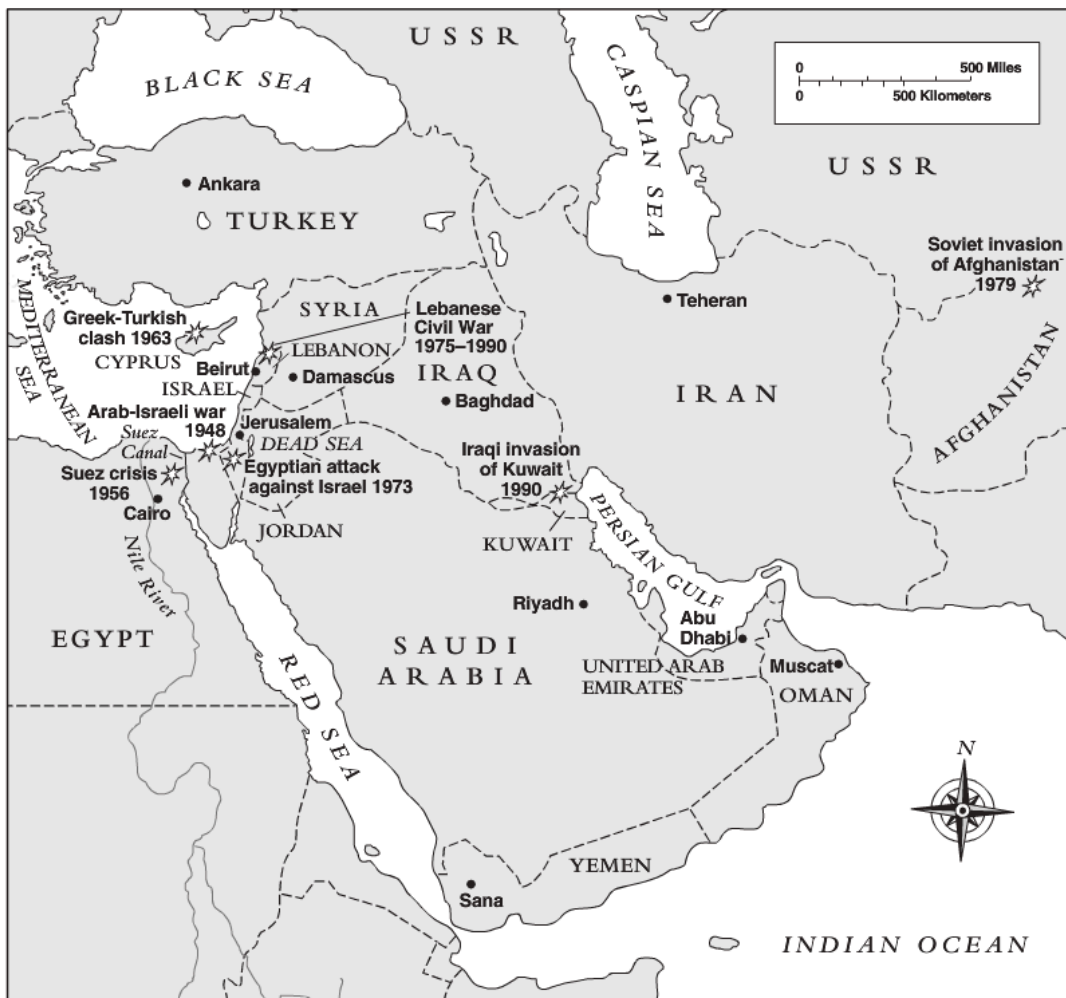
U.S.-Soviet Relations

For U.S. security, nothing was more crucial than U.S. diplomatic relations with its chief political and military rival, the Soviet Union. Throughout Eisenhower's presidency, the relations between the two superpowers fluctuated between periods of relative calm and extreme tension.

Spirit of Geneva After Stalin's death in 1953, Eisenhower called for a slowdown in the arms race and presented to the United Nations an *atoms for wpeace* plan. The Soviets also showed signs of wanting to reduce Cold

War tensions. They withdrew their troops from Austria (once that country had agreed to be neutral in the Cold War) and established peaceful relations with Greece and Turkey. By 1955, a desire for improved relations on both sides resulted in a summit meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, between Eisenhower and the new Soviet premier, Nikolai Bulganin. At this conference, the U.S. president proposed an “open skies” policy over each other’s territory—open to aerial photography by the opposing nation—in order to eliminate the chance of a surprise nuclear attack. The Soviets rejected the proposal. Nevertheless, the “spirit of Geneva,” as the press called it, produced the first thaw in the Cold War. Even more encouraging, from the U.S. point of view, was a speech by the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in early 1956 in which he denounced the crimes of Joseph Stalin and supported “peaceful coexistence” with the West.

MIDDLE EAST AREAS OF CONFLICT, 1948–1990



Hungarian Revolt The relaxation in the Cold War encouraged workers in East Germany and Poland to demand reforms from their Communist governments. In October 1956, a popular uprising in Hungary actually succeeded in overthrowing a government backed by Moscow. The new, more liberal leaders wanted to pull Hungary out of the Warsaw Pact, the Communist security organization. This was too much for the Kremlin, and Khrushchev sent in Soviet tanks to crush the freedom fighters and restore control over Hungary. The United States took no action in the crisis. Eisenhower feared that sending troops to aid the Hungarians would touch off a major war in Europe. In effect, by allowing Soviet tanks to roll into Hungary, the United States gave de facto recognition to the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and ended Dulles' talk of "liberating" this region. Soviet suppression of the Hungarian revolt also ended the first thaw in the Cold War.

Sputnik Shock In 1957, the Soviet Union shocked the United States by launching the first satellites, *Sputnik I* and *Sputnik II*, into orbit around the earth. Suddenly, the technological leadership of the United States was open to question. To add to American embarrassment, U.S. rockets designed to duplicate the Soviet achievement failed repeatedly.

What was responsible for this scientific debacle? American schools became the ready target for criticism of their math and science instruction and failure to produce more scientists and engineers. In 1958, Congress responded with the National Defense and Education Act (NDEA), which authorized giving hundreds of millions in federal money to the schools for math, science, and foreign language education. Congress in 1958 also created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to direct the U.S. efforts to build missiles and explore outer space. Billions were appropriated to compete with the Russians in the space race.

Fears of nuclear war were intensified by *Sputnik*, since the missiles that launched the satellites could also deliver thermonuclear warheads anywhere in the world in minutes, and there was no defense against them.

Second Berlin Crisis "We will bury capitalism," Khrushchev boasted. With new confidence and pride based on *Sputnik*, the Soviet leader pushed the Berlin issue in 1958 by giving the West six months to pull its troops out of West Berlin before turning over the city to the East Germans. The United States refused to yield. To defuse the crisis, Eisenhower invited Khrushchev to visit the United States in 1959. At the presidential retreat of Camp David in Maryland, the two agreed to put off the crisis and scheduled another summit conference in Paris for 1960.

U-2 Incident The friendly "spirit of Camp David" never had a chance to produce results. Two weeks before the planned meeting in Paris, the Russians shot down a high-altitude U.S. spy plane—the U-2—over the Soviet Union. The incident exposed a secret U.S. tactic for gaining information. After its

open-skies proposals had been rejected by the Soviets in 1955, the United States had decided to conduct regular spy flights over Soviet territory to find out about its enemy's missile program. Eisenhower took full responsibility for the flights—*after* they were exposed by the U-2 incident—but his honesty proved to be a diplomatic mistake. Khrushchev denounced the United States and walked out of the Paris summit to temporarily end the thaw in the Cold War.

Communism in Cuba

Perhaps more alarming than any other Cold War development during the Eisenhower years was the loss of Cuba to communism. A bearded revolutionary, Fidel Castro, overthrew the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959. At first, no one knew whether Castro's politics would be better or worse than those of his ruthless predecessor. Once in power, however, Castro nationalized American-owned businesses and properties in Cuba. Eisenhower retaliated by cutting off U.S. trade with Cuba. Castro then turned to the Soviets for support. He also revealed that he was a Marxist and soon proved it by setting up a Communist totalitarian state. With communism only 90 miles off the shores of Florida, Eisenhower authorized the CIA to train anticommunist Cuban exiles to retake their island, but the decision to go ahead with the scheme was left up to the next president, Kennedy.

Eisenhower's Legacy

After leaving the White House, Eisenhower claimed credit for checking Communist aggression and keeping the peace without the loss of American lives in combat. He also started the long process of relaxing tensions with the Soviet Union. In 1958, he initiated the first arms limitations by voluntarily suspending above-ground testing of nuclear weapons.

“Military-Industrial Complex” In his farewell address as president, Eisenhower spoke out against the negative impact of the Cold War on U.S. society. He warned the nation to “guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence . . . by the military-industrial complex.” If the outgoing president was right, the arms race was taking on a momentum and logic all its own. It seemed to some Americans in the 1960s that the United States was in danger of going down the path of ancient Rome by turning into a military, or imperial, state.

The Civil Rights Movement

While Eisenhower was concentrating on Cold War issues, events with revolutionary significance to race relations were developing within the United States.

Origins of the Movement

The baseball player Jackie Robinson had broken the color line in 1947 by being hired by the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first African American to play on a major league team since the 1880s. President Truman integrated the armed forces in 1948 and introduced civil rights legislation in Congress. These were the first well-publicized indications that race relations after World War II were changing. As the 1950s began, however, African Americans in the South were still by law segregated from whites in schools and in most public facilities. They were also kept from voting by poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and intimidation. Social segregation left most of them poorly educated, while economic discrimination kept them in a state of poverty.

Changing Demographics The origins of the modern civil rights movement can be traced back to the movement of millions of African Americans from the rural South to the urban centers of the South and the North. In the North, African Americans, who joined the Democrats during the New Deal, had a growing influence in party politics in the 1950s.

Changing Attitudes in the Cold War The Cold War also played an indirect role in changing both government policies and social attitudes. The U.S. reputation for freedom and democracy was competing against Communist ideology for the hearts and minds of the peoples of Africa and Asia. Against this global background, racial segregation and discrimination stood out as glaring wrongs that needed to be corrected.

Desegregating the Schools

The NAACP had been working through the courts for decades trying to overturn the Supreme Court's 1896 decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which allowed segregation in "separate but equal" facilities. In the late 1940s, the NAACP won a series of cases involving higher education.

Brown Decision One of the great landmark cases in Supreme Court history was argued in the early 1950s by a team of NAACP lawyers led by Thurgood Marshall. In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, they argued that segregation of black children in the public schools was unconstitutional because it violated the 14th Amendment's guarantee of "equal protection of the laws." In May 1954, the Supreme Court agreed with Marshall and overturned the *Plessy* case. Writing for a unanimous Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren ruled that (1) "separate facilities are inherently unequal" and unconstitutional, and (2) school segregation should end with "all deliberate speed."

Resistance in the South Opposition to the *Brown* decision erupted throughout the South. To start with, 101 members of Congress signed the "Southern Manifesto" condemning the Supreme Court for a "clear abuse of judicial power." States fought the decision several ways, including the temporary closing of the public schools and setting up private schools. The Ku Klux Klan made a comeback, and violence against blacks increased. In Arkansas in

1956, Governor Orval Faubus used the state's National Guard to prevent nine African American students from entering Little Rock Central High School, as ordered by a federal court. President Eisenhower then intervened. While the president did not actively support desegregation or the Brown decision, he understood his constitutional duty to uphold federal authority. Eisenhower ordered federal troops to stand guard in Little Rock and protect black students. Resistance remained stubborn. In 1964, ten years after the Supreme Court decision, less than 2 percent of blacks in the South attended integrated schools.



Source: Marion Post Wolcott, Memphis, 1939. Library of Congress

Montgomery Bus Boycott

In 1955, as a Montgomery, Alabama, bus took on more white passengers, the driver ordered a middle-aged black woman to give up her seat to one of them. Rosa Parks refused and her arrest for violating the segregation law sparked a massive African American protest in the form of a boycott of the city buses. The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., minister of the Baptist church where the boycott started, soon emerged as the inspirational leader of a nonviolent movement to end segregation. The protest touched off by Rosa Parks and the Montgomery boycott resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that segregation laws were unconstitutional. The boycott also sparked other civil rights protests that reshaped America over the coming decades.

Federal Laws

Signed into law by President Eisenhower, two civil rights laws of 1957 and 1960 were the first such laws to be enacted by the U.S. Congress since Reconstruction. They were modest in scope, providing for a permanent Civil Rights Commission and giving the Justice Department new powers to protect the voting rights of blacks. Despite this legislation, southern officials still used an arsenal of obstructive tactics to discourage African Americans from voting.

Nonviolent Protests

What the government would not do, the African American community did for itself. In 1957, Martin Luther King Jr. formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which organized ministers and churches in the South to get behind the civil rights struggle. In February 1960, college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, started the sit-in movement after being refused service at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. To call attention to the injustice of segregated facilities, students would deliberately invite arrest by sitting in restricted areas. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed a few months later to keep the movement organized. In the 1960s, African Americans used the sit-in tactic to integrate restaurants, hotels, buildings, libraries, pools, and transportation throughout the South.

The results of the boycotts, sit-ins, court rulings, and government responses to pressure marked a turning point in the civil rights movement. Progress was slow, however. In the 1960s, a growing impatience among many African Americans would be manifested in violent confrontations in the streets.

Immigration Issues in the Postwar Years

Congress dropped the bans on Chinese and other Asian immigrants and eliminated “race” as a barrier to naturalization, but the quota system remained in place until 1965. Puerto Ricans, as American citizens, could enter the United States without restrictions. However, Mexicans faced a choice of working under contract in the *braceros* program, entering as a regulated legal immigrant, or crossing the border as “illegals.” In the early 1950s, U.S. officials, responding to complaints from native-born workers and from Mexico, launched Operation Wetback, which forced an estimate 3.8 million people to return to Mexico. Mexican migrants remaining in the United States often faced discrimination and exploitation by commercial farmers.

Popular Culture in the Fifties

Among white suburbanites, the 1950s were marked by similarities in social norms. Consensus about political issues and conformity in social behavior were safe harbors for Americans troubled by the foreign ideology of communism. At the same time, consensus and conformity were the hallmarks of a consumer-driven mass economy.

Consumer Culture and Conformity

Television, advertising, and the middle-class movement to the suburbs contributed mightily to the growing homogeneity of American culture.

Television Little more than a curiosity in the late 1940s, television suddenly became a center of family life in millions of American homes. By 1961, there were 55 million TV sets, about one for every 3.3 Americans. Television programming in the fifties was dominated by three national networks, which presented viewers with a bland menu of situation comedies, westerns, quiz shows, and professional sports. FCC chairman Newton Minnow criticized television as a “vast wasteland” and worried about the impact on children of a steady dose of five or more hours of daily viewing. Yet the culture portrayed on television—especially for third and fourth generations of white ethnic Americans—provided a common content for their common language.

Advertising In all the media (television, radio, newspapers, and magazines), aggressive advertising by name brands promoted common material wants, and the introduction of suburban shopping centers and the plastic credit card in the 1950s provided a quick means of satisfying them. The phenomenal proliferation of chains of fast food restaurants on the roadside was one measure of success for the new marketing techniques and standardized products as the nation turned from “mom and pop” stores to franchise operations.

Paperbacks and Records Despite television, Americans read more than ever. Paperback books, an innovation in the 1950s, were selling almost a million copies a day by 1960. Popular music was revolutionized by the mass marketing of inexpensive, long-playing (LP) record albums and stacks of 45 rpm records. Teenagers fell in love with rock-and-roll music, a blend of African American rhythm and blues with white country music, popularized by the gyrating Elvis Presley.

Corporate America In the business world, conglomerates with diversified holdings began to dominate such industries as food processing, hotels, transportation, insurance, and banking. For the first time in history, more American workers held white-collar jobs than blue-collar jobs. To work for one of *Fortune* magazine’s top 500 companies seemed to be the road to success. Large corporations of this era promoted teamwork and conformity, including a dress code for male workers of a dark business suit, white shirt, and a conservative tie. The social scientist William Whyte documented this loss of individuality in his book *The Organization Man* (1956).

Big unions became more powerful after the merger of the AF of L and the CIO in 1955. They also became more conservative, as blue-collar workers began to enjoy middle-class incomes.

For most Americans, conformity was a small price to pay for the new affluence of a home in the suburbs, a new automobile every two or three years, good schools for the children, and maybe a vacation at the recently opened Disneyland (1955) in California.

Religion Organized religions expanded dramatically after World War II with the building of thousands of new churches and synagogues. Will Herberg's book *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955) commented on the new religious tolerance of the times and the lack of interest in doctrine, as religious membership became a source of both individual identity and socialization.

Women's Roles

The baby boom and running a home in the suburbs made homemaking a full-time job for millions of women. The traditional view of a woman's role as caring for home and children was reaffirmed in the mass media and in the best-selling self-help book, *Baby and Child Care* (1946) by Dr. Benjamin Spock.

At the same time, evidence of dissatisfaction was growing, especially among well-educated women of the middle class. More married women, especially as they reached middle age, entered the workforce. Yet male employers in the 1950s saw female workers primarily as wives and mothers, and women's lower wages reflected this attitude.

Social Critics

Not everybody approved of the social trends of the 1950s. In *The Lonely Crowd* (1958), Harvard sociologist David Riesman criticized the replacement of "inner-directed" individuals in society with "other-directed" conformists. In *The Affluent Society* (1958), economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote about the failure of wealthy Americans to address the need for increased social spending for the common good. (Galbraith's ideas were to influence the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the next decade.) Sociologist C. Wright Mills portrayed dehumanizing corporate worlds in *White Collar* (1951) and threats to freedom in *The Power Elite* (1956).

Novels Some of the most popular novelists of the 1950s wrote about the individual's struggle against conformity. J. D. Salinger provided a classic commentary on "phoniness" as viewed by a troubled teenager in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Joseph Heller satirized the stupidity of the military and war in *Catch-22* (1961).

"Beatniks" A group of rebellious writers and intellectuals made up the Beat Generation of the 1950s. Led by Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*, 1957) and poet Allen Ginsberg ("Howl," 1956), they advocated spontaneity, use of drugs, and rebellion against societal standards. The beatniks would become models for the youth rebellion of the 1960s.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: A SILENT GENERATION?

Among intellectuals, a commonly held view of the 1950s was that Americans had become complacent in their political outlook—a “silent generation” presided over by a grandfatherly and passive President Eisenhower. Liberal academics believed that McCarthyism had stopped any serious or critical discussion of the problems in American society. Eisenhower’s policies and their general acceptance by most voters seemed a bland consensus of ideas that would bother no one. Critics contrasted the seeming calm of the 1950s with the more “interesting” social and cultural revolution of the next decade.

Over time, historians have treated the 1950s with more respect. Research into the Eisenhower papers has revealed a president who used a hidden-hand approach to leadership. Behind the scenes, he was an active and decisive administrator who was in full command of his presidency. His domestic policies achieved sustained economic growth, and his foreign policy relaxed international tensions. Such accomplishments no longer looked boring to historians writing after decades of economic dislocations and stagnant or declining incomes.

Reflecting this more generous view of Eisenhower is William O’Neill’s *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945–1960* (1987). O’Neill argues that Eisenhower led a needed and largely successful economic and social postwar “reconstruction.” He and other historians emphasize that the 1950s prepared the way for both the liberal reforms of the 1960s and the conservative politics of the 1980s. Achievements of women, African Americans, and other minorities in a later era were made possible by changes in the fifties. Furthermore, the integration of Catholics, Jews, and other white ethnics into American society during the postwar years made it possible for Kennedy to be elected the first Irish Catholic president in 1960.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Domestic Politics (POL)
elections of 1952, 1956
Dwight Eisenhower
Adlai Stevenson
Richard Nixon
modern Republicanism
Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)
soil-bank program
Highway Act (1956); interstate highway system

“New Look” Foreign Policy (WOR)

John Foster Dulles
“brinksmanship”
massive retaliation
decolonization
India, Pakistan, Indonesia
Third World
CIA, covert action
Iranian overthrow

US Policy in Asia (WOR)

Korean armistice
Indochina
Ho Chi Minh
Geneva Conference (1954)
division of Vietnam
domino theory
Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (1954)

US Policy in Middle East (WOR)

State of Israel (1948)
Arab nationalism
Suez Canal crisis (1956)
Eisenhower Doctrine
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

US-Soviet Relations (WOR)

atoms for peace
“spirit of Geneva”
open-skies
Nikita Khrushchev
peaceful coexistence
Hungarian revolt
Warsaw Pact
Sputnik (1957)
NDEA, NASA
U-2 incident
Cuba, Fidel Castro
military-industrial complex

Civil Rights in 1950s (POL, ID)

Jackie Robinson
causes of movement
NAACP
desegregation
Thurgood Marshall
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)

Earl Warren
Southern Manifesto
Little Rock crisis
Rosa Parks
Montgomery bus boycott
Martin Luther King Jr.
Civil Rights acts of 1957, 1960
Civil Rights Commission
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
nonviolent protest
sit-in movement
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
immigration issues
Operation Wetback

1950’s Culture (CUL)

homogeneity
popular culture
paperbacks
television
rock and roll
consumer culture
fast food
credit cards
conglomerates
social critics
The Lonely Crowd
The Affluent Society
The Catcher in the Rye
Catch-22
beatniks