

10 The Cold War Era



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With the onset of the Cold War, some American families began constructing elaborate underground fallout shelters outfitted with supplies in case of a nuclear attack. This shelter was constructed in the early 1950s.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- List the factors that contributed to the Cold War.
- Describe the ways that U.S. foreign policy changed during the Cold War.
- Explain why Truman had difficulty fully implementing his domestic agenda.

- Discuss how McCarthyism and anticommunism affected different segments of society.
- Describe how Cold War foreign policy led to U.S. involvement in conflicts in Asia.

American Lives: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are the only U.S. citizens to have been executed during peacetime for spying for a foreign government. They were indicted on August 17, 1950, and charged with espionage by conspiring to provide U.S. military secrets—including information about the atomic bomb—to the Soviet Union. As facts in the case became known, some American officials began to believe that the secret information proved key to the Soviet Union's development of its own atomic weapon.

Julius Rosenberg was born in New York City in 1918 to Jewish immigrants from Poland, and he earned a degree in electrical engineering from the City College of New York in 1939. While in college he became a student leader in the Young Communist League USA, the youth wing of the American Communist Party. Ethel Greenglass, born in New York in 1915, flirted with a stage career but eventually worked as a secretary for a shipping firm. She met Julius at a meeting of the Young Communist League, and the two married in 1939.

Communists had been involved in successful unionization drives during the Depression and World War II, which had reinforced their popularity. Like a small but growing segment of American citizens, the Rosenbergs came to believe that the capitalist United States provided little opportunity for the working classes and that the Communist Party USA was the best advocate for democratic rights and economic justice.

During the war, Julius worked as an engineer at a U.S. Army Signal Corps laboratory, but he was fired in 1945 for his involvement with the Communist Party. Until his discharge, his wartime work gave Julius access to classified reports on military operations and electronic and communications projects. At some point in 1942, Soviet intelligence agents recruited Julius and encouraged him to pass on these military secrets. Julius recruited others for the Soviet espionage scheme as well, including Ethel's brother David Greenglass, who worked on the top secret Manhattan Project at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Greenglass provided the Soviet spy network with top secret information on the U.S. atomic bomb project.

The Soviet Union, initially far behind in nuclear technology, shocked the world by testing its own atomic bomb on August 29, 1949. Although intelligence agencies uncovered no direct link between the Rosenbergs and the Soviet bomb, the nation learned of their alleged conspiracy through an investigation shortly after the Soviet test. Passing key American intelligence to the Soviets was a shocking crime, and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Greenglass, and several other conspirators were arrested and indicted under the Espionage Act of 1917.

Greenglass offered key evidence against his sister and brother-in-law and served just over 9 years in prison. A handful of other conspirators also testified against the couple. Convicted of espionage, the Rosenbergs were sentenced to death and executed by electric chair on June 19, 1953 (Burnett, 2004).

Until their deaths, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg proclaimed their innocence but offered no evidence save their own testimony. In 1995 the federal government released a series of documents relating to the case that confirmed Julius's involvement as a courier and recruiter for Soviet intelligence. Ethel's involvement remains unclear.



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Julius and Ethel Rosenberg leave federal court after being indicted on espionage charges.

For further thought:

1. What does the Rosenberg case suggest about competition between the United States and the Soviet Union?
2. Did the Rosenbergs' punishment fit the crime?

10.1 Origins of the Cold War

World War II left most of Europe in shambles. Millions were homeless because the war destroyed thousands of homes, businesses, and public buildings. The European economy was similarly devastated, with much of the industrial infrastructure destroyed or heavily damaged. Great Britain was heavily in debt to the United States and was forced to borrow even more to begin reconstruction. The Soviet Union had suffered severe population losses, including nearly 8.7 million military deaths and 19 million noncombat deaths from starvation, disease, and German prison camps and mass shootings. The USSR also experienced a significant reduction in industrial and food production in the immediate postwar period.

Unable to quickly rebuild, European business elites, conservatives, and even liberals lost ground to Socialists and Communists, who supported the nationalization of banks, manufacturing, and utilities. Smaller European nations such as Greece and Italy also saw major advances by their own homegrown Communist parties. At the war's end, the United States, with its political stability and rapid economic growth, stood as the lone strong nation among the struggling former combatants. Still, some feared that a Communist upsurge could shake the United States and challenge the nation's traditions of free enterprise and capitalism.

In this uncertain environment, despite its huge losses, the Soviet Union was the only other world power that had the ideological confidence and military might to join the United States in shaping the new world order. Although the United States and the USSR depended on one another for victory in the war, the alliance between them was tenuous. The Soviets' Communist-based ideology, culture, and economic system, as well as the dictatorial control of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, stood in stark contrast to American democratic values and capitalism. Although some hoped that the alliance between the two nations would last beyond the war, the relationship quickly began to unravel once the common threat of German aggression was removed.

The United States and the Soviet Union became locked in a protracted struggle in which their clash of ideas and values was as central as their military and diplomatic rivalry. Beginning in the immediate postwar era, this so-called **Cold War** was as integral to the restructuring of the new world order as was the physical rebuilding of war-torn Europe and Japan.

Roots of the Conflict

When Harry S. Truman assumed the presidency following Roosevelt's death in April 1945, he faced some of the most delicate and worrisome troubles of any American president. With little experience in international affairs, he confronted the growing division between the United States and the Soviet Union that began during the war, as evidenced in the tensions over Poland at the Yalta conference. His decisions during and immediately after World

Exploring History through Film: Anti-Capitalist Soviet Propaganda

The Soviet state was active in producing anti-capitalist propaganda for the Russian masses. This propaganda portrayed the capitalist state as corrupt and oppressive of the working class, while promoting the Soviet State as a heroic collection of likeminded, noble workers.

Anti-Capitalist Soviet Propaganda

From Title: *American Imperialists: Soviet Animation vs. th...*
(<https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=100753&xtid=35505>)



Critical Thinking Questions

- Why was Soviet propaganda so dependent upon visual forms of media? What were the benefits of this form of media? What, if any, were the drawbacks?

War II fostered a half century of global competition with the USSR that held dramatic consequences for the entire world.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union hoped to reshape the world according to their own values, beliefs, and economic systems. The growth of global institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank fostered the American vision of a world based on democracy, international cooperation, and economic prosperity, especially in Western Europe and Asia. The Soviets, who occupied significant parts of Eastern Europe and Germany at the war's end, sought to spread their influence and Communist system to that region of the world. Concern arose that the Soviets were building an empire of sorts through their influence in Eastern Europe and that the free Polish elections Stalin had promised at Yalta would not materialize.

Truman's response to these developments included actions that were intended to win allies and achieve access to free markets and raw materials, as well as spread freedom and democracy. As president, he bore responsibility for maintaining a precarious balance between actions that enhanced postwar economic growth and those that might halt the spread of Soviet influence.

American diplomat George Kennan offered Truman and his secretary of state a close assessment of the USSR in his so-called Long Telegram, issued from Moscow in February 1946. He told the president that it appeared the Soviets were seeking to expand their power. He advised that the Soviets' "neurotic view of world affairs" was rooted in a "traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity." Kennan worried that the Soviets would spread their influence to people "in Europe at least, [who] are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security" (Kennan, 1946). He advised the United States to take action to contain or counter this Soviet expansionism. This was the first assertion of the **containment** policy that came to guide American actions during the Cold War (Casey, 2001).

The first conflict of the Cold War emerged from the Soviet occupation of northern Iran, where Stalin sought control over that nation's immense oil resources. Pressure from the United States and Britain, and especially a resolution from the UN Security Council, resulted in a withdrawal, but the USSR was not so willing to back away from Eastern Europe, which it had occupied since the end of the war.

At Yalta, Britain and the United States tacitly agreed to allow the Soviet Union to influence Eastern European nations and direct reconstruction there. The Soviets installed and supported Communist-friendly governments in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Some of the governments of Eastern Europe were chosen through elections, as Stalin had promised, but manipulation of the electoral process assured that Soviet Communist influence spread to the region. Instead of developing free and democratic governments, these Eastern European nations fell under Soviet control and aligned ideologically with communism. The Soviets justified their actions in Eastern Europe as analogous to Britain's empire building in Asia and Africa or U.S. interventions in Latin America.

Fear of spreading communism was a real and palpable concern for leaders elsewhere in Europe as well. Citizens of many European nations welcomed the ideas behind the Communist philosophy. Government control of transportation systems and utilities, for example, helped restore badly needed services to war-torn areas, and many supported whatever measures would restore prewar life as soon as possible. For these reasons, Communist Party membership increased dramatically from the Depression era through 1947. In Italy, party membership grew from 5,000 to an incredible 1.7 million. In Czechoslovakia, Communist numbers rose from 28,000 to 750,000, and in Greece from 17,000 to 70,000 (Goldberg, Rearden, & Condit, 1984).

By stark contrast, the United States witnessed a sharp decline in Communist Party membership. Peaking at between 75,000 and 85,000 members in 1945, mostly union workers, by 1956 the party held fewer than 22,000 members and continued to steadily decline (Davis, 1992).

Containment and the Truman Doctrine

Early in 1947, conflict in Greece and Turkey spurred Truman to make his first application of the containment policy. A civil war in Greece pitted a weak monarch against a growing Communist rebellion. Farther to the south and east, Turkey was under pressure from the Soviets to allow them access to the waterway linking the Black and the Mediterranean Seas. Both nations struggled with corrupt and undemocratic governments. Initially receiving British aid, both governments faced possible overthrow when the British announced they were no

longer able to afford to keep their troops in that region and planned to focus attention on their own reconstruction. The British asked the Americans to take over their role and especially to provide monetary aid.



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President Harry S. Truman altered the nation's foreign policy when he declared the United States would support seekers of freedom and democracy around the world.

must take immediate and resolute action. (as cited in Merrill & Paterson, 2009, p. 201)

Although neither country faced a direct Soviet takeover, American officials, concerned that instability in the region might cut off Western access to the oil-rich Middle East, urged action. Senate leader Arthur Vandenberg advised the president to intervene in Greece and Turkey, a radical departure for American foreign policy (T. Morgan, 2003). According to Vandenberg, if Truman wanted to get people to support this new direction, he should “make a personal appearance before Congress and scare hell out of the country” (as cited in Lucas, 1999, p. 8).

On March 12, 1947, Truman addressed a joint session of Congress and declared, “At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life.” He then presented two options. One choice was for nations to be governed by the will of the majority. This occurred, as in the United States, when nations had representative governments and supported freedoms of speech, liberty, and religion.

The other option, the one chosen by the Soviet Union, was government by the will of the minority and the use of terror and oppression to impose a way of life. Soviet officials fixed elections, controlled the press, and suppressed personal freedoms. Truman concluded by saying:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. . . . We

This new policy, dubbed the **Truman Doctrine**, fundamentally shaped the United States' approach to the Cold War by providing justification for America to exert its influence, promote the growth of democracy, and resist the spread of communism throughout the world. Truman argued, for example, that on the basis of this policy the United States should support the pro-Western government in Greece with a monetary commitment, though not with American troops.

Some in Congress expressed concern that the plan increased the powers of the president and represented a significant economic burden, but the growing fears about a world split between communism and democracy overrode those reservations. Initiating a long-lasting Cold War consensus in Congress, Republicans and Democrats authorized \$400 million to support Greece in its civil war and neighboring Turkey with military aid (T. Morgan, 2003). “Scaring the hell” out of the American people helped set the stage for the paranoid tone of the Cold War.

The United States and the World

The shift in foreign policy under the Truman Doctrine necessitated a reorganization and redirection of diplomatic energy and the creation of new government structures aimed at containing communism. The **National Security Act of 1947** combined the Department of War and the Department of the Navy to create a Department of Defense and further defined and consolidated military command. A Joint Chiefs of Staff composed of a representative from each military division advised the secretary of defense, a new cabinet-level post. The act also created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to engage in secret military actions and gather intelligence abroad. Coordinating actions of the CIA and various military branches was the National Security Council, a body of presidential advisors knowledgeable on issues of foreign policy and military action (Walker, 1993).

Military power and covert intelligence gathering thus formed one arm of the nation's containment policy. Economic aid and stimulus to rebuild war-torn Europe formed a separate and softer means of enticing Europeans to look favorably on the democratic philosophy of the United States. In Asia the United States sought

to use economic and political tools to transform Japan from an enemy into a regional anti-Communist ally. None of these efforts, however, could completely forestall a more direct confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Marshall Plan

Two years after the war, much of Europe had yet to rebuild; many nations experienced widespread food and supply shortages. Dealing with millions of displaced citizens and the destruction of infrastructure and industry proved to be a daunting task. Despite internal European efforts, reconstruction was a slow process, and Americans grew concerned that more of these vulnerable nations could fall under Soviet influence and control. From the Soviet perspective, the slow reconstruction provided a compelling argument that capitalism was failing in Europe and that communism had more to offer the war-torn nations.

The Americans therefore viewed an economic plan to rebuild Europe as a nonmilitary form of containment, which would also provide important new markets for American manufactured goods. Secretary of State George Marshall outlined such a plan for European recovery in his commencement address before the graduating class of Harvard University in June 1947. Instead of the usual oratory dwelling on the graduates' future achievement, Marshall detailed the rationale for promoting economic stability that he believed would engender political strength in Europe.

As army chief of staff during the war, Marshall had overseen the country's massive military expansion and planned many of its military campaigns, and he was intimately familiar with Europe's postwar needs. A career soldier from rural Pennsylvania and a distant descendant of Chief Justice John Marshall, his extensive military and diplomatic experience lent his **Marshall Plan** much credibility.

Marshall's plan required all European nations to organize and administer American aid themselves. It also did not exclude the Soviet Union. Marshall told the graduates:

Any government that is willing to assist in recovery will find full co-operation on the part of the USA. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist. (as cited in Schain, 2001)

The United States committed billions of dollars, eventually spending more than \$12 billion, for the rebuilding effort. The aid went entirely to Western European nations, since the Soviets rejected it and urged those Eastern European countries under its sphere of influence to reject it as well. Accepting aid from the United States would have undermined the Soviet's superpower standing, and the plan's provision requiring American review of recipient nations' finances was seen as an unreasonable imposition on Soviet sovereignty.

American leaders were not surprised and never expected to extend aid to the Soviets. Although the financial assistance was desperately needed, the plan came with strings attached. It was devised to adhere Europeans to the United States and prevent the rise of radical leaders and the spread of communism. The Marshall Plan thus helped define the line dividing communism and democracy in Europe.

Within 3 years the plan was so successful that Western European nations regained prewar production and consumption levels; in addition, their consumers became reliant on American manufactured and consumer products. The financial investment further spurred the U.S. economy because American firms and factories produced the goods and services necessary for rebuilding. In addition to direct financial aid, the United States negotiated trade agreements, known as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade with more than 20 European nations. These provided for free trade among member nations and solidified important markets for



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Under the Marshall Plan, relief packages such as these sacks of flour were stamped with an emblem to let Europeans know the aid came from the United States.

American products (Walker, 1993). In 1953 Secretary of State Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts at restructuring the European economy.

Rebuilding Japan and a New Alliance

Allied military occupation followed Japan's surrender in August 1945. Acting as supreme commander, U.S. general Douglas MacArthur guided the nation until a democratic constitution was enacted in 1948. Shaped by MacArthur's strong influence, the constitution renounced any future involvement in war and disbanded Japan's military, leaving only a small force for basic defense. Constructed under military occupation, Japan's new constitution expanded democracy, giving women the right to vote for the first time in the nation's history (Fujimura-Fanselow & Kameda, 1995).

The economic rebuilding of Japan also concerned the United States. At first aiming to demolish Japanese industries linked to military buildup, American policy shifted when, in October 1949, just a month after the Soviets tested their first nuclear weapon, the lengthy civil war within China ended with Communist Mao Tse-tung ousting China's nationalist government and creating the People's Republic of China.

Mao's alliance with Stalin sparked fears that most of Asia would fall under Communist control. The United States refocused energy on the economic reconstruction of Japan, shoring up its position as an anti-Communist ally in the region. Thanks to U.S. support and limited military spending, the Japanese economy boomed in the 1950s, leading it to become an important economic force in the second half of the 20th century.

Berlin Blockade

Economic redevelopment initiatives could not completely subvert growing military tensions. The **Berlin Blockade**, lasting from June 24, 1948 to May 12, 1949, was an early international crisis of the emerging Cold War. Like Japan, Germany came under allied occupation at the end of World War II, and it was divided into four zones, each governed by one of the major Allied powers (see Figure 10.1). Berlin, the historic capital, fell in the Soviet zone but remained under joint control. As Cold War tensions grew, the United States, Britain, and France sought to combine their German zones into a new nation called West Germany, with its own currency and closer alignment with the democratic West. The Soviet Union responded to this move by blocking Allied access to resupply their sectors of Berlin.

Figure 10.1: Control of Berlin during the Cold War

During the Cold War, Germany was divided into the separate nations of East and West Germany. The Soviet Union held dominance of the East. The inset shows how the city of Berlin was divided between French, British, American, and Soviet sectors.



For 11 months the Allies airlifted supplies to the citizens of West Berlin. In what was dubbed “Operation Vittles,” U.S. Air Force pilots flew hundreds of missions to drop bundles of food, fuel, and other necessities to be collected by waiting Berliners. In addition to basic provisions, some pilots dropped chocolate bars, chewing gum, and other treats meant especially for the German children.

A leader of Operation Vittles was Col. Gail S. “Hal” Halvorsen, dubbed the “Candy Pilot.” Beginning with just a few dropped treats, Halvorsen’s movement gained press attention, and subsequent donations allowed him and other pilots to drop more than 23 tons of candies and treats bundled and attached to little parachutes. American schoolchildren collected candy and assembled parachutes. German youth, accustomed during the war to hide at the sound of approaching airplanes, soon learned to run to try to grab as many bundles as possible.

Halvorsen recalled, “When I flew over the airport I could see the children down below, I wiggled my wings and the little group went crazy. I can still see their arms in the air, waving at me” (as cited in Tunnell, 2010, p. ix). More than providing a treats to the children of Berlin and other provisions, the airlift succeeded in breaking the blockade, which Stalin lifted in June 1949. The airlift was also a victory for containment policy, preventing the spread of communism into West Germany. Ideological division of Berlin and of Germany continued for the remainder of the Cold War, finally ending with German reunification in 1991.

Collective Security

As the world moved to rebuild in the postwar period, thoughts also turned toward preventing future conflict and establishing collective security measures. Securing a lasting peace guided the ideology of American policy makers, as did preventing the spread of Soviet influence beyond Eastern Europe. Although the U.S. isolationist philosophy had prevented involvement in the League of Nations in 1920, following World War II the United States stood as one of two superpowers and accepted its role in the global community.

Once the Soviet Union demonstrated its military might by testing its own atomic weapon, it was even more essential to check further conflict. Those European nations subjected to Nazi occupation also feared the rearmament of Germany and sought protection. In 1949 the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**

formed as an intergovernmental military alliance to provide mutual defense in the event of a future attack by a non-NATO member, especially the Soviet Union. At its founding the organization's 12 members included all of the Western European Allies and the United States. Central also to NATO was West Germany, which was under control of NATO member nations.

10.2 The Postwar Era at Home

Cold War concerns did not stop Americans from experiencing prosperity and growth. Programs such as the **GI Bill**, formally the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, offered veterans substantial benefits. Low-interest mortgages and business loans, tuition payments for college, and a year of unemployment compensation helped to reintegrate service members and elevate their economic status. Record union membership across such important industries as auto and steel production raised many into the swelling middle class. Expanding military spending brought even more employment opportunities, and new government-sponsored technology transferred into the design and production of new consumer goods, including personal computers, computer operating systems, and nuclear-powered energy.

The postwar era was also fraught with domestic conflict, however. Believing that the growth of unions gave the working class too much power and increased the cost of doing business, some pushed to restrict collective bargaining rights. Other segments of society sought to suppress the rising expectations of African Americans, including many who served valiantly during the war. A political movement in the southern states sought to ensure the continuance of Jim Crow segregation and White supremacy.

Truman's Fair Deal

Although he embraced many of the policies of his predecessor, Truman also established his own domestic agenda, known as the **Fair Deal**. It included 21 provisions, many of which proposed to greatly expand the social welfare programs of the New Deal. Truman sought to expand benefits for returning veterans, enhance unemployment insurance, and increase subsidies for farmers. He called for more public works programs to build up the nation's infrastructure, a standard minimum wage of 75 cents per hour, environmental conservation, and a major overhaul of the tax structure. Most controversially, his Fair Deal proposed a national system of health insurance and revisions to the Social Security Act to provide pensions to the disabled and to expand its roles to include previously excluded occupations such as farm labor and domestic service.

Liberals and labor leaders backed Truman's programs, but he did not enjoy the congressional Democratic majority of FDR's presidency. Large numbers of Republicans prevailed in the 1946 midterm elections, giving the party control of both houses of Congress for the first time in more than 2 decades. Republicans in Congress refused to take up many of Truman's Fair Deal policies and instead pushed their own agenda.

Postwar Labor and Operation Dixie

After the war, the nation's most powerful labor unions, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations, sponsored a series of strikes, and the CIO launched **Operation Dixie**, a drive to bring collective bargaining to workers in southern states. In response, while Truman pushed to expand liberal-minded policies through his Fair Deal, congressional politics turned more conservative, seeking among other things to rein in labor militancy.

Despite the guarantees under the 1935 Wagner Act, conservative business leaders and politicians had minimized the impact of unions in most southern industries during the Depression. During World War II, labor shortages finally pushed southern wages up, and more than 800,000 workers in the region, including a significant number of African Americans, joined unions. In 1946 labor leaders pressed to extend the gains before the momentum waned. Operation Dixie thus pitted entrenched conservatives against liberal-minded labor advocates.

Van A. Bittner of the United Steelworkers was among the more than 200 labor organizers seeking to unionize workers in textile mills and other industries across the South beginning in the summer of 1946. Along with leaders of the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA), Bittner focused operations on three southern states with the largest number of mills: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

A balding man with glasses, Bittner hardly fit the stereotype of the union organizer as a heavily muscled and unintelligent thug, an image left over from the early years of the labor struggles. He issued press releases calling the union drive a "great crusading movement on behalf of humanity" (as cited in Minchin, 1997). The goal was

raising wages through unionization, because Bittner and his colleagues believed that only economic improvement could lead to political change.

Operation Dixie proved to be an utter failure. Bittner and other organizers underestimated the resistance from the political and industrial leadership of the South. When Bittner was unable to provide immediate results, the international council of the CIO cut funding for the unionization drive, and in succeeding years the number of textile workers enjoying collective bargaining actually shrank.

Funding cuts were only one reason the drive failed. Textile mills tended to operate in tightly organized company towns, where industrialists controlled housing, schools, and churches. Many southern workers were suspicious of outside union organizers, and police, local politicians, and community leaders were sometimes outright hostile to men such as Bittner. Organizers did make some inroads in organizing African American workers, but many working-class White people rejected interracial solidarity.

Undoing Labor's New Deal

The failure of Operation Dixie and the triumph of Republicans in Congress brought a surge in conservative policies. Congress pushed aside Truman's Fair Deal and instead passed a series of laws designed to benefit the interests of business and the rich. Overriding Truman's veto, Republicans lowered taxes across the nation by \$5.5 billion, with wealthy Americans benefiting most (McNeese, 2010b).

Congress also moved to push back labor gains of the previous decade and a half. In 1947, again over Truman's veto, Congress passed the **Taft-Hartley Act** to amend the New Deal's Wagner Act. Robert Taft and Fred Hartley, Republican senators from Ohio and New Jersey, respectively, devised the plan, which was officially called the Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947. It reduced the powers of labor unions while at the same time increasing the legal reporting unions were required to provide the federal government.

Among its several provisions, Taft-Hartley permitted states to enact what were known as right-to-work laws that prohibited "closed shops" or "union shops," where union membership was required for employment. It also outlawed labor unions' contributions to federal primary and general election campaigns. Supporters argued that the law reduced irresponsible and illegal actions by labor leaders. Detractors saw it as a "slave-labor law," arguing that it stripped workers of their rights and placed total power in the workplace in the hands of employers.

In his veto message Truman said the bill represented a bitter divide between Democrats and Republicans. Taft-Hartley proved to be one of the most consequential laws of the 20th century. It fostered the pushback of union gains under the New Deal and tempered the wage and benefit gains of the war years. Many states, particularly in the U.S. South, passed right-to-work laws that effectively limited workers from joining unions and stopped national unionization drives in their tracks. Eventually, when international economic competition threatened, industrialists would move their operations to right-to-work states to reduce labor costs.

The 1948 Election

Truman's Fair Deal agenda did not achieve what he had hoped, and his political future was at stake as the 1948 presidential election approached. Doubling down on his liberal domestic initiatives, he followed the advice of a special commission on civil rights and lent support, though somewhat reluctantly, to a program pressing for civil rights and equal treatment of African Americans and other minorities in housing, employment, education, and the court system. Never working too hard on his legislative agenda, Truman waited for Congress to act on the proposal, but a coalition of some Republicans and southern Democrats blocked each measure.



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A caravan of AFL-CIO members from as far away as the West Coast converged on Washington, D.C., to urge President Truman to veto the Taft-Hartley Act.

When the liberal wing of the Democratic Party called for desegregation of the military at its 1948 nominating convention, Truman responded on July 26 with **Executive Order 9981**, which provided the president's guarantee that all members of the U.S. military receive equal treatment and opportunity regardless of their race, color, religion, or national origin. Opposition among military leaders would delay full implementation of desegregation until the Korean War erupted in 1950, but Truman's record favoring civil rights legislation provoked rapid response among his party's southern delegates.

A group of southern Democrats led by South Carolinian Strom Thurmond stormed out of the convention and created a distinct party, known as the States' Rights Party, or the **Dixiecrats**, which aimed to maintain Jim Crow laws, White supremacy, and racial segregation. The Dixiecrats posed a serious threat to the future of the Democratic Party. Through the first half of the 20th century, southern Whites voted solidly Democratic, but opposition to liberal ideas, and the increasing push for civil rights, weakened the party's hold on the so-called solid South (Karabell, 2000).

Another fragmentation split the Democratic Party on the left. Those opposing Truman's Cold War policies nominated former vice president Henry Wallace under the banner of the Progressive Party. Women such as Eslanda Goode Robeson, Shirley Du Bois (both African American), and Betty Friedan formed an important block of Progressive Party supporters. Robeson, an anthropologist, was the wife of the actor Paul Robeson, and Du Bois, a writer, was wed to scholar and activist W. E. B. Du Bois. Friedan, at the time a journalist for a labor publication, later became the first president of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and published *The Feminine Mystique*, which sparked the second wave of feminism in the United States.

Through the Progressive Party these women and others pushed for an end to segregation, for world peace, and for an acceptance of Soviet influence in Europe (Castledine, 2012). Wallace's candidacy also attracted liberals, Communists, and Socialists, later bringing party members under close scrutiny for potential disloyalty.

Truman won the Democratic nomination and faced Republican New York governor Thomas Dewey, as well as Thurmond and Wallace, in November. The president launched a whistle-stop campaign, riding a train through the country and giving speeches along the way. He worked tirelessly to win votes, gaining strength from enthusiastic audience shouts like, "Give 'em hell, Harry!" Even with these grassroots efforts, Dewey's lead appeared insurmountable. Dewey's widespread appeal resulted from his support and advocacy of the business community. During the campaign he spoke out against government inefficiency and the Communist threat but avoided military or defense issues.

It seemed so certain that Dewey would win on the night of the election that the *Chicago Tribune* printed the headline "Dewey Defeats Truman" for the morning edition (as cited in Halberstam, 2008). Surprising nearly everyone, the final tally of the actual votes in the early morning hours showed that Truman was victorious, earning nearly 50% of the popular vote (see Table 10.1). The election also gave Democrats control of both the House and Senate, a gain not seen since 1932.

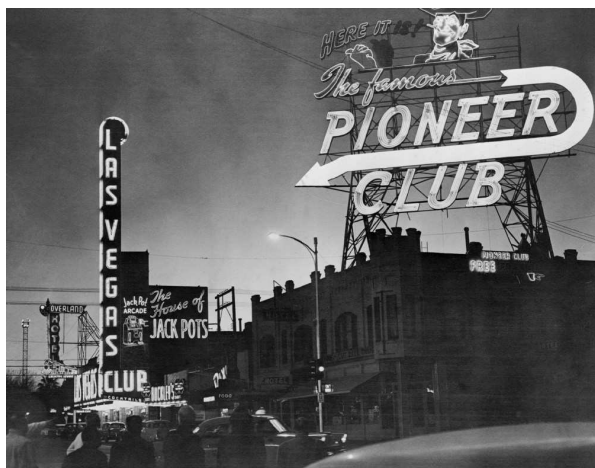
Table 10.1: Presidential election of 1948

Vote Category	Harry S. Truman (D)	Thomas Dewey (R)	Strom Thurmond (States' Rights)	Henry A. Wallace (Progressive)
Electoral vote	303	189	39	0
Popular vote	24,179,347	21,991,292	1,175,930	1,157,238
Percentage of popular	49.6%	45.1%	2.4%	2.3%

Anticommunism and the Cold War at Home

Cold War ideology and policies altered life in America. The military buildup begun during World War II continued in the postwar era, and national security became the buzzword justifying spending. Government funding supported new research programs at major universities, and a system of federal highways seemed necessary to easily evacuate large populations should a nuclear attack materialize. The Federal Highway Act of

1956, for example, appropriated \$25 billion for the construction of an interstate highway system to be completed over a 10-year period.



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Pedestrians on the streets of Las Vegas could see the lights from atomic explosions in the desert but were given no warning from the government. At some nightclubs, patrons climbed on the roof for a better view of the mushroom clouds.

Infrastructure construction and military spending prevented a postwar economic downturn as programs for new and improved aircraft, weapons, and even the first computers took shape. Much of the government defense spending funneled into Sunbelt states, those south from Virginia to Florida and west to the Pacific coast. New weaponry and military installations located there largely thanks to powerful senators and representatives from those states. Funds for highway and infrastructure construction also heavily favored the Sunbelt as evidenced by the construction of Interstate 10, which stretches from Florida to California.

Despite the economic benefits of the Cold War, many Americans began to look on the government with suspicion. The Cold War led to secret government operations that left the public wondering about the government's motives and activities during the Cold War and beyond. To give just one example, testing of atomic weapons continued in the desert of Nevada without the warning that each explosion exposed nearby residents to dangerous levels of radiation.

Americans also began to consider how divisions within U.S. society influenced safety at home and abroad. In the wake of growing independence movements in colonial Africa and Asia, for instance, some began to rethink racial policies that permitted segregation and discrimination. Immigration restriction policies were also relaxed, to a degree, to allow in a few refugees from Communist-controlled countries.

While some Americans began to regard the government with suspicion, many more turned a watchful eye on their fellow citizens. Americans began to redefine what it meant to be patriotic, expecting loyal citizens to salute the flag, support the military and the government, and be ready to call out Communist or disloyal activity. A growing number of U.S. residents and others soon found themselves considered disloyal. These included, as in years past, radicals and Communists, but suspicion extended as well to those who expressed any dissent.

Almost as soon as the Cold War was underway, fear arose that communism would take root in the United States. The National Security Council warned that the Communists' "preferred technique is to subvert by infiltration and intimidation" (as cited in Field, 2005, pp. 3–4). It insisted that Americans must be alert to the potential Communist penetration of "labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media for influencing opinion" (as cited in Field, 2005, p. 4). Fear that communism could spread into American politics, culture, and other important institutions drove a movement to

Exploring History through Film: Religion and Politics during the Cold War: Adding *Under God* to the Pledge of Allegiance

When saying the Pledge of Allegiance, most people assume the phrase "under God" was always in the pledge. However, this was added during the Cold War (as well as "in God we trust" becoming the official motto of the United States) as a way to contrast the U.S. from the Soviet Union, where religion was banned.

identify elements of disloyalty and eradicate them.

Anti-Communist Politics

Anticommunism influenced partisan politics at both the national and grassroots level. A number of national politicians called for investigations to preserve internal security. In 1947, just before announcing the Truman Doctrine, Truman increased FBI funding and implemented a screening system for federal employees to root out Communists and Communist sympathizers. He also asked the attorney general to compile a list of potentially subversive organizations.

Meanwhile, congressional committees conducted more than 75 hearings on Communist subversion between 1945 and 1952, most famously those held by the **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)**. Originally created in 1938, the HUAC investigated potential disloyalty among Hollywood actors and directors, college professors, labor leaders, writers, and even federal employees. Those appearing before the committee were urged to affirm their U.S. loyalty and also to name other known Communists.

Many entertainers, including Charlie Chaplin and Orson Welles, were placed on a Hollywood blacklist and became unable to work in the motion picture industry. Walt Disney, the founder and head of Disney Studios, testified that communism was rampant in the entertainment industry. Screen Actors Guild president Ronald Reagan provided the committee with the names of a number of actors he believed to be Communist sympathizers (Cannon, 2003).

Homosexuals and Disloyalty

The well-publicized House committee and other government investigations also targeted segments of society and organizations that appeared to be gaining too much social ground. Some believed, for instance, that Communists funded African American organizations such as the NAACP, and others perceived racial advances such as the desegregation of the military as Communist plots.

The anti-Communist hysteria also subjected homosexuals to suspicion. Of special concern was evidence that homosexuals, who were considered “deviants,” passed as straight, in the same way that Communists might operate without detection in government positions. As both a gay man and an African American, novelist James Baldwin came under the watchful eye of the FBI, which eventually compiled a 1,700-page file on his writings and personal behavior.

Baldwin found his name placed on the Security Index, a list of so-called dangerous individuals who purportedly posed a threat to national security. The author of multiple novels, plays, essays, and poems detailing the lives of African Americans, Baldwin voluntarily left the United States for Paris in 1948. Although considered one of the most prolific African American writers of the 20th century, Baldwin was not welcome in Cold War America (Field, 2005).

Religion and Politics during the Cold War: Adding U...

From Title: *Soul of a Nation: God in America—How Religious...*

(<https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=100753&xtid=44449>)



Critical Thinking Questions

- What, in your opinion, does the insertion of these expressions of faith tell us about the cultural mindset of the early cold war period? How, in your mind, has this influenced the U.S. mindset to this day?

Loyalty Issues and McCarthyism

No single figure became more associated with anti-Communist campaigns, and with the paranoia they induced, than Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy. He began his crusade in hopes that it would gain him public attention and boost his political career. During a speech before a women's Republican club in Wheeling, West Virginia, in February 1950, McCarthy claimed to possess a list showing the names of 205 members of the U.S. State Department with ties to the Communist Party. He proclaimed these to be "enemies from within" (McCarthy, 1946) but was never able to produce credible evidence that even one Communist worked for the department.

Accusations of disloyalty curbed debate on Cold War issues and terrified millions of Americans. Some of the accused lost their jobs, and the psychological impact created a climate of distrust, because one never knew who to trust or when a comment might be misconstrued. Despite his inability to produce proof to support his accusations, McCarthy's influence grew. *McCarthyism* would later enter the lexicon as a term for stifling free debate and denying constitutional rights through an accusation of disloyalty (Doherty, 2003).

McCarthy used his chairmanship of a minor Senate subcommittee to conduct investigations into the actions of "disloyal" federal workers. Partisan rhetoric fueled many of the investigations, since the senator accused his political opponents of Communist leanings. He referred to Secretary of State Dean Acheson as "the Red Dean of Washington" (as cited in McMahon, 2009, p. 114) and declared without evidence that Communist sympathizers held offices at the highest reaches of government. He manipulated the press and even the

new medium of television by constantly announcing new and more shocking accusations, usually based on flimsy evidence.

McCarthy overplayed his hand when he made unfounded accusations of Communist infiltration in the U.S. Army. The army retaliated by accusing the senator of seeking special treatment for an army private who offered key materials regarding the Communist accusations. Between April and June 1954, the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations held the televised Army-McCarthy hearings. The widely watched hearings showed an overly aggressive McCarthy making unsubstantiated claims. Although the committee did not find evidence that McCarthy gave improper aid to the army private, his erratic behavior lost him the support of the American public and ruined his credibility.



Grey Villet/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images

Thousands of Americans watched the televised Army-McCarthy hearings from their homes in 1954.

American Experience: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Peace Information Center

African American leader and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the many Americans who spoke out in opposition to the military buildup and shifting ideology of the Cold War era. His experience demonstrates the high price dissenters paid. A respected sociologist and historian, as well as a civil rights activist (see Chapter 5), Du Bois had long criticized American capitalism, arguing that it perpetuated racism in the United States. He supported Socialist ideology in his scholarship.

Du Bois also admired the work of the Communist Party. In a 1938 reply to a letter from a Communist worker he wrote, "I am not a communist but I appreciate what the communists are trying to do and endeavor always in my classes and elsewhere to give a fair and balanced judgment concerning them" (as cited in Aptheker, 1976, p. 170). The FBI compiled a file on Du Bois during the war, but it was during the 1950s, as the Cold War escalated, that he came under close scrutiny.

A peace advocate and a staunch opponent of nuclear weapons, the 82-year-old Du Bois chaired the short-lived Peace Information Center (PIC) in 1950. The center's purpose was to educate Americans about peace movements forming around the globe and to gather signatures on a petition supporting a ban on nuclear weapons. Some members of the PIC were Communists, and in July 1950 Secretary of State Dean Acheson attacked the center, calling its peace appeal a "propaganda trick" of the Soviet Union. Du Bois replied, "Does it not occur to you, Sir, that there are honest Americans who . . . hate and fear war and are determined to do something to avert it?" (as cited in Randolph, 2005, p. 87).

The federal government indicted Du Bois and other PIC leaders for refusing to register the organization as an agent of a foreign state. The government dismissed the case against Du Bois in 1951 but confiscated his passport and withheld it for 8 years because he refused to declare that he was not a member of the Communist Party. Even after regaining his passport and continuing to spread his peace message, Du Bois was forbidden to travel to Communist countries.

In 1961, to put the matter to rest, he formally joined the Communist Party USA. Later that year he traveled to Ghana, where he worked on a new writing project. In 1963 the United States refused to renew



Underwood Photo Archives/SuperStock

W. E. B. Du Bois faced criticism because his crusade for world peace was at odds with American Cold War ideology.

his passport, so at age 95, and just a few months before his death, Du Bois became a citizen of Ghana (Randolph, 2005).

For further reading, see:

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2007). *In battle for peace*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, D. L. (2009). *W. E. B. Du Bois: A biography, 1868–1963*. New York: Holt.

10.3 Republicans Resurgent

Popular dissent and disagreement with Truman's policies allowed the Republican Party to look forward to potential victory in the 1952 presidential election. One of the major sources of discontent was Truman's handling of an escalating conflict within the Asian nation of Korea, the first military conflict of the Cold War.

The Korean War

The Berlin Blockade was a minor skirmish in comparison to the Cold War escalation that followed. Once both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed atomic weapons, the possibility of nuclear war began to loom large. In 1950 the National Security Council encouraged a massive military rearmament. Issuing a 50-page secret document, National Security Council paper 68, known as **NSC-68**, the council also forcefully restated Kennan's containment policy, claiming that the United States must take the lead in preventing the spread of communism. Historians also suggest that the military buildup added importantly to restoring economic stability and balance between the United States and the nations aided under the Marshall Plan (Cardwell, 2011).

Despite the ideological conflicts and growing nuclear arsenal, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States directly attacked the other during the Cold War. Instead, they played out the conflict in other, smaller regions. One of the first of these was Korea. In the aftermath of World War II, American and Russian troops occupied portions of the country, and both nations were reluctant to relinquish territory. Much like in postwar Germany, the leaders divided the nation, splitting Korea at the 38th parallel, with the United States occupying the South and the Soviets the North. Both nations ceased their occupation in 1949, but the Soviets left a Communist regime in the North. At the same time, South Korea's government was friendly toward the United States.

One year later, North Korea invaded South Korea, taking over its capital in Seoul. The United States, drawing on the containment policy and especially NSC-68, immediately pledged military assistance to South Korea. The United Nations similarly condemned the invasion in UN Security Council Resolution 82, and in a subsequent resolution it recommended a member state military force to deal with the conflict. Truman appointed Gen. Douglas MacArthur as the commander of a United Nations force, but in reality it was predominantly made up of American troops.

This began the Korean War, a dangerous time when the Cold War "turned hot" and brought the world to the brink of another world war. Like the conflict over Berlin, this marked a moment when the United States drew a line and told the Soviet Union that it would not tolerate further expansion. According to some, the conflict was "a war we can't win, we can't lose, and we can't quit" (Dickson, 2004, p. 257).

U.S. troops were central to the UN fighting force and especially to the Battle of Inchon in September 1950. MacArthur's amphibious landing led to an attack behind North Korean lines, resulting in a UN victory and, within 2 weeks, the recapture of the South Korean capital at Seoul and the eventual occupation of much of the North (see Figure 10.2). In October, however, the tide turned when the UN forces approached North Korea's border with China. The Chinese warned MacArthur not to cross the Yalu River, but he refused to respect this boundary. More than 100,000 Chinese troops flooded into to the conflict, driving MacArthur's force back across the 38th parallel.

Figure 10.2: Korean War, 1950–1953

Lasting nearly 3 years, the Korean War proved to be a stalemate and did little to contain communism in the region.



The war demonstrated one of the downsides to limited warfare. Even though the United States was a strong military power and possessed a nuclear arsenal, some feared the other nations might interpret its reluctance to use its most devastating weapons as cowardice. There was direct evidence of this perspective from Mao Tse-tung, who in a 1946 interview with the journalist Anna Louise Strong, said:

The atom bomb is a *paper tiger* with which the US reactionaries try to terrify the people. It looks terrible, but in fact is not. Of course, the atom bomb is a weapon of mass destruction, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new weapons. (as cited in Engelhardt, 2007, p. 160)

The final battles in Korea during the first half of 1951 were more political than military, which seemed to reinforce Mao's sentiment. While Truman attempted to negotiate a settlement, MacArthur took matters in his own hands and issued his own, unauthorized ultimatum to China in which he demanded peace and threatened all-out war. He tried to convince Truman that he should pursue the Chinese and push northward, or even possibly use nuclear weapons. The president disagreed, and MacArthur publicly criticized Truman's decision. The general believed that as a professional military leader, he knew more about the proper way to manage the conflict, and he chafed at the civilian (presidential) military control inherent in the American tradition.

The president was incensed by the action and fired MacArthur for insubordination. MacArthur returned to the United States and was met with enthusiastic supporters. In his final speech, he said, "I am closing 52 years of military service. . . . Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. I now close my military career and just fade away. Goodbye" (as cited in *Imparato*, 2000, p. 167). Although the nation's top military leaders supported MacArthur's removal, the political fallout followed him. The peace negotiations that began in July 1951 dragged on for 2 more years while thousands more U.S. servicemen died. The nation was poised for a change.

Eisenhower and the Republican Cold War

The 1952 presidential election gave Republicans their first chance to regain the White House since the Great Depression. Foreign policy challenges emanating from his containment policy, the failure of his domestic agenda, and finally his firing of the popular MacArthur ruined Truman's chances for reelection. He had underestimated the public reaction to his Korea strategy, and his approval numbers plummeted. Republican senator Robert Taft even threatened impeachment.

Amid the controversy, Truman bowed out of contention for the Democratic nomination. After much scrambling at their convention, the Democrats nominated Illinois governor Adlai E. Stevenson, whose moderate political stance proved acceptable to both labor and southern party loyalists.

Former Allied supreme commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower claimed the Republican nomination. As a military hero he supported Truman's foreign policy agenda, but he argued that the Democratic Party had mismanaged the Korean War and the attack on communism. His military hero popularity won him the Republican nomination over Ohio senator Robert Taft, the other leading Republican contender. Taft believed in nonintervention and planned to cut military spending. Campaigning under the slogan "I like Ike," Eisenhower's Republican agenda argued for a campaign against "communism, Korea, and corruption" (*Polsby, Wildavsky, Schier, & Hopkins*, 2012, p. 244). His vice presidential running mate was a young Richard Nixon, a California senator.

Eisenhower's military expertise proved helpful in settling the Korean conflict. He personally traveled to Korea in December 1952, where he visited troops and subsequently used both diplomacy and a threat of additional military action to force an end to the fighting. An armistice negotiated in July 1953 left Korea divided at the 38th parallel. A 2-mile-wide demilitarized zone separated North and South Korea, and communism was contained to the north. As many as 20,000 American troops remain in the conflict zone even in the early 21st century, and the dispute between North and South Korea has yet to be resolved.

Spending for the Korean War had expanded U.S. defenses across the globe, making America the world's supreme military power. But the massive military buildup that NSC-68 recommended was tempered following the war. Military spending peaked in 1953, after which spending on traditional military equipment and armaments dropped (*McClenahan & Becker*, 2011). Eisenhower's Cold War strategy focused on covert actions by the CIA or small military assignments through special operations engagements. He saw this as more efficient and effective means of pursuing the nation's goal of containing communism.

The Korean War taught U.S. commanders an important lesson. Gen. Matthew Ridgway, Eisenhower's army chief of staff, warned of the dangers of ever fighting another land war in Asia, and the president agreed. Yet the United States was already funneling aid to the French in Indochina (today's Vietnam) in the hope that the French could maintain their colonial holdings and stave off the encroachment of communism in that region.

Massive Retaliation

Containment was the guiding principle during the Truman years, but during the Eisenhower administration Secretary of State John Foster Dulles redefined America's foreign policy as **massive retaliation**. In his opinion, the Truman administration responded too passively to the Communist threat. His goal was to not just prevent the spread of communism, but to also build such a stockpile of nuclear weapons that the Soviets would retreat from their plans of world domination (George & Smoke, 1974).

Eisenhower believed nuclear weapons made military and economic sense. It was more cost-effective to build and house a vast nuclear arsenal than it was to enlist, equip, and train a large military force. Dulles agreed and said nuclear weapons provided "more bang for the buck" or, in terms that the Soviets would understand, "More rubble for the Ruble" (as cited in Evangelista, 2002, p. 95). Another term for this new U.S. military strategy was brinkmanship. This meant that America was now willing to press the Soviet Union as far as it had to, even to the *brink* of war, in order to stop communism.

The Indochina Quagmire

Many thought a region in Southeast Asia called Indochina (encompassing the modern nations of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; see Figure 10.3) controlled the floodgates of communism (Herring, 2002). This region was a colony of France—though during World War II, the French lost control of it to Japan. After the war France wanted to return to power, but Ho Chi Minh, the Communist prime minister of Vietnam from 1945 to 1955, opposed outside occupation and pushed for independence (Duiker, 2000).

Figure 10.3: Indochina

Indochina was one region vulnerable to the spread of communism under the so-called domino theory.



Ho's inspiration was the United States, and in fact the American government supported him during World War II as he attempted to resist the Japanese. At the war's end, Ho was able to secure control of North Vietnam. As a nationalist, however, he sought to unify the entire country. Modeling his Vietnamese policy of independence after Thomas Jefferson's own words in the Declaration of Independence, it seemed to Ho that American support would continue.

But the United States withdrew its support because of Ho's political ties. Although he had asked for some support to stave off French intervention following World War I, only the Soviets offered support for an

independent Vietnam. As a result, it is not surprising that he favored communism, studied in Russia, and led American leaders to speculate that he was a puppet of Stalin. Eisenhower opposed his plans to reunify the region and offered whatever support he could to the French to stop him.

In November 1953 the French occupied Dien Bien Phu, a small village near the Vietnamese border with Laos. Vietnamese opposition forces in support of Ho entered the region, and conflict erupted in early 1954 between the Vietnamese and French forces. By mid-1954, Ho was receiving aid from both the Soviet Union and China. France appeared unable to thwart Ho's regional goals, even with American help, and the French hold on the region collapsed.

Domino Theory

Vietnam, a part of French Indochina, did not have vital natural resources, nor was it of strategic interest to staging a war in another country. Prior to this period, the United States had no economic or political ties there. And yet it quickly became a major focus of the nation's foreign policy.

Eisenhower explained the country's newfound importance at a conference on April 7, 1954. A reporter asked him to comment on the importance of Indochina, as many Americans were unclear about the region's significance. Eisenhower responded with a few details, such as why the United States could not tolerate any people being subjugated under the control of a dictator. Then he got to the real reason that he was supporting military aid to the French: He outlined the domino principle, wherein one piece falls quickly after another in sequence.

Expanding on this **domino theory**, Eisenhower listed other nations that would quickly fall if Vietnam became Communist, including Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia. He concluded his press conference saying, "The possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world" (as cited in Katsiaficas, 1992, p. 34).

Despite this conviction, Eisenhower did not want to send American ground troops to the region. As the French continued to fare poorly in the region, Eisenhower and the National Security Council debated this option, but the president said that he "simply could not imagine the United States putting ground forces anywhere in Southeast Asia" (as cited in Khong, 1992, p. 75). The extent of American aid to this point primarily meant economic support for those who resisted Communist expansion in Vietnam.

The Geneva Accords

French troops continued to fare poorly in their efforts to stop the Viet Minh, Ho Chi Minh's forces. When the French lost control of the village of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, French and Vietnamese agents, as well as the Soviets, Chinese, British, and Americans, held negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, to try to end the fighting. The resulting **Geneva Accords** divided the country at the 17th parallel, with the Viet Minh in control of the North and a pro-Western coalition in the South. The agreement also stated that in 1956 Vietnam would have its first democratic election, which would choose a government for the entire country.

These accords signified the end of French involvement in Vietnam. The United States stepped in when France stepped down and began to support Ngo Dinh Diem to control South Vietnam. American leaders trusted him because of his close ties to the United States. He had gone to school in a New Jersey Catholic seminary, and he was firmly against holding "free" elections as stipulated by the Geneva Accords because he thought the North would falsify the results no matter the votes of the people.

Western accolades for Diem did not hold true for the larger Vietnamese population, many of whom viewed his Western education and conversion to Catholicism to be in opposition to the mainstream Buddhist religion and traditional values among the nation's larger population. Surprising many Westerners, Ho Chi Minh was actually very popular among the Vietnamese population, and under free and fair elections, he would likely have won.

Secretary of State Dulles supported Diem in his decision to renege on the 1956 elections. Dulles also did not want the United States to go it alone in Vietnam and worked quickly to form a defense alliance known as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), made up of the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

Many expressed concern that, between NATO and SEATO, the United States was forming too many alliances and promising to defend too many regions of the world. Critics began to complain about “pactomania” (Clemens, 2000). Despite the detractors, the administration no longer considered neutrality an option. Nations, according to Dulles, had to stand either with or against communism. There was no middle ground.



Associated Press

Viet Minh soldiers celebrate their control of Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam, with a parade.

Cold War Blame

After World War I, when the United States had its first “red scare,” communism and democracy came to be perceived as competing ideologies. In the 1920s Lenin openly expressed his Marxist philosophy, predicting that nationalism and capitalism would disintegrate under the rising strength of socialism (Pipes, 1997). This viewpoint did not lessen over the decades, and the only reason that Roosevelt was willing to ally with the Soviet Union in World War II was because he saw a greater evil in Hitler.

After the war, communism became an even larger threat for two main reasons. First, leaders like Stalin believed that the West’s goal was world domination through the spread of capitalism and democracy. Second, from an ideological perspective, there was no middle ground between communism and democracy upon which to compromise. Communism outlawed the right to private property, the family unit had less authority than the community, and religion was banned. There appeared no other choice, from the democratic perspective, but to contain and suppress this ideology.

Historians have debated and changed their interpretations of who was to blame for the Cold War over the past 50 years. The traditional view was that the Soviets were aggressors and that they caused the Cold War because the United States had no other recourse but to try to contain them. Later revisionist historians placed more blame on the United States, claiming that it exaggerated the Soviet threat as a rationale to secure its own power. Today the prevailing postrevisionist viewpoint is that both the United States and the Soviet Union were equally to blame. Both nations sought power and, in the process, misunderstood and exaggerated the threats of the other and exacerbated them with their policies.

Summary and Resources

Chapter Summary

- The U.S. role on the world stage dramatically changed following World War II. Rising tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union stemmed from an ideological divide between American-style democracy and capitalism and Soviet-style communism.
- As the two dominant political players in the immediate postwar era, these two nations entered an era of conflict known as the Cold War. As the Soviet Union moved to spread its influence in Eastern Europe and Asia, President Harry S. Truman redefined U.S. foreign policy. Instead of limiting its influence to the Western Hemisphere, the United States declared its intention to aid free peoples around the world in an effort to contain communism.
- Under the Truman Doctrine, the United States offered aid and engaged in military operations in Europe, Korea, and Southeast Asia.
- Although Truman sought to expand the social welfare gains of the New Deal, his Fair Deal found little support in a Republican-dominated Congress. Conservatives stopped the drive to bring unions to southern workers and stalled gains on civil rights.
- Fear of an internal threat from communism also dominated the domestic agenda. Labor unions, the entertainment industry, and even government employees came under scrutiny for disloyalty. Anti-Communist hysteria soon waned, but the Cold War continued to dominate America's world perspective for nearly 40 years.
- With his election in 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower negotiated a conclusion to the immediate conflict of the Korean War and shifted the Cold War in a new direction. Containment began to take on a new activist dimension as tensions in Indochina began to escalate.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. How was the Cold War fought?
2. The Korean War has often been called America's "forgotten war." Why do you think this is the case?
3. Why were Americans so terrified of communism after World War II?
4. How did the Cold War affect the lives of average Americans?
5. How did containment and the Truman Doctrine influence the direction of American foreign policy?

Additional Resources

The Cold War Museum

http://www.coldwar.org/museum/coldwar_stories.asp (http://www.coldwar.org/museum/coldwar_stories.asp)

This website museum offers a series of narratives and oral histories related to the Cold War.

George Kennan's "Long Telegram"

<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>
(<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>)

Kennan's message to Harry Truman in this telegram helped define the emerging Cold War.

Armistice Agreement for the Restoration of the South Korean State

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=85&page=transcript> (<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=85&page=transcript>)

The end of the Korean War was marked not by a definitive victory but by a stalemate, as outlined in this armistice ending the conflict.

GI Bill

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=76&page=transcript> (<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=76&page=transcript>)

This government law provided needed resources to veterans, including funding for education, small business loans, and low-cost mortgages.

HUAC Hearing Transcripts, Washington State

<http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/cpproject/HUAC%20hearings.shtml>
(<http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/cpproject/HUAC%20hearings.shtml>)

These recordings from the House of Representatives committee on un-American activities provide an insight into the inner workings of the anti-Communist congressional committee.

Recollections From the Front (Korean War)

<http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/frontline.htm> (<http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/frontline.htm>)

The oral histories in this collection offer first-person narratives of the war experiences of American military personnel.

Korean War Oral History Collection

<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/OHKW> (<http://ufdc.ufl.edu/OHKW>)

This oral history collection offers firsthand accounts of the Korean War and its era.

Key Terms

Berlin Blockade

From June 24, 1948, to May 12, 1949, the Soviet Union blocked access to the Allied-controlled areas of West Berlin. Allied nations responded by airlifting needed supplies and provisions to the city's citizens.

Cold War

The sustained state of military and political tension between primarily the United States and the Soviet Union developing after World War II and lasting until 1991. It was designated a "cold" war because no fighting occurred directly between the major rivals.

containment

The U.S. foreign policy that aimed to prevent the spread of communism abroad.

Dixiecrats

Also known as the States' Rights Party, this splinter group of former Democrats aimed to uphold Jim Crow laws, White supremacy, and racial segregation.

domino theory

The notion that if one nation in a region fell under the sway of communism, others would soon follow in a domino effect.

Executive Order 9981

Executed in July 1948, this presidential order provided that service members would receive equal treatment and opportunity regardless of race, color, or national origin. Under this act the desegregation of the major service branches occurred during the Korean War.

Fair Deal

President Harry S. Truman's plan to expand the social welfare guarantees of the New Deal, including aid for education and a national health care system. A Republican-controlled Congress largely blocked the measures.

Geneva Accords

A series of agreements negotiated in 1954 temporarily separating Vietnam into northern and southern zones. South Vietnam and the United States failed to sign the agreement, and tensions continued to plague the region.

GI Bill

Formally the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, it provided a range of veteran's benefits, including business loans, mortgages, and education subsidies.

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

The congressional committee first organized in 1938 but used during the Cold War to investigate potential disloyalty among American citizens.

Marshall Plan

The economic plan for rebuilding European nations following World War II; it also served to ensure Western Europe remained loyal to the United States and did not fall under Communist influence.

massive retaliation

The military doctrine and nuclear strategy asserting that in the event of an attack the United States would retaliate with great force. To actively engage in massive retaliation, the United States began a major buildup of nuclear weapons as a deterrent to enemy attack.

National Security Act of 1947

This act restructured the U.S. military and intelligence services, creating a secretary of defense, the National Security Council, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO formed in 1949 to provide collective defense against attack or incursion by non-NATO member states, especially the Soviet Union. The 12 member states included the United States, Britain, France, Canada, and eight Western European nations.

NSC-68

National Security Council paper 68; it formally restated the containment policy and asserted the U.S. intention to take the lead in preventing the international spread of communism.

Operation Dixie

The organizing drive by the CIO to bring collective bargaining to workers in southern states.

Taft-Hartley Act

Legislation reducing the power of labor unions; it permitted states to pass so-called right-to-work laws making union membership optional.

Truman Doctrine

The foreign policy asserting the intention of the United States to support free people in their resistance to communism. This major shift in policy marks the onset of the Cold War.