

PERIOD 8: 1945–1980

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In 1945, the United States emerged from World War II with the world’s largest and strongest economy. Despite fears of a return to an economic depression, Americans were happy to get back to civilian life. What no one could predict was how the fall of colonial empires, the spread of Communism, and changes in the global economy would impact American lives in the future.

Overview At home, Americans enjoyed a robust economic growth through the 1960s with little competition, as the rest of world’s economies recovered from the war. Democrats, expanding on the New Deal, enacted major domestic programs, such as Medicare, aid to education, and civil rights for African Americans and women. The Cold War against Communist governments dominated U.S. foreign policy. While the threat of the use of nuclear weapons kept the great powers from attacking each other, limited “hot” wars in Korea and Vietnam cost America more than 100,000 lives. By the late 1960s, frustration over the Vietnam War, and opposition to liberal domestic programs, such as civil rights, and increased civil unrest weakened the Democratic majority, which slowly gave way during the 1970s to a conservative resurgence in 1980.

Alternate View Historians debate when postwar prosperity and optimism gave way to pessimism and a declining standard of living for many Americans. Some identify 1968, a year of assassinations, riots, and intense conflict over the Vietnam War as a starting point. Others point to the mid-1970s, when wage growth stagnated for many average Americans.

Key Concepts

8.1: The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable postwar world by asserting and working to maintain a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.

8.2: New movements for civil rights and liberal efforts to expand the role of government generated a range of political and cultural responses.

8.3: Postwar economic and demographic changes had far-reaching consequences for American society, politics, and culture.

Source: AP® *United States History Course and Exam Description, Updated Fall 2015*

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

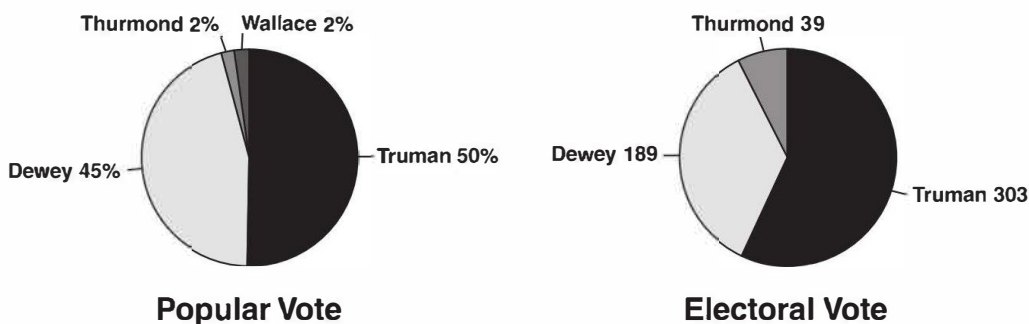
For years afterward, unions sought unsuccessfully to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act. The act became a major issue dividing Republicans and Democrats in the 1950s.

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

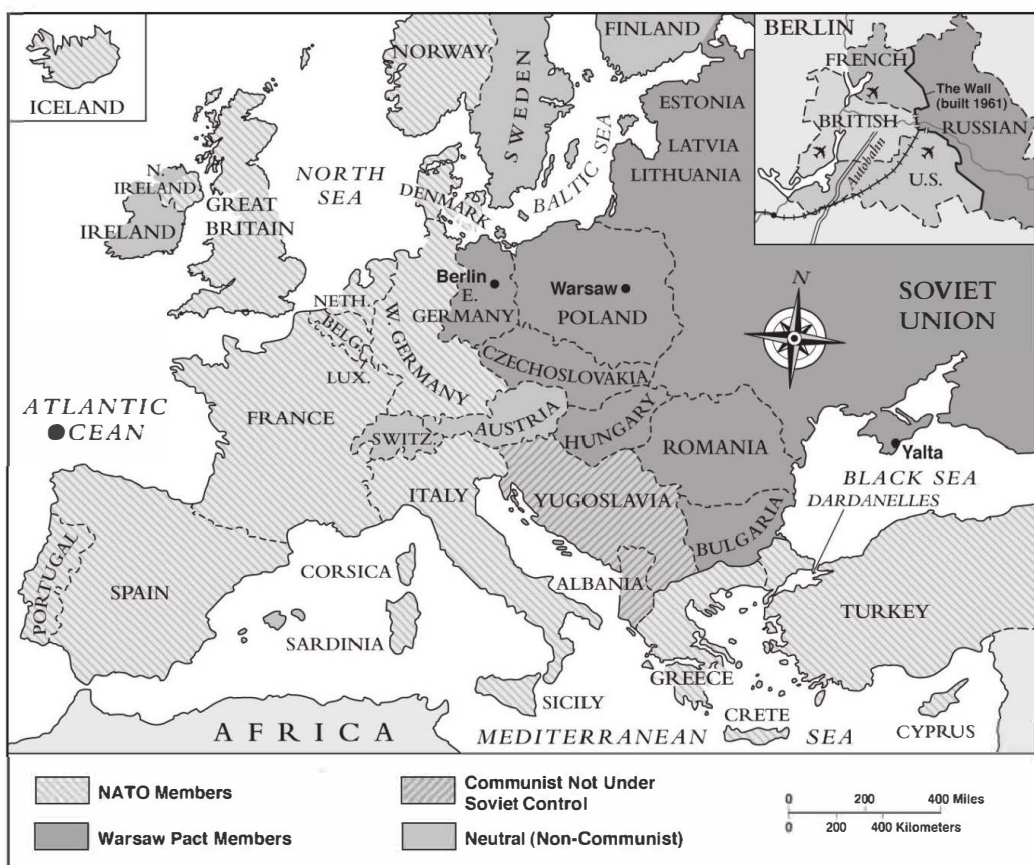
A major crisis of the Cold War focused on Berlin. In June 1948, the Soviets cut off all access by land to the German city. Truman dismissed any plans to withdraw from Berlin, but he also rejected using force to open up the roads through the Soviet-controlled eastern zone. Instead, he ordered U.S. planes 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.”

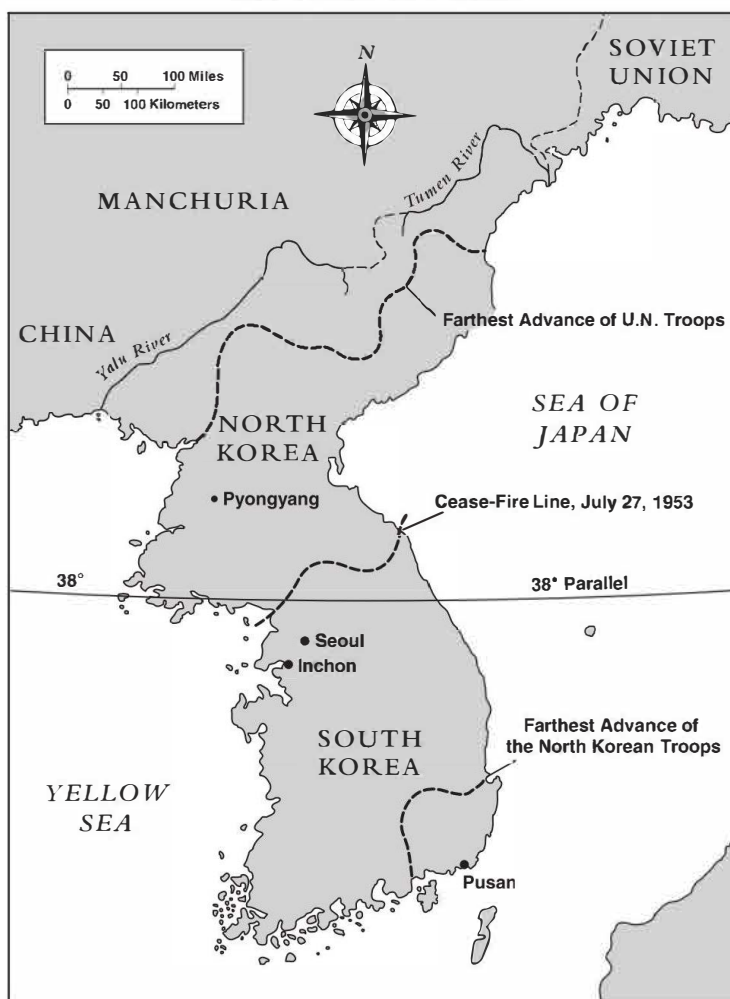
Counterattack At first the war in Korea went badly, as the North Koreans pushed the combined South Korean and American forces to the tip of the peninsula. However, General MacArthur reversed the war with a brilliant amphibious assault at Inchon behind the North Korean lines. U.N. forces then proceeded 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

THE KOREAN WAR



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.

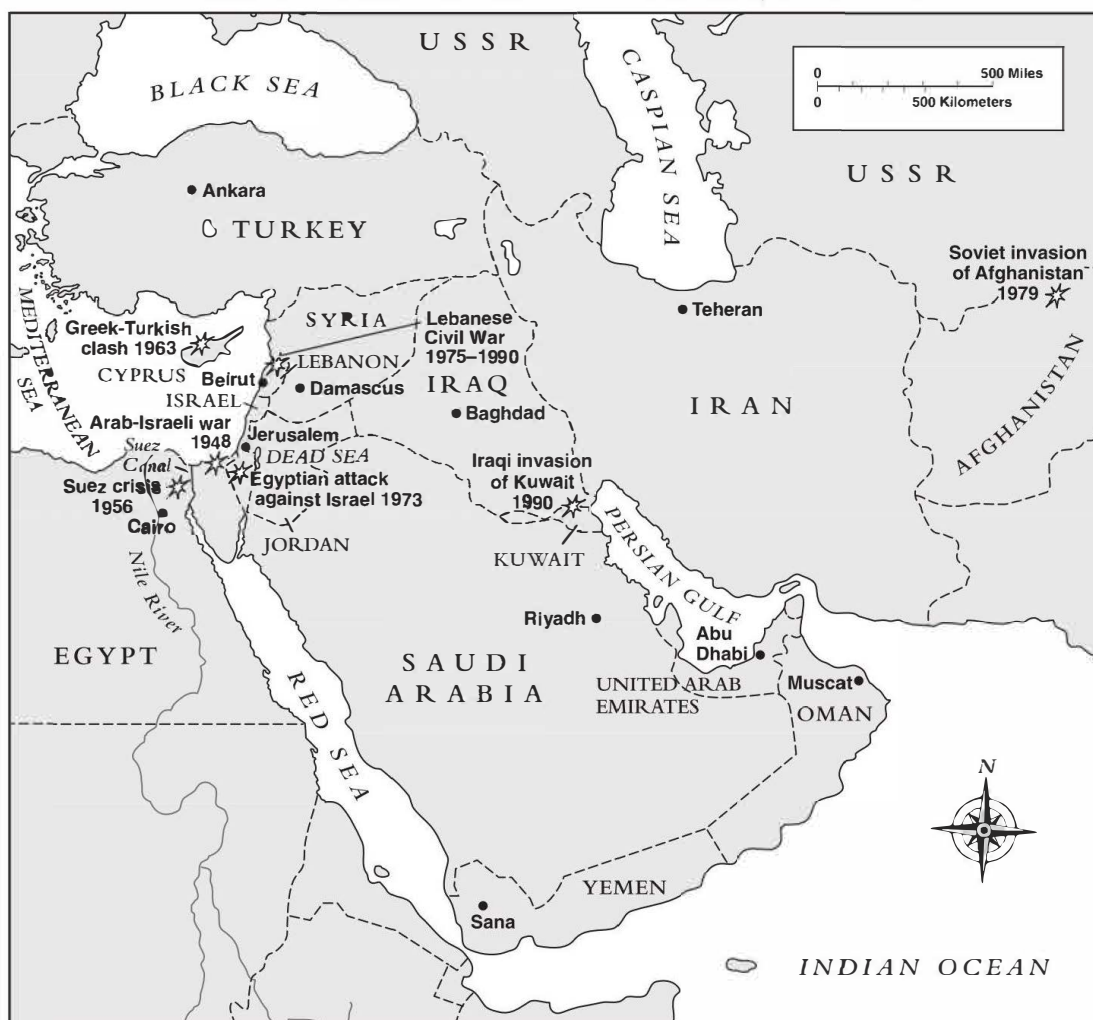
U.S.-Soviet Relations

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 peace* 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—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. President Truman took one step in this direction by desegregation the military in 1948.

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

<p>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</p> <p>“New Look” Foreign Policy (WOR) John Foster Dulles “brinkmanship” massive retaliation decolonization India, Pakistan, Indonesia Third World CIA, covert action Iranian overthrow</p> <p>US Policy in Asia (WOR) Korean armistice Indochina Ho Chi Minh Geneva Conference (1954) division of Vietnam domino theory Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (1954)</p>	<p>US Policy in Middle East (WOR) State of Israel (1948) Arab nationalism Suez Canal crisis (1956) Eisenhower Doctrine Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)</p> <p>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</p> <p>Civil Rights in 1950s (POL, NAT) Jackie Robinson causes of movement NAACP desegregation Thurgood Marshall <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i> (1954)</p>	<p>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</p> <p>1950’s Culture (CUL) homogeneity popular culture paperbacks television rock and roll consumer culture fast food credit cards conglomerates social critics <i>The Lonely Crowd</i> <i>The Affluent Society</i> <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> <i>Catch-22</i> beatniks</p>
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PROMISE AND TURMOIL, THE 1960S

Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage. . . . Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.

John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

The 1960s were in many ways both the best and the worst of times. On the one hand, the postwar economic prosperity peaked in the 1960s. At the same time, racial strife, a controversial war in Vietnam, and student radicalism started to tear the country apart. The proud superpower began to learn its limits both in the jungles of Vietnam and on the streets at home.

John F. Kennedy's New Frontier

The decade began with an election that proved symbolic of the changes that were to come.

The Election of 1960

President Eisenhower had not been able to transfer his popularity to other Republicans, and the Democrats retained control of Congress through Eisenhower's last two years in office.

Nixon At their 1960 convention, the Republicans unanimously nominated Richard Nixon for president. During his eight years as Eisenhower's vice president, Nixon had gained a reputation as a statesman in his diplomatic travels to Europe and South America. In a visit to Moscow, he stood up to Nikita Khrushchev in the so-called kitchen debate (which took place in a model of an American kitchen) over the relative merits of capitalism and communism. Still young at 47, Nixon was known to be a tough and seasoned campaigner.

Kennedy Early in 1960, several Democrats believed they had a chance at the nomination. Liberal Democrats Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota and Adlai Stevenson of Illinois were in the contest, and southern Democrats supported

the Senate majority leader, Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. In the primaries, however, a charismatic, wealthy, and youthful 43-year-old senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, defeated his rivals. Going into the convention, he had just enough delegates behind him to win the nomination. To balance the ticket, the New Englander chose a Texan, Lyndon B. Johnson, to be his vice presidential running mate—a choice that proved critical in carrying southern states in the November election.

Campaign The new medium of television was perhaps the most decisive factor in the close race between the two youthful campaigners, Nixon and Kennedy. In the first of four televised debates—the first such debates in campaign history—Kennedy appeared on-screen as more vigorous and comfortable than the pale and tense Nixon. On the issues, Kennedy attacked the Eisenhower administration for the recent recession and for permitting the Soviets to take the lead in the arms race. In reality, what Kennedy called a “missile gap” was actually in the U.S. favor, but his charges seemed plausible after *Sputnik*. As the first Catholic presidential candidate since Al Smith (1928), Kennedy’s religion became an issue in the minds of some voters. Religious loyalties helped Nixon in rural Protestant areas but helped Kennedy in the large cities.

Results In one of the closest elections in U.S. history, Kennedy defeated Nixon by a little more than 100,000 popular votes, and by a slightly wider margin of 303 to 219 in the electoral college. Many Republicans, including Nixon, felt the election had been stolen by Democratic political machines in states like Illinois and Texas by stuffing ballot boxes with “votes” of the deceased.

Domestic Policy

At 43, Kennedy was the youngest candidate ever to be elected president. His energy and sharp wit gave a new, personal style to the presidency. In his inaugural address, Kennedy spoke of “the torch being passed to a new generation” and promised to lead the nation into a New Frontier. The Democratic president surrounded himself with both business executives such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and academics such as economist John Kenneth Galbraith. For the sensitive position of attorney general, the president chose his younger brother, Robert. John Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline (“Jackie”), brought style, glamour, and an appreciation of the arts to the White House. The press loved Kennedy’s news conferences, and some later likened his administration to the mythical kingdom of Camelot and the court of King Arthur, the subject of a then-popular Broadway musical.

New Frontier Programs The promises of the New Frontier proved difficult to keep. Kennedy called for aid to education, federal support of health care, urban renewal, and civil rights, but his domestic programs languished in Congress. While few of Kennedy’s proposals became law during his thousand-day administration, most were passed later under President Johnson.

On economic issues, Kennedy had some success. He faced down big steel executives over a price increase he charged was inflationary and achieved a price rollback. In addition, the economy was stimulated by increased spending

for defense and space exploration, as the president committed the nation to land on the moon by the end of the decade.

Foreign Affairs

With his domestic programs often blocked, Kennedy increasingly turned his attention to foreign policy issues. In 1961, he set up the Peace Corps, an organization that recruited young American volunteers to give technical aid to developing countries. Also in 1961, he organized the Alliance for Progress, which promoted land reform and economic development in Latin America. Kennedy did persuade Congress to pass the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which authorized tariff reductions with the recently formed European Economic Community (Common Market) of Western European nations.

Bay of Pigs Invasion (1961) Kennedy made a major blunder shortly after entering office. He approved a Central Intelligence Agency scheme planned under the Eisenhower administration to use Cuban exiles to overthrow Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba. In April 1961, the CIA-trained force of Cubans landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba but failed to set off a general uprising as planned. Trapped on the beach, the anti-Castro Cubans had little choice but to surrender after Kennedy rejected the idea of using U.S. forces to save them. Castro used the failed invasion to get even more aid from the Soviet Union and to strengthen his grip on power.

Berlin Wall Trying to shake off the embarrassment of the Bay of Pigs defeat, Kennedy agreed to meet Soviet premier Khrushchev in Vienna in the summer of 1961. Khrushchev seized the opportunity in Vienna to threaten the president by renewing Soviet demands that the United States pull its troops out of Berlin. Kennedy refused. In August, the East Germans, with Soviet backing, built a wall around West Berlin. Its purpose was to stop East Germans from fleeing to West Germany. As the wall was being built, Soviet and U.S. tanks faced off in Berlin. Kennedy called up the reserves, but he made no move to stop the completion of the wall. In 1963, the president traveled to West Berlin to assure its residents of continuing U.S. support. To cheering crowds, he proclaimed: "Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put up a wall to keep our people in. . . . As a free man, I take pride in the words, '*Ich bin ein Berliner*' [I am a Berliner]."

The Berlin Wall stood as a gloomy symbol of the Cold War until it was torn down by rebellious East Germans in 1989.

Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) The most dangerous challenge from the Soviets came in October 1962. U.S. reconnaissance planes discovered that the Russians were building underground sites in Cuba for the launching of offensive missiles that could reach the United States in minutes. Kennedy responded by announcing to the world that he was setting up a naval blockade of Cuba until the weapons were removed. A full-scale nuclear war between the superpowers seemed likely if Soviet ships challenged the U.S. naval blockade. After days of tension, Khrushchev finally agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba

in exchange for Kennedy's pledge not to invade the island nation and to later remove some U.S. missiles from Turkey.

The Cuban missile crisis had a sobering effect on both sides. Soon afterward, a telecommunications hotline was established between Washington and Moscow to make it possible for the leaders of the two countries to talk directly during a crisis. In 1963, the Soviet Union and the United States—along with nearly 100 other nations—signed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to end the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. This first step in controlling the testing of nuclear arms was offset by a new round in the arms race for developing missile and warhead superiority.



Flexible Response A different Cold War challenge were the many “brush-fire wars” in Africa and Southeast Asia, in which insurgent forces were often aided by Soviet arms and training. Such conflicts in the Congo (later renamed Zaire) in Africa and in Laos and Vietnam in Southeast Asia convinced the Kennedy administration to adopt a policy of flexible response. Moving away from Dulles’ idea of massive retaliation and reliance on nuclear weapons, Kennedy and McNamara increased spending on conventional (nonnuclear) arms and mobile military forces. While the flexible-response policy reduced the risk of using nuclear weapons, it also increased the temptation to send elite special forces, such as the Green Berets, into combat all over the globe.

Assassination in Dallas

After just two and a half years in office, President Kennedy’s “one brief, shining moment” was cut short on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas, as two

bullets from an assassin's rifle found their mark. After the shocking news of Kennedy's murder, millions of stunned Americans were fixed to their televisions for days and even witnessed the killing of the alleged assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, just two days after the president's death. The Warren Commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, concluded that Oswald was the lone assassin. For years afterward, however, unanswered questions about the events in Dallas produced dozens of conspiracy theories pointing to possible involvement by organized crime, Castro, the CIA, and the FBI. For many Americans, the tragedy in Dallas and doubts about the Warren Commission marked the beginning of a loss of credibility in government.

In Retrospect At the time, John Kennedy's presidency inspired many idealistic young Americans to take seriously his inaugural message and to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." However, more recently, his belligerent Cold War rhetoric has drawn criticism from some historians. Nevertheless, the Kennedy legend has endured.

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society

Two hours after the Kennedy assassination, Lyndon Johnson took the presidential oath of office aboard a plane at the Dallas airport. On the one hand, as a native of rural west Texas and a graduate of a little-known teacher's college, he seemed very unsophisticated compared to the wealthy, Harvard-educated Kennedy. On the other hand, Johnson was a skilled politician who had started his career as a devoted Roosevelt Democrat during the Great Depression.

As the new president, Johnson was determined to expand the social reforms of the New Deal. During his almost 30 years in Congress, he had learned how to get things done. Shortly after taking office, Johnson persuaded Congress to pass (1) an expanded version of Kennedy's civil rights bill, and (2) Kennedy's proposal for an income tax cut. The latter measure sparked an increase in jobs, consumer spending, and a long period of economic expansion in the sixties.

The War on Poverty

Michael Harrington's best-selling book on poverty, *The Other America* (1962), helped to focus national attention on the 40 million Americans still living in poverty. Johnson responded by declaring in 1964 an "unconditional war on poverty." The Democratic Congress gave the president almost everything that he asked for by creating the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and providing this antipoverty agency with a billion-dollar budget. The OEO sponsored a wide variety of self-help programs for the poor, such as Head Start for preschoolers, the Job Corps for vocational education, literacy programs, and legal services. The controversial Community Action Program allowed the poor to run antipoverty programs in their own neighborhoods.

Like the New Deal, some of Johnson's programs produced results, while others did not. Nevertheless, before being cut back to pay for the far more costly Vietnam War, the War on Poverty did significantly reduce the number of American families living in poverty.

The Election of 1964

Johnson and his running mate, Senator Hubert Humphrey, went into the 1964 election with a clearly liberal agenda. In contrast, the Republicans nominated a staunch conservative, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who advocated ending the welfare state, including TVA and Social Security. A TV ad by the Democrats pictured Goldwater as a dangerous extremist, who would be quick to involve the United States in nuclear war. However, the doomed Goldwater campaign did energize young conservatives and introduced new conservative voices, such as former film actor and TV host, Ronald Reagan of California.

Johnson won the election by a landslide, taking 61 percent of the popular vote—a higher figure than FDR’s landslide of 1936. In addition, Democrats now controlled both houses of Congress by better than a two-thirds margin. A Democratic president and Congress were in a position to pass the economic and social reforms originally proposed by President Truman in the 1940s.

Great Society Reforms

Johnson’s list of legislative achievements from 1963 to 1966 is long and includes new programs that would have lasting effects on U.S. society. Several of the most significant ones are listed in the table below.

Great Society Programs		
Title	Year Passed	Program
Food Stamp Act	1964	Expanded the federal program to help poor people buy food
National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities	1965	Provided federal funding for the arts and for creative and scholarly projects
Medicare	1965	Provided health insurance for all people 65 and older
Medicaid	1965	Provided funds to states to pay for medical care for the poor and disabled
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	1965	Provided federal funds to poor school districts; funds for special education programs; and funds to expand Head Start, an early childhood education program
Higher Education Act	1965	Provided federal scholarships for post-secondary education
Immigration Act	1965	Abolished discriminatory quotas based on national origins
Child Nutrition Act	1966	Added breakfasts to the school lunch program

In addition to the programs listed in the table, Congress increased funding for mass transit, public housing, rent subsidies for low-income people, and crime prevention, Johnson also established two new cabinet departments: the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Congress, in response to Ralph Nader's book *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965), also passed regulations of the automobile industry that would save hundreds of thousands of lives in the following years. Clean air and water laws were enacted in part as a response to Rachel Carson's exposé of pesticides, *Silent Spring* (1962). Federal parks and wilderness areas were expanded. LBJ's wife, Lady Bird Johnson, contributed to improving the environment with her Beautify America campaign, which resulted in the Highway Beautification Act that removed billboards from federal roads.

Evaluating the Great Society Critics have attacked Johnson's Great Society for making unrealistic promises to eliminate poverty, for creating a centralized welfare state, and for being inefficient and very costly. On the other hand, defenders point out that these programs gave vitally needed assistance to millions of Americans who had previously been forgotten or ignored—the poor, the disabled, and the elderly. Johnson himself would jeopardize the Democrat's vast domestic achievements by escalating the war in Vietnam—a war that resulted in higher taxes and inflation.

Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965

Ironically, a southern president succeeded in persuading Congress to enact the most important civil rights laws since Reconstruction. Even before the 1964 election, Johnson managed to persuade both a majority of Democrats and some Republicans in Congress to pass the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which made segregation illegal in all public facilities, including hotels and restaurants, and gave the federal government additional powers to enforce school desegregation. This act also set up the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to end discrimination in employment on the basis of race, religion, sex, or national origin. Also in 1964, the 24th Amendment was ratified. It abolished the practice of collecting a poll tax, one of the measures that, for decades, had discouraged poor people from voting.

The following year, after the killings and brutality in Selma, Alabama, against the voting rights marches led by Martin Luther King Jr., President Johnson persuaded Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This act ended literacy tests and provided federal registrars in areas where blacks were kept from voting. The impact was most dramatic in the Deep South, where African Americans could vote for the first time since the Reconstruction era.

Civil Rights and Conflict

The civil rights movement gained momentum during the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies. A very close election in 1960 influenced President Kennedy not to press the issue of civil rights, lest he alienate white voters. But the defiance of the governors of Alabama and Mississippi to federal court rulings on integration

forced a showdown. In 1962, James Meredith, a young African American air force veteran, attempted to enroll in the University of Mississippi. A federal court guaranteed his right to attend. Supporting Meredith and the court order, Kennedy sent in 400 federal marshals and 3,000 troops to control mob violence and protect Meredith's right to attend class.

A similar incident occurred in Alabama in 1963. Governor George Wallace tried to stop an African American student from entering the University of Alabama. Once again, President Kennedy sent troops to the scene, and the student was admitted.

The Leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Civil rights activists and freedom riders who traveled through the South registering African Americans to vote and integrating public places were met with beatings, bombings, and murder by white extremists. Recognized nationally as the leader of the civil rights movement, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. remained committed to nonviolent protests against segregation. In 1963, he and some followers were jailed in Birmingham, Alabama, for what local authorities judged to be an illegal march. The jailing of King, however, proved to be a milestone in the civil rights movement because most Americans believed King to have been jailed unjustly. From his jail cell, King wrote an essay, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which he argued:

[W]e need emulate neither the "do-nothingism" of the complacent nor the hatred and despair of the black nationalist. For there is the more excellent way of love and nonviolent protest. I am grateful to God that, through the influence of the Negro church, the way of non-violence became an integral part of our struggle. . . .

One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. . . .

King's letter moved President Kennedy to support a tougher civil rights bill.

March on Washington (1963) In August 1963, King led one of the largest and most successful demonstrations in U.S. history. About 200,000 blacks and whites took part in the peaceful March on Washington in support of the civil rights bill. The highlight of the demonstration was King's impassioned "I Have a Dream" speech, which appealed for the end of racial prejudice and ended with everyone in the crowd singing "We Shall Overcome."

March to Montgomery (1965) A voting rights march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capitol of Montgomery was met with beatings and tear gas in what became known as "Bloody Sunday." Televised pictures of the violence

proved a turning point in the civil rights movement. The national outrage moved President Johnson to send federal troops to protect King and other marchers in another attempt to petition the state government. As a result, Congress passed the powerful Voting Rights Act of 1965. Nevertheless, young African Americans were losing patience with the slow progress toward equality and the continued violence against their people by white extremists.

Black Muslims and Malcolm X

Seeking a new cultural identity based on Africa and Islam, the Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad preached black nationalism, separatism, and self-improvement. The movement had already attracted thousands of followers by the time a young man became a convert while serving in prison. He adopted the name Malcolm X. Leaving prison in 1952, Malcolm X acquired a reputation as the movement's most controversial voice. He criticized King as "an Uncle Tom" (subservient to whites) and advocated self-defense—using black violence to counter white violence. He eventually left the Black Muslims and moved away from defending violence, but he was assassinated by black opponents in 1965. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* remains an engaging testimony to one man's development from a petty criminal into a major leader.

Race Riots and Black Power

The radicalism of Malcolm X influenced the thinking of young blacks in civil rights organizations such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Stokely Carmichael, the chairman of SNCC, repudiated nonviolence and advocated "black power" (especially economic power) and racial separatism. In 1966, the Black Panthers were organized by Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and other militants as a revolutionary socialist movement advocating self-rule for American blacks.

Riots Shortly after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the arrest of a young black motorist by white police in the black neighborhood of Watts in Los Angeles sparked a six-day race riot that killed 34 people and destroyed over 700 buildings. Race riots continued to erupt each summer in black neighborhoods of major cities through 1968 with increasing casualties and destruction of property. Rioters shouting slogans—"Burn baby, burn" and "Get whitey"—made whites suspect that black extremists and revolutionaries were behind the violence. There was little evidence, however, that the small Black Power movement was responsible for the violence. A federal investigation of the many riots, the Kerner Commission, concluded in late 1968 that racism and segregation were chiefly responsible and that the United States was becoming "two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." By the mid-1960s, the issue of civil rights had spread far beyond *de jure* segregation practiced under the law in the South and now included the *de facto* segregation and discrimination caused by racist attitudes in the North and West.

Murder in Memphis Martin Luther King, Jr., received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, but his nonviolent approach was under increasing pressure from

all sides. His effort to use peaceful marches in urban centers of the North, such as Chicago, met with little success. King also broke with President Johnson over the Vietnam War because that war was beginning to drain money from social programs. In April 1968, the nation went into shock over the news that King, while standing on a motel balcony in Memphis, Tennessee, had been shot and killed by a white man. Massive riots erupted in 168 cities across the country, leaving at least 46 people dead. The violence did not reflect the ideals of the murdered leader, but it did reveal the anger and frustrations among African Americans in both the North and the South. The violence also fed a growing “white backlash,” especially among white blue-collar voters, to the civil rights movement, which was soon reflected in election results.

The Warren Court and Individual Rights

As chief justice of the Supreme Court from 1953 to 1969, Earl Warren had an impact on the nation comparable to that of John Marshall in the early 1800s. Warren’s decision in the desegregation case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) was by far the most important case of the 20th century involving race relations. Then in the 1960s the Warren Court made a series of decisions that profoundly affected the criminal justice system, state political systems, and the definition of individual rights. Before Warren’s tenure as chief justice, the Supreme Court had concentrated on protecting property rights. During and after his tenure, the Court focused more on protecting individual rights.

Criminal Justice

Several decisions of the Warren Court concerned a defendant’s rights. Four of the most important were the following:

- *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961) ruled that illegally seized evidence cannot be used in court against the accused.
- *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) required that state courts provide counsel (services of an attorney) for indigent (poor) defendants.
- *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964) required the police to inform an arrested person of his or her right to remain silent.
- *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) extended the ruling in *Escobedo* to include the right to a lawyer being present during questioning by the police.

Reapportionment

Before 1962, many states included at least one house of its legislature (usually the senate) that had districts that strongly favored rural areas to the disadvantage of cities. In the landmark case of *Baker v. Carr* (1962), the Warren Court declared this practice unconstitutional. In *Baker* and later cases, the Court established the principle of “one man, one vote,” meaning that election districts would have to be redrawn to provide equal representation for all citizens.

Freedom of Expression and Privacy

Other rulings by the Warren Court extended the rights mentioned in the 1st Amendment to protect the actions of protesters, to permit greater latitude under freedom of the press, to ban religious activities sponsored by public schools, and to guarantee adults' rights to use contraceptives.

- *Yates v. United States* (1957) said that the 1st Amendment protected radical and revolutionary speech, even by Communists, unless it was a “clear and present danger” to the safety of the country.
- *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) ruled that state laws requiring prayers and Bible readings in the public schools violated the 1st Amendment's provision for separation of church and state.
- *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) ruled that, in recognition of a citizen's right to privacy, a state could not prohibit the use of contraceptives by adults. (This privacy case provided the foundation for later cases establishing a woman's right to an abortion.)

The Warren Court's defense of the rights of unpopular individuals, including people accused of crimes, provoked a storm of controversy. Critics called for Warren's impeachment. Both supporters and critics agreed that the Warren Court profoundly changed the interpretation of constitutional rights.

Social Revolutions and Cultural Movements

In the early and mid-1960s, various liberal groups began to identify with blacks' struggle against oppressive controls and laws. The first such group to rebel against established authority were college and university students.

Student Movement and the New Left

In 1962, a newly formed radical student organization called Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) held a meeting in Port Huron, Michigan. Following the leadership of Tom Hayden, the group issued a declaration of purposes known as the Port Huron Statement. It called for university decisions to be made through participatory democracy, so that students would have a voice in decisions affecting their lives. Activists and intellectuals who supported Hayden's ideas became known as the New Left.

The first major student protest took place in 1964 on the Berkeley campus of the University of California. Calling their cause the Free Speech Movement, Berkeley students demanded an end to university restrictions on student political activities. By the mid-1960s, students across the country were protesting a variety of university rules, including those against drinking and dorm visits by members of the opposite sex. They also demanded a greater voice in the government of the university. Student demonstrations grew with the escalation of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. Hundreds of campuses were disrupted or closed down by antiwar protests.

The most radical fringe of the SDS, known as the Weathermen, embraced violence and vandalism in their attacks on American institutions. In the eyes of most Americans, the Weathermen's extremist acts and language discredited the early idealism of the New Left.

Counterculture

The political protests of the New Left went hand in hand with a new counterculture that was expressed by young people in rebellious styles of dress, music, drug use, and, for some, communal living. The apparent dress code of the "hippies" and "flower children" of the 1960s included long hair, beards, beads, and jeans. The folk music of Joan Baez and Bob Dylan gave voice to the younger generation's protests, while the rock music of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Jim Morrison, and Janis Joplin provided the beat and lyrics for the counterculture. In 1969, a gathering of thousands of young people at the Woodstock Music Festival in upper New York State reflected the zenith of the counterculture. However, as a result of experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD or becoming addicted to various other drugs, some young people destroyed their lives. The counterculture's excesses and the economic uncertainties of the times led to its demise in the 1970s.

In Retrospect The generation of baby boomers that came of age in the 1960s believed fervently in the ideals of a democratic society. They hoped to slay the dragons of unresponsive authority, poverty, racism, and war. However, the impatience of some activists with change, the use of violence, and the spread of self-destructive behavior discredited their cause in the eyes of others, particularly older Americans.

Sexual Revolution

One aspect of the counterculture that continued beyond the 1960s was a change in many Americans' attitudes toward sexual expression. Traditional beliefs about sexual conduct had originally been challenged in the late 1940s and 1950s by the pioneering surveys of sexual practice conducted by Alfred Kinsey. His research indicated that premarital sex, marital infidelity, and homosexuality were more common than anyone had suspected. Medicine (antibiotics for venereal disease) and science (the introduction of the birth control pill in 1960) also contributed to changing attitudes about engaging in casual sex with a number of partners. Moreover, overtly sexual themes in advertisements, magazines, and movies made sex appear to be just one more consumer product.

How deeply the so-called sexual revolution changed the behavior of the majority of Americans is open to question. There is little doubt, however, that premarital sex, contraception, abortion, and homosexuality became practiced more openly. Later, in the 1980s, there was a general reaction against the loosened moral codes as many blamed it for an increase in illegitimate births, especially among teenagers, an increase in rape and sexual abuse, and the spread of a deadly new disease, AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

The Women's Movement

The increased education and employment of women in the 1950s, the civil rights movement, and the sexual revolution all contributed to a renewal of the women's movement in the 1960s. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) gave the movement a new direction by encouraging middle-class women to seek fulfillment in professional careers in addition to filling the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. In 1966, Friedan helped found the National Organization for Women (NOW), which adopted the activist tactics of other civil rights movements to secure equal treatment of women, especially for job opportunities. By this time, Congress had already enacted two antidiscriminatory laws: the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These measures prohibited discrimination in employment and compensation on the basis of gender, but had been poorly enforced.

Campaign for the ERA Feminists achieved a major legislative victory in 1972 when Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). This proposed constitutional amendment stated: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." Although NOW and other groups campaigned hard for the ratification of the ERA, it just missed acceptance by the required 38 states. It was defeated in part because of a growing reaction against feminism by conservatives who feared the movement threatened the traditional roles of women.

Achievements Even without the ERA, the women's movement accomplished fundamental changes in attitudes and hiring practices. In increasing numbers, women moved into professions previously dominated by men: business, law, medicine, and politics. Although women still experienced the "glass ceiling" in the corporate world, American society at the beginning of the 21st century was less and less a man's world.

The Vietnam War to 1969

None of the divisive issues in the 1960s was as tragic as the war in Vietnam. Some 2.7 million Americans served in the conflict and 58,000 died in a failed effort to prevent the takeover of South Vietnam by communist North Vietnam.

Early Stages

Vietnam was hardly mentioned in the election debates of 1960 between Nixon and Kennedy. U.S. involvement was minimal at that time, but every year thereafter, it loomed larger and eventually dominated the presidency of Lyndon Johnson and the thoughts of the nation.

Buildup Under Kennedy President Kennedy adopted Eisenhower's domino theory that, if Communist forces overthrew South Vietnam's government, they would quickly overrun other countries of Southeast Asia—Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Kennedy therefore continued U.S. military aid to South Vietnam's regime and significantly increased the number of military "advisers," who trained the South Vietnamese army and

guarded weapons and facilities. By 1963, there were more than 16,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam in support, not combat, roles. They provided training and supplies for South Vietnam's armed forces and helped create "strategic hamlets" (fortified villages).

However, the U.S. ally in South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, was not popular. He and his government steadily lost the support of peasants in the countryside, while in the capital city of Saigon, Buddhist monks set themselves on fire in the streets to protest Diem's policies. Kennedy began to question whether the South Vietnamese could win "their war" against Communist insurgents. Just two weeks before Kennedy himself was assassinated in Dallas, Diem was overthrown and killed by South Vietnamese generals. Historians later learned that the generals acted with the knowledge of the Kennedy administration.

Tonkin Gulf Resolution Lyndon Johnson became president just as things began to fall apart in South Vietnam. The country had seven different governments in 1964. During the U.S. presidential campaign, Republican candidate Barry Goldwater attacked the Johnson administration for giving only weak support to South Vietnam's fight against the Vietcong (Communist guerrillas). In August 1964, President Johnson and Congress took a fateful turn in policy. Johnson made use of a naval incident in the Gulf of Tonkin off Vietnam's coast to secure congressional authorization for U.S. forces going into combat. Allegedly, North Vietnamese gunboats had fired on U.S. warships in the Gulf of Tonkin. The president persuaded Congress that this aggressive act was sufficient reason for a military response by the United States. Congress voted its approval of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which basically gave the president, as commander in chief, a blank check to take "all necessary measures" to protect U.S. interests in Vietnam.

Critics later called the full-scale use of U.S. forces in Vietnam an illegal war, because the war was not declared by Congress, as the Constitution requires. Congress, however, did not have this concern and did not withdraw its resolution. Until 1968, most Americans supported the effort to contain communism in Southeast Asia. Johnson was caught in a political dilemma to which there was no good solution. How could he stop the defeat of a weak and unpopular government in South Vietnam without making it into an American war—a war whose cost would doom his Great Society programs? If he pulled out, he would be seen as weak and lose public support.

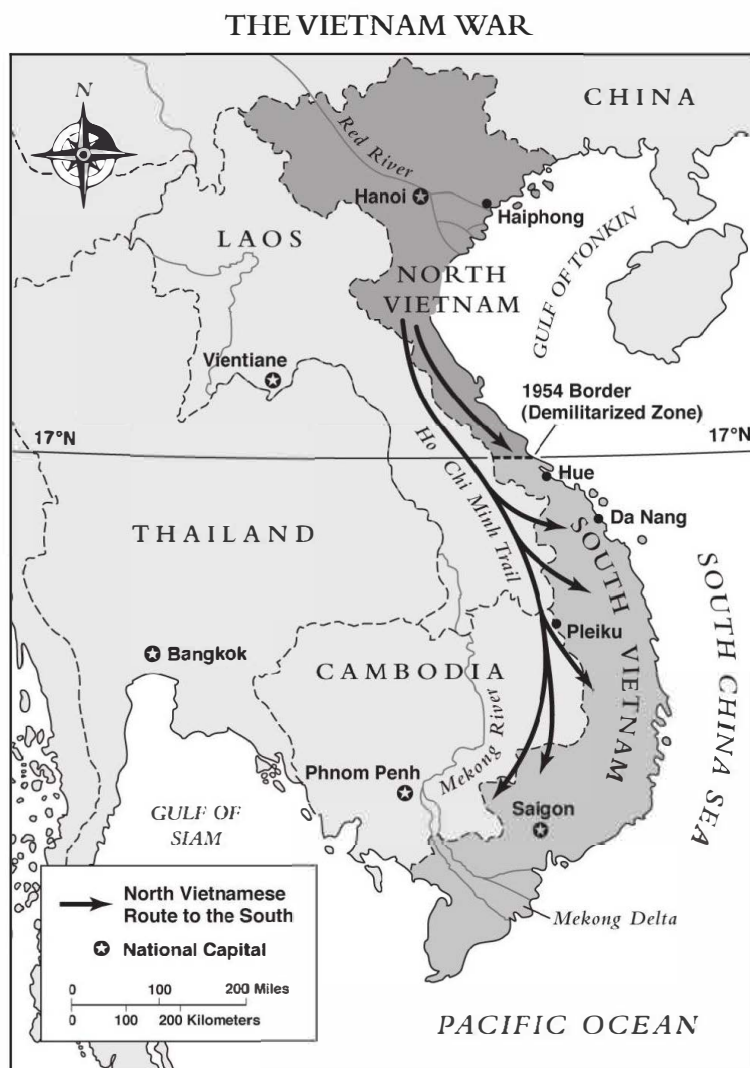
Escalating the War

In 1965, the U.S. military and most of the president's foreign policy advisers recommended expanding operations in Vietnam to save the Saigon government. After a Vietcong attack on the U.S. base at Pleiku in 1965, Johnson authorized Operation Rolling Thunder, a prolonged air attack using B-52 bombers against targets in North Vietnam. In April, the president decided to use U.S. combat troops for the first time to fight the Vietcong. By the end of 1965, over 184,000 U.S. troops were in Vietnam, and most were engaged in a combat role. Johnson continued a step-by-step escalation of U.S. involvement in the war. Hoping

to win a war of attrition, American generals used search-and-destroy tactics, which only further alienated the peasants. By the end of 1967, the United States had over 485,000 troops in Vietnam (the peak was 540,000 in March 1969), and 16,000 Americans had already died in the conflict. Nevertheless, General William Westmoreland, commander of the U.S. forces in Vietnam, assured the American public that he could see “light at the end of the tunnel.”

Controversy

Misinformation from military and civilian leaders combined with Johnson’s reluctance to speak frankly with the American people about the scope and the costs of the war created what the media called a *credibility gap*. Johnson always hoped that a little more military pressure would bring the North Vietnamese to the peace table. The most damaging knowledge gap, however, may have been within the inner circles of government. Years later, Robert McNamara in his memoirs concluded that the leaders in Washington had failed to understand both the enemy and the nature of the war.



Hawks versus Doves The supporters of the war, the “hawks,” believed that the war was an act of Soviet-backed Communist aggression against South Vietnam and that it was part of a master plan to conquer all of Southeast Asia. The opponents of the war, the “doves,” viewed the conflict as a civil war fought by Vietnamese nationalists and some Communists who wanted to unite their country by overthrowing a corrupt Saigon government.

Some Americans opposed the war because of its costs in lives and money. They believed the billions spent in Vietnam could be better spent on the problems of the cities and the poor in the United States. By far the greatest opposition came from students on college campuses who, after graduation, would become eligible to be drafted into the military and shipped off to Vietnam. In November 1967, the antiwar movement was given a political leader when scholarly Senator Eugene F. McCarthy of Minnesota became the first antiwar advocate to challenge Johnson for the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination.

Tet Offensive On the occasion of their Lunar New Year (Tet) in January 1968, the Vietcong launched an all-out surprise attack on almost every provincial capital and American base in South Vietnam. Although the attack took a fearful toll in the cities, the U.S. military counterattacked, inflicted much heavier losses on the Vietcong, and recovered the lost territory. Even so, in political terms, the American military victory proved irrelevant to the way the Tet Offensive was interpreted at home. The destruction viewed by millions on the TV news appeared as a colossal setback for Johnson’s Vietnam policy. Thus, for the Vietcong and North Vietnamese, Tet was a tremendous political victory in demoralizing the American public. In the New Hampshire primary in February, the antiwar McCarthy took 42 percent of the vote against Johnson.

LBJ Ends Escalation The Joint Chiefs of Staff responded to Tet by requesting 200,000 more troops to win the war. By this time, however, the group of experienced Cold War diplomats who advised Johnson had turned against further escalation of the war. On March 31, 1968, President Johnson went on television and told the American people that he would limit the bombing of North Vietnam and negotiate peace. He then surprised everyone by announcing that he would not run again for president.

In May 1968, peace talks between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the United States started in Paris, but they were quickly deadlocked over minor issues. The war continued, and tens of thousands more died. But the escalation of the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam had stopped, and under the next administration it would be reversed.

Coming Apart at Home, 1968

Few years in U.S. history were as troubled or violent as 1968. The Tet offensive and the withdrawal of Johnson from the presidential race were followed by the senseless murder of Martin Luther King Jr. and destructive riots in cities across the country. As the year unfolded, Americans wondered if their nation was coming apart from internal conflicts over the war issue, the race issue, and the generation gap between the baby boomers and their parents.

Second Kennedy Assassination

In 1964, Kennedy's younger brother, Robert Kennedy, had become a senator from New York. Four years later, he decided to enter the presidential race after McCarthy's strong showing in New Hampshire. Bobby Kennedy was more effective than McCarthy in mobilizing the traditional Democratic blue-collar and minority vote. On June 5, 1968, he won a major victory in California's primary, but immediately after his victory speech, he was shot and killed by a young Arab nationalist who opposed Kennedy's support for Israel.

The Election of 1968

After Robert Kennedy's death, the election of 1968 turned into a three-way race between two conservatives—George Wallace and Richard Nixon—and one liberal, Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Democratic Convention at Chicago When the Democrats met in Chicago for their party convention, it was clear that Hubert Humphrey had enough delegates to win the nomination. As vice president, he had loyally supported Johnson's domestic and foreign policies. He controlled the convention, but the antiwar demonstrators were determined to control the streets. Chicago's mayor Richard Daley had the police out in mass, and the resulting violence went out on television across the country as a "police riot." Humphrey left the convention as the nominee of a badly divided Democratic party, and early polls showed he was a clear underdog in a nation sick of disorder and protest.

White Backlash and George Wallace The growing hostility of many whites to federal desegregation, antiwar protests, and race riots was tapped by Governor George Wallace of Alabama. Wallace was the first politician of late-20th-century America to marshal the general resentment against the Washington establishment ("pointy-head liberals," as he called them) and the two-party system. He ran for president as the self-nominated candidate of the American Independent party, hoping to win enough electoral votes to throw the election into the House of Representatives.

Return of Richard Nixon Many observers thought Richard Nixon's political career had ended in 1962 after his unsuccessful run for governor of California. In 1968, however, a new, more confident and less negative Nixon announced his candidacy and soon became the front-runner in the Republican primaries. The favorite of the party regulars, he had little trouble securing his nomination at the Republican convention. For his running mate, he selected Governor Spiro Agnew of Maryland, whose rhetoric was similar to that of George Wallace. Nixon was a "hawk" on the Vietnam War and ran on the slogans of "peace with honor" and "law and order."

Results Wallace and Nixon started strong, but the Democrats began to catch up, especially in northern urban centers, as Humphrey preached to the faithful of the old New Deal coalition. On election night, Nixon defeated Humphrey by a very close popular vote but took a substantial majority of the electoral vote (301 to 191), ending any threat that the three-candidate election would end up in the House of Representatives.

The significance of the 1968 election is clear in the combined total of Nixon's and Wallace's popular vote of almost 57 percent. Apparently, most Americans wanted a time out to heal the wounds inflicted on the national psyche by the upheavals of the 1960s. Supporters of Nixon and Wallace had had enough of protest, violence, permissiveness, the counterculture, drugs, and federal intervention in social institutions. Elections in the 1970s and 1980s would confirm that the tide was turning against New Deal liberalism in favor of the conservatives.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WHAT ARE THE LESSONS OF VIETNAM?

The U.S. war in Vietnam had been long and deadly. Marked by failures in both political and military leadership, the war initiated a period of widespread distrust of the government. What went wrong? Critics of the war argued that the United States failed in Vietnam because neither the government nor the military understood the nature of the war. Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon viewed the conflict strictly in Cold War terms as an act of aggression by the Communist "monolith" to take over another part of the world, instead of a civil war in which a former colony was trying to gain its independence from Western colonialism. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, in his book *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (1995), laments that members of the Johnson administration lacked Asian experts to advise them on the formulation of Vietnam policy.

In contrast, General William Westmoreland and other military leaders of the era blamed the civilian government for placing restrictions on the conduct of the war that prevented the military from winning it. In their view, the war could have been won if only the U.S. military had been permitted to take the offensive and bring the war to a swift conclusion. The generals blamed the media for turning the American people against the war. Westmoreland and others argued that the telecasts of the Tet Offensive forced a change in the conduct of the war, just at the point that the U.S. military was beginning to win it.

Many observers have attempted to extract lessons from Vietnam, hoping that the mistakes of the past can be avoided in the future. To many critics of the war, it appeared that the most important mistake was attempting to impose an unsatisfactory regime on a country and that the United States should not go into a war if no vital national interests are at stake. Many critics concluded that a president and Congress should not lead the nation into future war unless they are confident that they can rally and sustain the support of the American people behind the effort over time.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Kennedy: Domestic Issues (POL)

Election of 1960
John F. Kennedy
New Frontier
Robert Kennedy
Jacqueline Kennedy
race to the moon
assassination in Dallas
Warren Commission

Kennedy: Foreign Policy (WOR)

Peace Corps
Alliance for Progress
Trade Expansion Act (1962)
Bay of Pigs
Berlin Wall
Cuban missile crisis (1962)
flexible response
Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Johnson: Domestic Programs (POL, WXT)

Lyndon Johnson
Great Society
War on Poverty
Michael Harrington, *The Other America*
Election of 1964
Barry Goldwater
Medicare; Medicaid
Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)
Immigrant Act (1965)
National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities
DOT and HUD
Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed*
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Lady Bird Johnson
Civil Rights Act of 1964
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
24th Amendment
Voting Rights Act of 1965

Civil Rights and Black Power (NAT, POL)

James Meredith
George Wallace
Martin Luther King Jr.
March on Washington (1963)
"I Have a Dream" speech
March to Montgomery
Black Muslims
Malcolm X
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
Congress of Racial Equality
Stokely Carmichael
Black Panthers
Watts riots, race riots
de facto segregation
Kerner Commission
King assassination (1968)

Rights of Americans (POL)

Warren Court
Mapp v. Ohio
Gideon v. Wainwright
Escobedo v. Illinois
Miranda v. Arizona
reapportionment
Baker v. Carr
"one man, one vote"
Yates v. United States
separation of church and state

Engel v. Vitale
Griswold v. Connecticut
privacy and contraceptives

Social Conflict (NAT, CUL)

Students for a Democratic Society
New Left
Weathermen
counterculture
Woodstock
Alfred Kinsey
sexual revolution
women's movement
Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*
National Organization for Women
Equal Pay Act (1963)
Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

Vietnam War to 1969 (WOR)

military "advisers"
fall of Diem
Tonkin Gulf Resolution
escalation of troops
General Westmoreland
credibility gap
Tet Offensive
hawks and doves

1968 Election (POL)

LBJ withdraws
Eugene McCarthy
Robert Kennedy
RFK assassination
Hubert Humphrey
Chicago convention
white backlash
George Wallace
Richard Nixon

THINK AS A HISTORIAN: WRITING WITH PRECISE WORDS

Strong essays use words that express the writer's ideas clearly with carefully chosen words rather than bland, general words. In each pair of sentences below, chose the sentence that uses the most precise words.

1. John Kennedy

- A. The death of Kennedy was a sad day for many people.
- B. The assassination of Kennedy shocked Americans.

2. Lyndon Johnson

- A. Johnson had spent many years in Congress trying to pass laws.
- B. Johnson was a veteran legislator, skilled at getting laws passed.

3. George Wallace

- A. Lots of people liked Wallace because they opposed things that were happening.
- B. Wallace expressed the conservative anger at integration.

LIMITS OF A SUPERPOWER, 1969–1980

If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.

Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation, April 30, 1970

In 1969, television viewers around the world witnessed the astonishing sight of two American astronauts walking on the moon's surface. This event, followed by a series of other successes for the U.S. space program, represented some of the high points of the 1970s. Offsetting these technological triumphs, however, were shocking revelations about White House participation in the Watergate crime, a stagnant economy, and the fall of South Vietnam to communism. Increased foreign economic competition, oil shortages, rising unemployment, and high inflation made Americans aware that even the world's leading superpower would have to adjust to a fast-changing, less manageable world.

Richard Nixon's Foreign Policy

In his January 1969 inaugural address, President Nixon promised to bring Americans together after the turmoil of the 1960s. However, suspicious and secretive by nature, Nixon soon began to isolate himself in the White House and create what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called an "imperial presidency." Nixon's first interest was international relations, not domestic policy. Together with his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger (who became secretary of state during Nixon's second term), Nixon fashioned a pragmatic foreign policy that reduced the tensions of the Cold War.

Vietnam

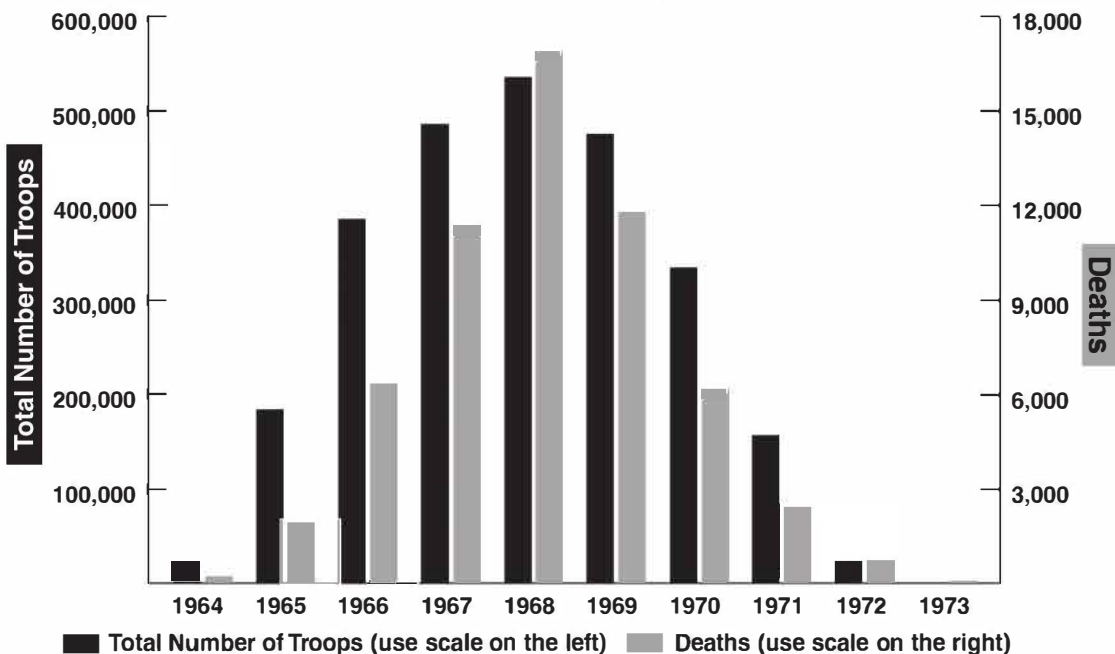
When Nixon took office, more than half a million U.S. troops were in Vietnam. His principal objective was to find a way to reduce U.S. involvement in the war while at the same time avoiding the appearance of conceding defeat. In a word, Nixon said the United States was seeking nothing less than "peace with honor."

“Vietnamization.” Almost immediately, the new president began the process called “Vietnamization.” He announced that he would gradually withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and give the South Vietnamese the money, the weapons, and the training that they needed to take over the full conduct of the war. Under this policy, U.S. troops in South Vietnam went from over 540,000 in 1969 to under 30,000 in 1972. Extending the idea of disengagement to other parts of Asia, the president proclaimed the *Nixon Doctrine*, declaring that in the future Asian allies would receive U.S. support but without the extensive use of U.S. ground forces.

Opposition to Nixon’s War Policies Nixon’s gradual withdrawal of forces from Vietnam reduced the number of antiwar protests. However, in April 1970, the president expanded the war by using U.S. forces to invade Cambodia in an effort to destroy Vietnamese Communist bases in that country. A nationwide protest on college campuses against this action resulted in the killing of four youths by National Guard troops at Kent State in Ohio and two students at Jackson State in Mississippi. In reaction to the escalation of the war, the U.S. Senate (but not the House) voted to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Also in 1970, the American public was shocked to learn about a 1968 massacre of women and children by U.S. troops in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. Further fueling the antiwar sentiment was the publication by the *New York Times* of the Pentagon Papers, a secret government history documenting the mistakes and deceptions of government policy-makers in dealing with Vietnam. The papers had been turned over, or “leaked,” to the press by Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department analyst.

U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM, 1964 to 1973



Source: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Vietnam Conflict Extract Data File and other sources.

Peace Talks, Bombing Attacks, and Armistice On the diplomatic front, Nixon had Kissinger conduct secret meetings with North Vietnam's foreign minister, Le Duc Tho. Kissinger announced in the fall of 1972 that "peace is at hand," but this announcement proved premature. When the two sides could not reach a deal, Nixon ordered a massive bombing of North Vietnam (the heaviest air attacks of the long war) to force a settlement. After several weeks of B-52 bomber attacks, the North Vietnamese agreed to an armistice, in which the United States would withdraw the last of its troops and get back over 500 prisoners of war (POWs). The Paris Accords of January 1973 also promised a cease-fire and free elections. In practice, however, the armistice did not end the war between the North and the South and left tens of thousands of enemy troops in South Vietnam. Before the war ended, the death toll probably numbered more than a million.

The armistice finally allowed the United States to extricate itself from a war that had claimed over 58,000 American lives. The \$118 billion spent on the war began an inflationary cycle that racked the U.S. economy for years afterward.

Détente with China and the Soviet Union

Nixon and Kissinger strengthened the U.S. position in the world by taking advantage of the rivalry between the two Communist giants, China and the Soviet Union. Their diplomacy was praised for bringing about *détente*—a deliberate reduction of Cold War tensions. Even after Watergate ended his presidency in disgrace, Nixon's critics would admit that his conduct of foreign affairs had enhanced world peace.

Visit to China Nixon knew that only an outspoken critic of communism like himself could take the bold step of improving relations with "Red" China (Mao Zedong's Communist regime) without being condemned as "soft" on communism. After a series of secret negotiations with Chinese leaders, Nixon astonished the world in February 1972 by traveling to Beijing to meet with Mao. His visit initiated diplomatic exchanges that ultimately led to U.S. recognition of the Communist government in 1979.

Arms Control with the U.S.S.R. Nixon used his new relationship with China to put pressure on the Soviets to agree to a treaty limiting antiballistic missiles (ABMs), a new technology that would have expanded the arms race. After the first round of Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I), U.S. diplomats secured Soviet consent to a freeze on the number of ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads. While this agreement did not end the arms race, it was a significant step toward reducing Cold War tensions and bringing about *détente*.

Nixon's Domestic Policy

Throughout the 1970s, the Democrats continued to hold majorities in both houses of Congress. The Republican president had to live with this reality and obtain some concessions from Congress through moderation and compromise. At the same time, Nixon laid the foundation for a shift in public opinion toward conservatism and for Republican gains that would challenge and overthrow the Democratic control of Congress in the 1980s and 1990s.

The New Federalism

Nixon tried to slow down the growth of Johnson's Great Society programs by proposing the Family Assistance Plan, which would have replaced welfare by providing a guaranteed annual income for working Americans. The Democratic majority in Congress easily defeated this initiative. The Republican president did succeed, however, in shifting some of the responsibility for social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. In a program known as revenue sharing, or the New Federalism, Congress approved giving local governments \$30 billion in block grants over five years to address local needs as they saw fit (instead of specific uses of federal money being controlled by Washington). Republicans hoped revenue sharing would check the growth of the federal government and return responsibility to the states, where it had rested before the New Deal.

Nixon attempted to bypass Congress by impounding (not spending) funds appropriated for social programs. Democrats protested that such action was an abuse of executive powers. The courts agreed with the president's critics, arguing that it was a president's duty to carry out the laws of Congress, whether or not the president agreed with them.

Nixon's Economic Policies

Starting with a recession in 1970, the U.S. economy throughout the 1970s faced the unusual combination of economic slowdown and high inflation—a condition referred to as *stagflation* (*stagnation plus inflation*). To slow inflation, Nixon at first tried to cut federal spending. However, when this policy contributed to a recession and unemployment, he adopted Keynesian economics and deficit spending so as not to alienate middle-class and blue-collar Americans. In August 1971, he surprised the nation by imposing a 90-day wage and price freeze. Next, he took the dollar off the gold standard, which helped to devalue it relative to foreign currencies. This action, combined with a 10 percent surtax on all imports, improved the U.S. balance of trade with foreign competitors.

By the election year of 1972, the recession was over. Also in that year, Congress approved automatic increases for Social Security benefits based on the annual rise in the cost of living. This measure protected seniors, the poor, and the disabled from the worst effects of inflation but also contributed to budget problems in the future. In 1972, Congress also passed Title IX, a statute to end sex discrimination in schools that receive federal funding. Though far-reaching, the law is best known for its requirement that schools provide girls with equal athletic opportunities. Many believe that these new opportunities in athletics proved to be a key step in promoting women's equality.

Southern Strategy

Having received just 43 percent of the popular vote in 1968, Nixon was well aware of being a minority president. He devised a political strategy to form a Republican majority by appealing to the millions of voters who had become disaffected by antiwar protests, black militants, school busing to achieve racial balance, and the excesses of the youth counterculture. Nixon referred to these

conservative Americans as the “silent majority.” Many of them were Democrats, including southern whites, northern Catholic blue-collar workers, and recent suburbanites who disagreed with the liberal drift of their party.

To win over the South, the president asked the federal courts in that region to delay integration plans and busing orders. He also nominated two southern conservatives (Clement Haynsworth and G. Harold Carswell) to the Supreme Court. Though the courts rejected his requests and the Senate refused to confirm the two nominees, his strategy played well with southern white voters. At the same time, Nixon authorized Vice President Spiro Agnew to make verbal assaults on war protesters and to attack the press as liberal.

The Burger Court

As liberal justices of the Supreme Court retired, Nixon replaced them with more conservative members. However, like other presidents, Nixon found that his appointees did not always rule as he had hoped. In 1969, after Chief Justice Earl Warren resigned, Nixon appointed Warren E. Burger of Minnesota to replace him. The Burger Court was more conservative than the Warren Court, but several of its major decisions angered conservatives. For example, in 1971 the court ordered busing to achieve racial balance in the schools, and in 1972 it issued strict guidelines that made carrying out the death penalty more difficult. The court’s most controversial ruling was *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In this 7–2 decision, the high court struck down many state laws prohibiting abortions as a violation of a women’s right to privacy. Finally, in the last days of Nixon’s Watergate agony (described later in this chapter), the court that he tried to shape denied his claims to executive privilege and ordered him to turn over the Watergate tapes (*United States v. Nixon*, 1974).

The Election of 1972

The success of Nixon’s southern strategy became evident in the presidential election of 1972 when the Republican ticket won majorities in every southern state. Nixon’s reelection was practically assured by (1) his foreign policy successes in China and the Soviet Union, (2) the removal of George Wallace from the race by an assassin’s bullet that paralyzed the Alabama populist, and (3) the nomination by the Democrats of a very liberal, antiwar, antiestablishment candidate, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota.

McGovern’s campaign quickly went off track. After some indecision, he dropped his vice presidential candidate, Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri, when it was discovered that he had undergone electroshock treatment for depression. On election day, Nixon overwhelmed McGovern in a landslide victory that carried every state but Massachusetts and won 61 percent of the popular vote. The Democrats still managed to keep control of both houses of Congress. Nevertheless, the voting patterns for Nixon indicated the start of a major political realignment of the Sunbelt and suburban voters, who were forming a new Republican majority. Nixon’s electoral triumph in 1972 made the Watergate revelations and scandals of 1973 all the more surprising.

Watergate

The tragedy of Watergate went well beyond the public humiliation of Richard Nixon and the conviction and jailing of 26 White House officials and aides. Watergate had a paralyzing effect on the political system in the mid-1970s, a critical time both at home and overseas, when the country needed respected, strong, and confident leadership.

White House Abuses

In June 1972, a group of men hired by Nixon's reelection committee were caught breaking into the offices of the Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. This break-in and attempted bugging were only part of a series of illegal activities and "dirty tricks" conducted by the Nixon administration and the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP).

Earlier, Nixon had ordered wiretaps on government employees and reporters to stop news leaks such as one that had exposed the secret bombing of Cambodia. The president's aides created a group, called the "plumbers," to stop leaks as well as to discredit opponents. Before Watergate, the "plumbers" had burglarized the office of psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the person behind the leaking of the Pentagon Papers, in order to obtain information to discredit Ellsberg. The White House had also created an "enemies list" of prominent Americans who opposed Nixon, the Vietnam War, or both. People on this list were investigated by government agencies, such as the IRS. The illegal break-in at Watergate reflected the attitude in the Nixon administration that any means could be used to promote the national security—an objective that was often confused with protecting the Nixon administration from its critics.

Watergate Investigation

No solid proof demonstrated that President Nixon ordered any of these illegal activities. However, after months of investigation, it became clear that Nixon did engage in an illegal cover-up to avoid scandal. Tough sentencing of the Watergate burglars by federal judge John Sirica led to information about the use of money and a promise of pardons by the White House staff to keep the burglars quiet. A Senate investigating committee headed by Democrat Sam Ervin of North Carolina brought the abuses to the attention of Americans through televised hearings. A highlight of these hearings was the testimony of a White House lawyer, John Dean, who linked the president to the cover-up. Nixon's top aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, resigned to protect him and were later indicted, as were many others, for obstructing justice.

The discovery of a taping system in the Oval Office led to a year-long struggle between Nixon, who claimed executive privilege for the tapes, and investigators, who wanted the tapes to prove the cover-up charges.

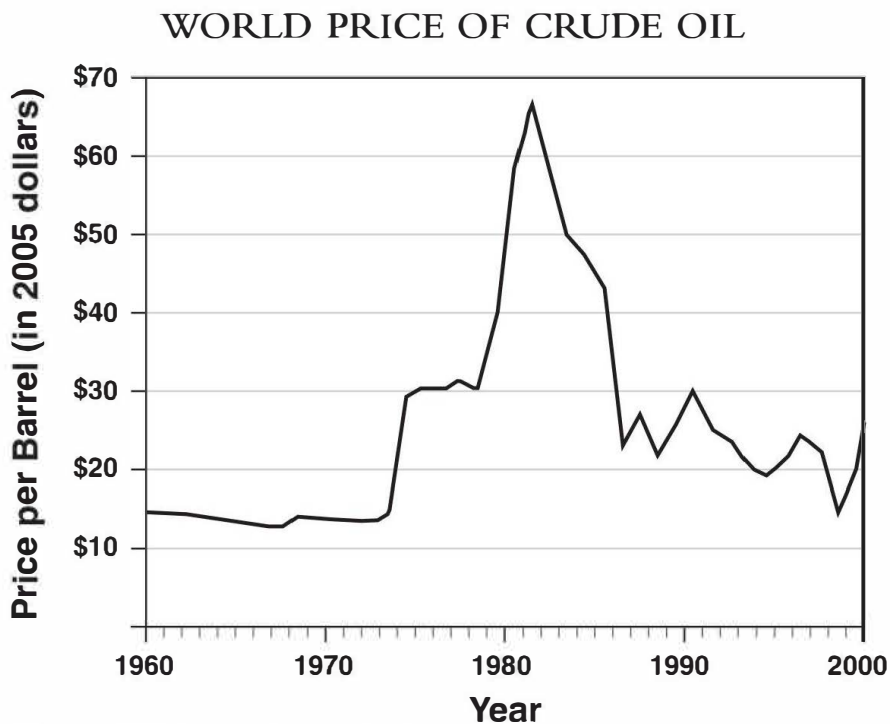
The Nixon administration received another blow in the fall of 1973, when Vice President Agnew had to resign because he had taken bribes when governor of Maryland. Replacing him was Michigan Representative Gerald Ford.

Other Developments in 1973

Although the Watergate affair absorbed most of Nixon's attention during his shortened second term, important developments occurred at home and abroad.

War Powers Act Further discrediting Nixon was the news that he had authorized 3,500 secret bombing raids in Cambodia, a neutral country. Congress used the public uproar over this information to attempt to limit the president's powers over the military. In November 1973, after a long struggle, Congress finally passed the War Powers Act over Nixon's veto. This law required Nixon and any future president to report to Congress within 48 hours after taking military action. It further provided that Congress would have to approve any military action that lasted more than 60 days.

October War and Oil Embargo In world politics, the most important event of 1973 was the outbreak of another Middle Eastern war. On October 6, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, the Syrians and Egyptians launched a surprise attack on Israel in an attempt to recover the lands lost in the Six-Day War of 1967. President Nixon ordered the U.S. nuclear forces on alert and air-lifted almost \$2 billion in arms to Israel to stem their retreat. The tide of battle quickly shifted in favor of the Israelis, and the war was soon over.



Source: U.S. Energy Administration

The United States was made to pay a huge price for supporting Israel. The Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) placed an embargo on oil sold to Israel's supporters. The embargo caused a worldwide oil shortage and long lines at gas stations in the United States. Even worse was the impact on the U.S. economy, which now suffered from runaway

inflation, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and a lower standard of living for blue-collar workers. Consumers switched from big American-made cars to smaller, more fuel-efficient Japanese cars, which cost U.S. automobile workers over 225,000 jobs. Congress responded by enacting a 55-miles-per-hour speed limit to save gasoline and approving construction of a controversial oil pipeline to tap American oil reserves in Alaska. No government program, however, seemed to bolster the sluggish economy or stem high inflation rates, which continued to the end of the decade.

Resignation of a President

In 1974, Nixon made triumphal visits to Moscow and Cairo, but at home his reputation continued to slide. In October 1973, the president appeared to be interfering with the Watergate investigation when he fired Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor assigned to the case. In protest, the U.S. attorney general resigned. The House of Representatives began impeachment hearings, which caused Nixon to reveal transcripts of some of the Watergate tapes in April 1974. Still, it took a Supreme Court decision in July to force him to turn over the tapes to the courts and Congress. Included on one tape made just days after the Watergate burglary was an 18 ½-minute gap that had been erased. Meanwhile, the House Judiciary Committee voted three articles of impeachment: (1) obstruction of justice, (2) abuse of power, and (3) contempt of Congress.

The conversations recorded on the tapes shocked friends and foes alike. The transcript of one such White House conversation clearly implicated Nixon in the cover-up only days after the Watergate break-in. Faced with certain impeachment in the House and a trial in the Senate, Richard Nixon chose to resign on August 9, 1974. Vice President Gerald Ford then took the oath of office as the first unelected president in U.S. history.

Significance To some, the final outcome of the Watergate scandal (Nixon leaving office under pressure) proved that the U.S. constitutional system of checks and balances worked as it was intended. For others, the scandal underlined the dangerous shift of power to the presidency that began with Franklin Roosevelt and had been expanded during the Cold War. Without a doubt, Watergate contributed to a growing loss of faith in the federal government.

Gerald Ford in the White House

Before Nixon chose him to replace Vice President Agnew in 1973, Gerald Ford had served in Congress for years as a representative from Michigan and as the Republican minority leader of the House. Ford was a likeable and unpretentious man, but many questioned his ability to be president.

Pardoning of Nixon

In his first month in office, President Ford lost the goodwill of many by granting Nixon a full and unconditional pardon for any crime that he might have committed. The pardon was extended even before any formal charges or indictment had been made by a court of law. Ford was accused of making a “corrupt

bargain” with Nixon, but he explained that the purpose of the pardon was to end the “national nightmare,” instead of prolonging it for months, if not years. Critics were angered that the full truth of Nixon’s deeds never came out.

Investigating the CIA

During Ford’s presidency (1974–1977), the Democratic Congress continued to search for abuses in the executive branch, especially in the CIA. This intelligence agency was accused of engineering the assassination of foreign leaders, among them the Marxist president of Chile, Salvador Allende. Ford appointed former Texas Congressman George H. W. Bush to reform the agency.

Failure of U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia

President Ford was unable to get additional funds from Congress for the South Vietnamese, who in 1974 were facing strong attack from Communist forces.

Fall of Saigon In April 1975, the U.S.-supported government in Saigon fell to the enemy, and Vietnam became one country under the rule of the Communist government in Hanoi (North Vietnam’s capital). Just before the final collapse, the United States was able to evacuate about 150,000 Vietnamese who had supported the United States and now faced certain persecution. The fall of South Vietnam marked a low point of American prestige overseas and confidence at home.

Genocide in Cambodia Also in 1975, the U.S.-supported government in Vietnam’s neighbor, Cambodia, fell to the Khmer Rouge, a radical Communist faction that killed over a million of its own people in a brutal relocation program to rid the country of western influence. Together the wars in Southeast Asia created 10 million refugees, many of whom fled to the United States.

Future of Southeast Asia The fall of Cambodia seemed to fulfill Eisenhower’s domino theory, but in fact the rest of Southeast Asia did not fall to communism. Instead, nations such as Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia emerged as the “little tigers” of the vigorously growing Asian (Pacific Rim) economy. Some argued that U.S. support of South Vietnam was not a waste, because it bought time for other nations of East Asia and Southeast Asia to develop and better resist communism.

The Economy and Domestic Policy

On domestic matters, Ford proved less accommodating and more conservative than Nixon. His chief concern was bringing inflation under control. He urged voluntary measures on the part of businesses and consumers, including the wearing of WIN buttons (Whip Inflation Now). Not only did inflation continue, but the economy also sank deeper into recession, with the unemployment rate reaching more than 9 percent. Ford finally agreed to a Democratic package to stimulate the economy, but he vetoed 39 other Democratic bills.

Bicentennial Celebration In 1976, the United States celebrated its 200th birthday. Americans’ pride in their history helped to put Watergate and Vietnam behind them. Even the lackluster presidency of Gerald Ford served the purpose of restoring candor and humility to the White House.

The Election of 1976

Watergate still cast its gloom over the Republican party in the 1976 elections. President Ford was challenged for the party's nomination by Ronald Reagan, a former actor and ex-governor of California, who enjoyed the support of the more conservative Republicans. Ford won the nomination in a close battle, but the conflict with Reagan hurt him in the polls.

Emergence of Jimmy Carter A number of Democrats competed for their party's nomination, including a little-known former governor of Georgia, James Earl (Jimmy) Carter. With Watergate still on voters' minds, Carter had success running as an outsider against the corruption in Washington. His victories in open primaries reduced the influence of more experienced Democratic politicians. After watching his huge lead in the polls evaporate in the closing days of the campaign, Carter managed to win a close election (287 electoral votes to 241 for Ford) by carrying most of the South and getting an estimated 97 percent of the African American vote. In the aftermath of Watergate, the Democrats also won strong majorities in both houses of Congress.

Jimmy Carter's Presidency

The informal style of Jimmy Carter signaled an effort to end the imperial presidency. On his inaugural day, he walked down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House instead of riding in the presidential limousine. Public images of the president carrying his own luggage may have impressed average Americans. However, veteran members of Congress always viewed Carter as an outsider who depended too much on his politically inexperienced advisers from Georgia. Even Carter's keen intelligence and dedication to duty may have been partly a liability in causing him to pay close attention to all the details of government operations. Critics observed that, when it came to distinguishing between the forest and the trees, Carter was a "leaf man."

Foreign Policy

The hallmark of Carter's foreign policy was human rights, which he preached with Wilsonian fervor to the world's dictators.

Human Rights Diplomacy Carter appointed Andrew Young, an African American, to serve as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Carter and Young championed the cause of human rights around the world, especially by opposing the oppression of the black majority in South Africa and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) by all-white governments. In Latin America, human rights violations by the military governments of Argentina and Chile caused Carter to cut off U.S. aid to those countries.

Panama Canal The Carter administration attempted to correct inequities in the original Panama Canal Treaty of 1903 by negotiating a new treaty. In 1978, after long debate, the Senate ratified a treaty that would gradually transfer operation and control of the Panama Canal from the United States to the Panamanians, a process to be completed by the year 2000. Opponents would remember Carter's "giveaway" of the canal in the 1980 election.

Camp David Accords (1978) Perhaps Carter's single greatest achievement as president was arranging a peace settlement between Egypt and Israel. In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat took the first courageous step toward Middle East peace by visiting Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in Jerusalem. President Carter followed this bold initiative by inviting Sadat and Begin to meet again at the presidential retreat in Camp David, Maryland. With Carter acting as an intermediary, the two leaders negotiated the Camp David Accords (September 1978), which provided a framework for a peace settlement between their countries.

Later, as a result of a peace treaty concluded in 1979, Egypt became the first Arab nation to recognize the nation of Israel. In return, Israel withdrew its troops from the Sinai territory taken from Egypt in the Six-Day War of 1967. The treaty was opposed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and most of the Arab world, but it proved the first step in the long road to a negotiated peace in the Middle East.

Iran and the Hostage Crisis The Middle East provided Carter's greatest frustration. In Iran, anti-American sentiment had been strong since the United States had helped overthrow the country's democratically elected leader in 1953 and install a dictatorial government. In 1979, Islamic fundamentalists in Iran, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini, overthrew the shah who was then leading the Iranian government. The shah had kept the oil flowing for the West during the 1970s, but his autocratic rule and policy of westernization had alienated a large part of the Iranian population.

With the ayatollah and fundamentalists in power, Iranian oil production ground to a halt, causing the second worldwide oil shortage of the decade and another round of price increases. U.S. impotence in dealing with the crisis became more evident in November 1979 when Iranian militants seized the U.S. embassy in Teheran and held more than 50 members of the American staff as prisoners and hostages. The hostage crisis dragged out through the remainder of Carter's presidency. In April 1980, Carter approved a rescue mission, but the breakdown of the helicopters over the Iranian desert forced the United States to abort the mission. For many Americans, Carter's unsuccessful attempts to free the hostages became a symbol of a failed presidency.

Cold War President Carter attempted to continue the Nixon-Ford policy of détente with China and the Soviet Union. In 1979, the United States ended its official recognition of the Nationalist Chinese government of Taiwan and completed the first exchange of ambassadors with the People's Republic of China. At first, détente also moved ahead with the Soviet Union with the signing in 1979 of a SALT II treaty, which provided for limiting the size of each superpower's nuclear delivery system. The Senate never ratified the treaty, however, as a result of a renewal of Cold War tensions over Afghanistan.

In December 1979, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan—an aggressive action that ended a decade of improving U.S.-Soviet relations. The United States feared that the invasion might lead to a Soviet move to control the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Carter reacted by (1) placing an embargo on grain exports

and the sale of high technology to the Soviet Union, and (2) boycotting the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. After having campaigned for arms reduction, Carter now had to switch to an arms buildup.

Domestic Policy: Dealing with Inflation

At home, the biggest issue was the growing inflation rate. At first Carter tried to check inflation with measures aimed at conserving oil energy and reviving the U.S. coal industry. However, the compromises that came out of Congress failed either to reduce the consumption of oil or to check inflation. In 1979–1980, inflation seemed completely out of control and reached the unheard of rate of 13 percent.

Troubled Economy Inflation slowed economic growth as consumers and businesses could no longer afford the high interest rates that came with high prices. The chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, Paul Volcker, hoped to break the back of inflation by pushing interest rates even higher, to 20 percent in 1980. These rates especially hurt the automobile and building industries, which laid off tens of thousands of workers. Inflation also pushed middle-class taxpayers into higher tax brackets, which led to a “taxpayers’ revolt.” Government social programs that were indexed to the inflation rate helped to push the federal deficit to nearly \$60 billion in 1980. Many Americans had to adjust to the harsh truth that, for the first time since World War II, their standard of living was on the decline.

Loss of Popularity

The Iranian hostage crisis and worsening economic crisis hurt Carter in the opinion polls. In 1979, in what the press called Carter’s “national malaise” speech, he blamed the problems of the United States on a “moral and spiritual crisis” of the American people. By that time, however, many Americans blamed the president for weak and indecisive leadership. By the election year 1980 his approval rating had fallen to only 23 percent. In seeking a second term, the unpopular president was clearly vulnerable to political challenges from both Democrats and Republicans.

American Society in Transition

Social changes in the 1970s were of potentially even greater significance than politics. By the end of the decade, for the first time, half of all Americans lived in the fastest-growing sections of the country—the South and the West. Unlike the previous decade, which was dominated by the youth revolt, Americans were conscious in the seventies that the population was aging. The fastest growing age group consisted of senior citizens over 65.

The country’s racial and ethnic composition was also changing noticeably in the late 20th century. By 1990, minority groups made up 25 percent of the population. The Census Bureau predicted that, by 2050, as much as half the population would be Hispanic American, African American, or Asian

American. Cultural pluralism was replacing the melting pot as the model for U.S. society, as diverse ethnic and cultural groups strove not only to end discrimination and improve their lives, but also to celebrate their unique traditions.

Growth of Immigration

Before the 1960s, most immigrants to the United States had come from Europe and Canada. By the 1980s, 47 percent of immigrants came from Latin America, 37 percent from Asia, and less than 13 percent from Europe and Canada. In part, this dramatic shift was caused by the arrival of refugees leaving Cuba and Vietnam after the Communist takeovers of these countries. Of far greater importance was the impact of the Immigration Act of 1965, which ended the ethnic quota acts of the 1920s favoring Europeans and thereby opened the United States to immigrants from all parts of the world.

Undocumented Immigrants How many immigrants entered the United States illegally every year could only be estimated, but by the mid-1970s, as many as 12 million foreigners were in the U.S. illegally. The rise in immigrants from countries of Latin America and Asia led to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which penalized employers for hiring immigrants who had entered the country illegally or had overstayed their visas, while also granting amnesty to undocumented immigrants arriving by 1982. Even so, many Americans concluded that the nation had lost control of its own borders, as both legal and undocumented immigrants continued to flock to the United States at an estimated million persons a year.

Demands for Minority Rights

One aspect of the protest movements of the 1960s that continued into later decades was the movement by a variety of minorities to gain both relief from discrimination and recognition for their contributions to U.S. society.

Hispanic Americans Most Hispanic Americans before World War II lived in the southwestern states, but in the postwar years new arrivals from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and South and Central America increasingly settled in the East and Midwest. Mexican workers, after suffering deportation during the Great Depression, returned to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s to take low-paying agricultural jobs. They were widely exploited before a long series of boycotts led by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Organization finally gained collective bargaining rights for farm workers in 1975. Mexican American activists also won a federal mandate for bilingual education requiring schools to teach Hispanic children in both English and Spanish. In the 1980s, a growing number of Hispanic Americans were elected to public office, including as mayors of Miami, San Antonio, and other large cities. The Census Bureau reported that, in 2000, Hispanics, including Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latin Americans, had become the country's largest minority group.

American Indian Movement In the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration had made an unsuccessful attempt to encourage American Indians to leave reservations and assimilate into urban America. American Indian leaders resisted the loss of cultural identity that would have resulted from such a policy. To achieve self-determination and revival of tribal traditions, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in 1968. Militant actions soon followed, including AIM's takeover of the abandoned prison on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay in 1969. AIM members also occupied Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973, site of the infamous massacre of American Indians by the U.S. cavalry in 1890.

American Indians had a number of successes in both Congress and the courts. Congress' passage of the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 gave reservations and tribal lands greater control over internal programs, education, and law enforcement. American Indians also used the federal courts successfully to regain property or compensation for treaty violations. They attacked widespread unemployment and poverty on reservations by improving education, through the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, and by building industries and gambling casinos on reservations, under the self-determination legislation. Interest in the cultural heritage of American Indians was also overcoming old prejudices. By the 2010 census, nearly three million people identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native, and over two million more identified themselves as a combination of American Indian or Alaska Native and some other ethnic group.

American Indian Population of the United States, 1950 to 2010		
Year	Total	Percentage
1950	343,410	0.2
1960	508,675	0.3
1970	827,255	0.4
1980	1,420,400	0.6
1990	1,959,234	0.8
2000	2,475,956	0.9
2010	2,932,248	0.9

Figures include Alaska Natives
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Asian Americans Americans of Asian descent had become the fastest growing ethnic minority by the 1980s. The largest group of Asian Americans were of Chinese ancestry, followed by Filipinos, Japanese, Indians, Koreans, and Vietnamese. A strong dedication to education resulted in Asian Americans being well represented in the best colleges and universities. However, at times, Asian Americans suffered from discrimination, envy, and Japan-bashing, while the less educated immigrants earned well below the national average.

Gay Liberation Movement In 1969, a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, sparked both a riot and the gay rights movement. Gay activists urged homosexuals to be open about their identity and to work to end discrimination and violent abuse. By the mid-1970s, homosexuality was no longer classified as a mental illness and the federal Civil Service dropped its ban on employment of homosexuals. In 1993, President Clinton attempted to end discrimination against gays and lesbians in the military, but settled for the compromise “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. People would not be asked or expected to describe their sexual identity, but the military could still expel people for being gay or lesbian.

The Environmental Movement

While the Progressive era conservation movement was fairly small and led by politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt, the modern environmental movement had wide spread popular support. The participation of 20 million citizens in the first Earth Day in 1970 reflected the nation’s growing concerns over air and water pollution and the destruction of the natural environment, including wildlife. Media coverage of industrial disasters increased public questioning of the benefits of industry and new technologies, in what some called a “post-modern” culture. Massive oil spills around the world, from off the coast of Santa Barbara California in 1969 to the *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker accident in Alaska in 1989, reinforced fears about the deadly combination of human error and modern technology. Public opinion also turned against building additional nuclear power plants after an accident at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania (1979) and the deadly explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union (1986).

Protective Legislation The environmental movement borrowed tactics from other protest movements to secure legislation to stop pollution and destruction of nature. In 1970, Congress passed the Clean Air Act and created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and followed this legislation in 1972 with the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In 1980, the Superfund was created to clean up toxic dumps, such as Love Canal in Niagara Falls, New York. These laws regulated toxic substances, public drinking water systems, dumping of waste, and protected natural environments and wildlife, such as the American bald eagle. In the 1980s, the backlash from business and industry would try to reverse the impact of this legislation.

Conservative Shift

The protest movements by diverse groups in American society seemed to produce more social stress and fragmentation. Combined with a slowing economy and a declining standard of living, these forces left many Americans feeling angry and bitter. A conservative reaction to the liberal policies of the New Deal and the Great Society was gaining strength in the late 1970s and would prove a powerful force in the politics of the next decade.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: END OF THE IMPERIAL PRESIDENCY?

The Cold War, and the Vietnam War in particular, caused critics in the 1970s to fear the expansion and abuse of power by presidents. They saw parallels between the decline of the Roman Republic and the rise of the powerful emperor system of the Roman Empire during Rome's expansion, and the developments in the political system of the United States during its emergence as a superpower after World War II. The actions of Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandals confirmed many Americans' fears.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. argued in his book *The Imperial Presidency* (1973) that the United States' exercise of world leadership had gradually undermined the original intent of the Constitution and the war powers of Congress. Cold War presidents had used national security, the need for secrecy, executive privilege, and the mystique of the high office to concentrate power into the White House. The end of the Vietnam War, the resignation of Richard Nixon, and the War Powers Act of 1973 seemed to end the dangers of the imperial presidency. Presidents Ford and Carter proved comparatively weak presidents, and power had seemed to shift back to the Congress, as the Founders had intended.

Schlesinger concluded that the U.S. would continue to need a strong president, but one working within the limits of the Constitution. The issue of the proper constitutional limits on presidential powers reemerged after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. What are the constitutional limits on presidential powers to fight terrorists given invasive reach of the newest electronic and military technologies?

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Nixon Foreign Policy (WOR)

Henry Kissinger
Vietnamization
Nixon Doctrine
Kent State
My Lai
Pentagon Papers
Paris Accords of 1973
détente
China visit
antiballistic missiles
Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)
Middle East War (1973)
OPEC; oil embargo

Nixon Domestic Policy (POL)

New Federalism
stagflation
southern strategy
wage and price controls
off the gold standard
cost of living indexed
Title IX
Burger Court
Roe v. Wade (1973)
election of 1972
George McGovern
Watergate cover-up
"plumbers"
"enemies list"
United States v. Nixon
War Powers Act (1973)
impeachment and
resignation
"imperial presidency"

Ford Presidency (POL, WOR)

Gerald Ford
pardon of Nixon
reform of CIA
fall of Saigon
Cambodia genocide
battle over inflation
Bicentennial
election of 1976

Carter Presidency (WOR, POL)

James Earl (Jimmy)
Carter
human rights
Panama Canal Treaty
(1978)
Camp David Accords
(1978)
Iranian hostage crisis
recognition of China
Soviet Afghanistan
invasion
Paul Volcker, high interest rates
"malaise" speech

American Identities (NAT, PEO)

cultural pluralism
impact of 1965 immigration law
Immigration Reform and Control Act (1986)
Hispanic Americans
Cesar Chavez
American Indian Movement
Indian Self-Determination Act (1975)
gaming casinos
Asian Americans
gay liberation movement

Environmental Movement (GEO)

Earth Day (1970)
Exxon Valdez accident
Three Mile Island
Chernobyl meltdown
Clean Air Act (1970)
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Clean Water Act (1972)
Environmental Superfund (1980)
Endangered Species Act (1973)