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IT
CAN
HAPPEN
HERE!

The Cold War Abroad and at Home, 1945–1960

**COMMUNISTS
TOOK
OVER
AMERICA**



WHITTAKER CHAMBERS (AP Images)



ALGER HISS (AP Images)

TESTIFYING BEFORE THE HOUSE Un-American Activities Committee in 1948, Whittaker Chambers, a repentant ex-communist and an editor of *Time* magazine, identified Alger Hiss as an underground member of a secret “communist cell” operating in Washington in the 1930s. The sad-faced, rumped, often disheveled Chambers appeared a tortured Christian soul crusading to save the West from the atheistic Red peril. The elegant, handsome Hiss, in contrast, seemed the very symbol of the liberal establishment: Harvard Law School graduate, former New Dealer, State Department official who accompanied FDR to Yalta, and now president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Hiss categorically denied any communist affiliation and claimed not to know Chambers.

Most liberals saw Hiss as the victim of conservatives bent on tarnishing New Deal liberalism. Conversely, those suspicious of the Rooseveltian liberal tradition thought Hiss the personification of a communist-riddled Democratic administration. To conservatives, he symbolized every wrong turn the nation had taken since the start of the New Deal. Under rigorous questioning by freshman Republican congressman Richard Nixon of California, Hiss eventually admitted he knew Chambers but continued to deny having ever been a communist. Chambers, in front of reporters at his Maryland farm, then produced microfilms he had hidden inside a hollowed-out pumpkin. The so-called “pumpkin papers” appeared to be State Department documents that had been copied on a typewriter once owned by Hiss. Chambers claimed Hiss had stolen the documents in the late 1930s and passed them on to the Soviets.

THE DAY THE COMMUNISTS TOOK OVER AMERICA BY ISABEL MOORE Books, magazines, TV, and Hollywood competed to combat the “Commie Menace.” (*The Michael Barson Collection/Past Perfect/Picture Research Consultants & Archives*)

Anticommunism and Containment, 1946–1953 (p. 798)

- Polarization and Cold War 798
- The Iron Curtain Descends 800
- Containing Communism 800
- Confrontation in Germany 804
- The Cold War in Asia 805
- The Korean War, 1950–1953 806

The Truman Administration at Home, 1945–1952 (p. 808)

- Truman’s Domestic Program 809
- The Eightieth Congress, 1947–1948 809
- The Fair Deal 810

The Politics of Anticommunism (p. 811)

- Loyalty and Security 811
- The Anticommunist Crusade 811
- McCarthyism 812
- The Election of 1952 815
- The Downfall of Joseph McCarthy 816
- “Modern Republicanism” 817

The Cold War Continues (p. 817)

- Ike and Dulles 817
- CIA Covert Actions 818
- Troubles in the Third World 818
- The Eisenhower Legacy 819

Because the statute of limitations on espionage had expired, the Justice Department indicted Hiss for perjury. After the first perjury trial ended in deadlock, a second one convicted Hiss in January 1950, sentencing him to five years in federal prison. Although one could not tell truth from lies in the trial testimony, and the documents in question seemed insignificant, the conviction of Hiss fueled paranoia of a communist conspiracy. If distinguished officials such as Hiss had been disloyal, what other “fifth columnists” might be part of a diabolical Red underground in the United States, manipulating what America could, and could not, do in the world?

The Hiss case emboldened many committees, public and private, to broaden their anticommunist probes and encouraged many Republicans, particularly Nixon and Senator Joseph McCarthy, to press the communists-in-government issue hard. Once reasonable concerns about American security now mushroomed into demagoguery and witch-hunts, the trampling of civil liberties, and suppression of dissent.

Such was the chief, and most chilling, domestic legacy of what came to be called the Cold War: a new form of international rivalry in which the United States and the Soviet Union avoided direct military conflict while using all their resources to thwart each other’s objectives.

Hard on the heels of V-J Day, an uncompromising Truman squared off against an obsessive Stalin over the postwar fate of Eastern Europe. Abandoning its historic aloofness from events outside the Western Hemisphere, the United States plunged into a global struggle to contain the Soviet Union and stop communism. While the United States experienced dramatic changes, the conflict would persist through the 1950s and beyond. The United States in 1940 had no military alliances, a small defense budget, and limited troops; by 1960, it had built a massive military establishment, signed mutual-defense pacts with forty countries, directly intervened in the affairs of allies and enemies alike, erected military bases on every continent, and engaged the USSR in a seemingly unending nuclear-arms race.

Containing communism abroad profoundly changed America at home as well. It transformed the economy, shifted national priorities, expanded the powers of the executive branch, and spawned a second Red Scare that decimated the Left, stifled liberalism, and helped bring the Republicans to power. While the Democrats proved unable to expand the New Deal into such areas as civil rights, education, and health care, the Republicans failed to turn back the clock and repeal the New Deal. The politics of deadlock, inherited from the late 1930s, continued into the 1960s. Obsessed with communist spies and traitors, Americans increasingly looked to their own prosperity and family life for the joy and blessings denied them by the Cold War.

FOCUS Questions

- How did the policies of both the United States and Soviet Union lead to the start of the Cold War?
- What effect did the Cold War have on the domestic programs of Truman and Eisenhower?
- What domestic and international events led to the Second Red Scare?
- In what ways did Eisenhower continue—and change—Truman’s foreign policy?
- What actions support the notion of Eisenhower as a centrist or moderate politician?

Anticommunism and Containment, 1946–1953

The smoldering antagonisms between Moscow and Washington at war’s end continued to flare. The “shotgun wedding” that joined the United States and the USSR in an alliance to defeat Hitler dissolved into a struggle to fill the power vacuums left by the defeat of the Axis, the exhaustion and bankruptcy of Western Europe, and the crumbling of colonial empires in Asia and Africa (see Map 26.1). Misperception and misunderstanding mounted as the two powers sought greater security, each feeding the other’s fears, causing a cycle of distrust and animosity. The Cold War resulted.

Polarization and Cold War

The destiny of Eastern Europe, especially Poland, stood at the heart of the strife between the United States and the USSR. Wanting to end the Soviet Union’s vulnerability to invasions from the West, Stalin insisted on a demilitarized Germany and a buffer zone of nations friendly to Russia along its western flank. He considered a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe essential to Russian security, a just reward for bearing the brunt of the war against Germany, and no different than the American spheres of influence in Western Europe, Japan, and Latin America. Stalin also believed that Roosevelt and Churchill had implicitly accepted a Soviet zone in Eastern Europe at the Yalta Conference.

With the Red Army occupying half of Europe at war’s end, Stalin installed pro-Soviet puppet governments in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania, and



MAP 26.1 DECOLONIZATION IN AFRICA AND ASIA, 1947–1999 Following the Second World War, decolonization movements swept Africa and Asia, liberating many peoples from their colonial rulers. Achieving independence in the postwar international system dominated by the Cold War, most newly independent states became targets of both the United States and the Soviet Union, as each sought to advance its interests in these regions, usually by intervention, intrigue, or economic influence. The Cold War became a global phenomenon. At the same time, decolonization provided a powerful impetus to the struggle for black equality in the United States.

supported the establishment of communist regimes in nominally independent Albania and Yugoslavia. Ignoring the Yalta Declaration of Liberated Europe, Stalin barred free elections in Poland and brutally suppressed Polish democratic parties. Poland, he said, was “not only a question of honor for Russia, but one of life and death.”

Stalin’s insistence on dominance in Eastern Europe collided with Truman’s unwillingness to concede Soviet supremacy beyond Russia’s borders. What Stalin saw as critical to Russian security Truman viewed as a violation of national self-determination, a betrayal of democracy, and a cover for communist aggression. Only a new world order based on the self-determination of all nations working in good faith within the United Nations, Truman maintained, could guarantee peace. He believed that accepting the “enforced sovietization” of Eastern Europe would betray American war aims and condemn nations rescued from Hitler’s tyranny to another totalitarian dictatorship. In addition, Truman feared that the

Democratic Party would invite political disaster if he reneged on the Yalta agreements. The Democrats counted on winning most of the votes of the 6 million Polish-Americans and millions of other Americans of Eastern European origin, who remained keenly interested in the fates of their homelands. He resolved not to appear “soft on communism.”

Combativeness fit the temperament of the feisty Truman. Eager to demonstrate his command, the president matched Stalin’s intransigence on controlling Poland with his own demands for Polish free elections. Encouraged by America’s monopoly of atomic weapons and its position as the world’s economic superpower, the new president hoped the United States could control the terms of the postwar settlement. His foreign policy sought, in the words of a November 1945 State Department document, to “establish the kind of world we want to live in.”

The Iron Curtain Descends

As Truman’s assertiveness deepened Stalin’s mistrust of the West, the Soviet Union tightened its grip on Eastern Europe, stepped up its confiscation of materials and factories from occupied territories, and forced its satellite nations (countries under Soviet control) to close their doors to American trade and influence. In a February 1946 speech that the White House considered a “declaration of World War III,” Stalin asserted that there could be no lasting peace with capitalism.

Two weeks later, **George F. Kennan**, an American diplomat in Moscow, wired a long telegram to the State Department. A leading student of Russian affairs, Kennan described Soviet expansionism as “like a toy automobile, wound up and headed in a given direction, stopping only when it meets some unanswerable force.” Therefore, U.S. policy must be the “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.” Truman, who had already insisted the time had come “to stop babying the Soviets” and “to get tough with Russia,” accepted Kennan’s advice. **Containment**—a policy uniting military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to curb, or “contain,” any further Soviet communist expansion—became Washington gospel (see *Beyond America*).

In early March 1946, Truman accompanied Winston Churchill to Westminster College in Missouri, where the former British prime minister warned of a new threat to democracy. Stalin, he said, had drawn an “iron curtain” across the eastern half of Europe. To meet the threat of further Soviet aggression, Churchill called for an alliance of the English-speaking peoples and the maintenance of an Anglo-American monopoly of atomic weapons: “There is nothing the Communists admire so much as strength and nothing for which they have less respect than for military weakness.”

As mutual hostility escalated, the Soviets and Americans rushed to develop doomsday weapons. In 1946, Congress established the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) to spur both nuclear energy and nuclear weaponry. The AEC, however, devoted more than 90 percent of its effort to atomic bombs. By 1950, one AEC adviser reckoned, the United States “had a stockpile capable of somewhat more than reproducing World War II in a single day.”

Thus, less than a year after American and Soviet soldiers had jubilantly met at the Elbe River to celebrate Hitler’s defeat, a Cold War emerged. It would be waged by economic pressure, nuclear intimidation, propaganda, subversion, and proxy wars (fought by governments and peoples allied to the principals rather than directly by the principals themselves). It would affect American life as decisively as any military engagement the nation had fought.

Containing Communism

On February 21, 1947, Britain informed the United States that it could no longer afford to assist Greece and Turkey in their struggles against communist insurgents in the eastern Mediterranean. The harsh European winter, the most severe in memory, heightened the sense of urgency in Washington. The economies of Western Europe had come to a

Poland, Stalin said, was “not only a question of honor for Russia, but one of life and death.”

near halt. Famine and tuberculosis plagued the continent. European colonies in Africa and Asia had risen in revolt. Cigarettes and candy bars circulated as currency in Germany, and the communist parties in France and Italy appeared ready to topple democratic coalition governments. Truman resolved to meet the challenge. But congressional leaders balked, agreeing to support the president only if he could “scare hell out of the country” to gain popular backing for meeting the Soviet threat.

Truman could and did. On March 12, 1947, addressing a joint session of Congress, he asked for \$400 million in military assistance to Greece and Turkey while announcing the **Truman Doctrine**. Instead of mentioning that the aid would go to a right-wing, military-dominated Greek regime and an autocratic Turkey, the Truman Doctrine pictured the matter as a global struggle, pitting “freedom” and “liberty” against “oppression” and “terror,” in which the policy of the United States would be to support free peoples everywhere “resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” The Truman Doctrine and the funds appropriated by Congress helped the Greek monarchy to defeat the rebel movement and Turkey to stay out of the Soviet orbit. Moreover, it endured long after the

crisis in the Mediterranean. It proclaimed the nation’s intention to be a global policeman—everywhere on guard against advances by the Soviet Union and its allies—and it laid the foundation for American foreign policy for much of the next four decades.

To back up the new international initiative, Congress passed the **National Security Act of 1947**, unifying the armed forces under a single Department of Defense, creating the National Security Council (NSC) to advise the president on strategic matters, and establishing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to gather information abroad and engage in covert activities in support of the nation’s security. Congress also approved the administration’s proposal for massive U.S. assistance for European recovery in 1947. Advocated by Secretary of State George C. Marshall, and thus called the **Marshall Plan**, the European Recovery Plan (ERP) aimed to combat the “hunger, poverty, desperation” that spawned communism. Truman correctly guessed that the Soviet Union and its

The United States must support free peoples everywhere “resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”



AMERICAN FOOD FOR A HUNGRY EUROPE Grateful English mothers line up for orange juice sent by the United States to assist Europeans devastated by the Second World War. (*National Archives*)



Beyond America

GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

Decolonization and the Cold War

Defeat in World War II forced Italy to relinquish Ethiopia, Libya, and Somalia, and Japan to give up its colony of Korea, repeating a pattern established at the end of World War I. What few expected was that the victors too would rapidly lose their empires in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The war led to a massive overturning of colonial rule, as scores of independent nations emerged from the empires established in previous centuries. The emergence of a broad-based, assertive nationalism throughout the developing world created a new world order that exacerbated tensions between the United States and Soviet Union as the two superpowers competed for the resources and support of the new emerging nations. Decolonization created a power vacuum that both Moscow and Washington sought to fill, which guaranteed the Cold War would be global in scale and scope. Flashpoints ranged from Algeria to Korea, from Mozambique to Vietnam. The United States and the Soviet Union vigorously competed for the allegiance of the nonwhite peoples of the Third World, compelling every administration from Truman to Johnson to promote civil rights for African-Americans as part of its mission of fighting world communism.

Exhausted by the war, and desperately needing to concentrate their energies on reconstruction, Britain, France, and other Allied nations were not eager to fight new wars against colonial peoples pressing for independence after 1945. The war weariness of the European powers encouraged Asian and African peoples to intensify their demands for independence. The Japanese defeats of British, Dutch, and French colonial armies had shattered assumptions of white superiority. Asians no longer regarded the humiliated Europeans with awe. In addition, the ideals of the United Nations, Allied propaganda, and the Atlantic Charter, which characterized World War II as a struggle for freedom and self-determination, intensified the desires for self-rule, especially among the many colonial peoples who had loyally fought alongside their masters. Although circumstances differed from place to place, decolonization—the relinquishing of colonial possessions by imperial powers—became an irresistible trend. In 1945, fifty-one nations signed the UN Charter; in the next two decades, seventy-one additional countries—nearly all of them former colonial territories—became members.

In Asia, the United States led the way in 1946, keeping its promise of postwar independence for the Philippines. Once Hindu and Muslim leaders agreed on a partition of British India into two nations, one constitutionally secular but dominated by Hindus, the other formally Muslim, independent India and Pakistan emerged in 1947. In 1948, Britain also granted autonomy to Burma (now Myanmar), Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and the newly created Malay Federation (now Malaysia). The following year the Dutch East Indies, colonized three and a half centuries earlier, became the independent republic of Indonesia—a nation of more than 100 million people of scores of religions and races, scattered over hundreds of islands.

France followed a bloodier path, however. It sought to regain the colonies in Southeast Asia it had lost to Japan in World War II. The result was a war against the Vietnamese nationalists led by Ho Chi Minh, and a civil war within Vietnam. After France finally withdrew in 1954, Vietnam would become the site of a major Cold War conflict between noncommunist South Vietnam and communist North Vietnam, and their respective allies.

In Africa, as well, France's determination to hold on to Algeria led to a bitter war in 1954, pursued with great brutality by both sides until Algeria won independence in 1962. The map and legal status of most of the area south of the Sahara, on the other hand, were transformed relatively peacefully in the 1950s and 1960s. The absence of protracted warfare between rulers and subjects enabled England and France to retain influence with their former colonies, limiting the involvement of both the United States and the Soviet Union in this region.

One area of the world critical for U.S. and Soviet interests—becoming a focal point of the Cold War—was the Middle East. Syria and Lebanon gained their independence from France in the course of the war. Britain surrendered its mandate over Jordan in 1946 and the oil-rich state of Kuwait in 1961. One legacy of colonialism, Palestine, however, absorbed much of the region's energies and the world's attention. With the Balfour Declaration of 1917, supported by the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, Britain had committed itself to a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The United Nations voted



HO CHI MINH FIGHTING THE FRENCH, 1950 Following the Second World War, the communist organizer and revolutionary Ho Chi Minh led an almost decade-long nationalist struggle to end French colonialism in Indochina. (AFP/Getty Images)

to create both a Jewish and an Arab state, but the Palestinians and other Arab nations refused to accept a neighboring Jewish state. The consequence was decades of instability and war, as Israeli and Arab nationalist interests clashed in combination with the efforts of the United States and Soviet Union to control the flow of oil—the lifeblood of industrial nations. The Middle East was a Cold War powder keg.

Decolonization struggles became an integral part of the Cold War. To secure access to raw materials and markets, strategic military bases, supportive votes in the UN, and allies in armed conflicts, the United States and the Soviet Union each sought to seduce or coerce the countries emerging from colonial rule. Hoping to steer the colonial independence movements into its own orbit—long seen by the Soviets as an integral part of the communist fight against the capitalist West—the USSR supported them with advisers and weapons and proclaimed an ideology calling for the liberation of all oppressed peoples. It maintained close contacts with many nationalist leaders fighting for independence, like Ho Chi Minh, who was trained in Moscow and worked in communist movements in Europe and Asia before returning to his native Indochina. In turn, by 1954 the United States would be bearing three-fourths of the cost of France's war against the independence struggle of Ho Chi Minh and his followers. Viewing the Third World through the distorting lens of the Cold War, the United States would too often see the Kremlin as the force behind anticolonialism, elevate

local struggles to global significance, and frequently confuse nationalism with communism. Access to markets and vital materials, the desire for prestige, and confidence that the American way was the best way—as well as anticommunism—led the United States to bid with money and flattery for the favor of many newly independent Third World countries such as Egypt, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines.

Both the American and Soviet conceptions of their own area of interest and activity grew steadily larger. As an Asian counterpart of the NATO military alliance, the United States formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954, and the following year organized the collective security pact, known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), of Britain, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran. Many in the Third World, however, sought a Third Way—nonalignment—beholden to neither the United States nor the USSR, and genuinely neutral in the Cold War. Resisting choosing sides, insisting on taking charge of their own destinies, some leaders of the new states—like India's Jawaharlal Nehru—skillfully manipulated Cold War antagonisms to their own advantage, flirting with one side to extract money and support from the other. In 1955, representatives of twenty-nine African and Asian nations who had been part of the colonial empires met in Bandung, Indonesia. They served notice on the United States and Soviet Union that their countries wanted to stay out of the Cold War. The conference claimed to speak for 65 percent of the world's population and declared that colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil that must be ended.

Using the international criticism of America's lynchings and racism to their advantage, African-American leaders demanded civil-rights reforms. President Truman responded. Mindful of the effectiveness of Soviet propaganda denouncing American racial segregation and violence—and understanding that racism at home impeded the ability of the United States to espouse democracy abroad—he issued executive orders to desegregate the federal bureaucracy and the armed forces, appointed a commission to recommend measures to bolster the status of civil rights, and ordered the Justice Department to submit briefs in support of a range of desegregation cases winding through the federal court system. The campaign for African-American civil rights, once a wholly domestic concern, became enmeshed in the Cold War effort of the United States to gain support in a decolonized world.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- In what ways did the Second World War spur decolonization?
- How and why did decolonization struggles and the newly independent states of the Third World become a major battleground in the Cold War?

“Prosperity Makes You Free.”

satellites would refuse to take part in the plan, because of the controls linked to it, and accurately foresaw that Western European economic recovery

would expand sales of American goods abroad and promote prosperity in the United States.

Although denounced by the Left as a “Martial Plan” and by isolationist voices on the Right as a “Share-the-American-Wealth Plan,” the Marshall Plan more than fulfilled its sponsors’ hopes. By 1952, industrial production had risen 200 percent in Western Europe, and the economic and social chaos that communists had exploited had been overcome in the sixteen nations that shared the \$17 billion in aid provided by the ERP. Its slogan, “Prosperity Makes You Free,” had been vindicated, and, not incidentally, Western Europe had become a major center of American trade and investment.

Confrontation in Germany

The Soviet Union reacted to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan by tightening its grip on Eastern Europe. Communist takeovers added Hungary and Czechoslovakia to the Soviet bloc in 1947 and 1948, and Stalin set his sights on Germany. The 1945 Potsdam Agreement had divided Germany into four separate zones (administered by France,

Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States) and created a joint four-power administration for Germany’s capital, Berlin, lying 110 miles within the Soviet-occupied eastern zone. As the Cold War intensified, the Western powers moved toward uniting their zones into an anti-Soviet West German state. Stalin responded in June 1948 by blocking all surface traffic into Berlin.

Truman resolved neither to abandon Berlin nor to shoot his way into the city and possibly trigger World War III. Instead, he ordered a massive airlift of supplies to the city (the **Berlin airlift**). American cargo planes landed in West Berlin every three minutes around the clock, bringing the mountain of food and fuel necessary to provide the blockaded city with a precarious lifeline. In May 1949, the Soviets ended the blockade. Stalin’s gambit had failed. The airlift highlighted American determination and technological prowess, revealed Stalin’s readiness to use innocent people as pawns, and dramatically heightened anti-Soviet feeling in the West. Continuing fears of a Soviet attack on Western Europe and public support for “firmness and increased ‘toughness’ in relations with Russia” then led Truman to push for a rearmed West German state and an Atlantic collective security alliance.

In May 1949, the United States, Britain, and France ended their occupation of Germany and approved the creation of the Federal Republic of



THE BERLIN AIRLIFT, 1948 German children watching an American plane in “Operation Vittles” bring food and supplies to their beleaguered city. The airlift kept a city of 2 million people alive for nearly a year and made West Berlin a symbol of the West’s resolve to contain the spread of Soviet communism. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

transformation from an empire in ruins into a prosperous democracy. In 1952, the occupation ended, but a military security treaty allowed the U.S. to retain its Japanese bases and brought Japan under the American “nuclear umbrella.” In further pursuit of containment, the United States helped crush a procommunist insurgency in the Philippines and aided French efforts to reestablish colonial rule in Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), despite American declarations in favor of national self-determination and against imperialism.

In China, however, U.S. efforts to block communism failed. The Truman administration first tried to mediate the civil war between the nationalist government of Jiang Jieshi and the communist forces of **Mao Zedong**, hoping to arrange a coalition government that would end the bloody conflict raging since the 1930s. It also sent nearly \$3 billion in aid to the nationalists between 1945 and 1949. But American dollars could not prevent the surrender of Jiang’s armies to Mao’s forces or the collapse of the nationalists’ corrupt regime, whose remnants fled to the island of Taiwan.

“Surely Pittsburgh, which had the nation’s steel, coke, and aluminum, would be the enemy’s first target.”

Mao’s establishment of the communist People’s Republic of China (PRC) shocked Americans. The most populous nation in the world, seen as a counterforce to communism and a market for American goods, had become “Red China.” Although Truman blamed Jiang’s defeat on his failure to reform China, most

Americans were unconvinced. China’s “fall” especially embittered conservatives who believed that America’s interests lay in Asia, not Europe. Their pressure influenced the administration’s refusal to recognize the PRC, block its admission to the United Nations, and proclaim Jiang’s nationalist regime in Taiwan the legitimate government of China.

In September 1949, as the “Who lost China” debate raged, the president announced that the Soviet Union had exploded an atomic bomb. The loss of their nuclear monopoly shattered Americans’ illusions of invincibility and increased their fear of communism.

Ordinary Americans sought safety in civil defense. Public schools held air-raid drills, teaching students to “duck and cover”—dive under their desks and shield their eyes against atomic blasts. “We took the drills seriously,” recalled novelist Annie Dillard; “surely Pittsburgh, which had the nation’s steel, coke, and aluminum, would be the enemy’s first target.” Four million Americans volunteered to be Sky Watchers, looking for Soviet planes. More than a

million purchased or constructed their own family bomb shelters. Those who could not afford a bomb shelter were advised by the Federal Civil Defense Administration to “jump in any handy ditch or gutter...bury your face in your arms...never lose your head.”

In January 1950, stung by charges that he was “soft on communism,” Truman ordered the development of a fusion-based hydrogen bomb (H-bomb), a thousand times more destructive than an atomic bomb. In November 1952, the United States exploded its first H-bomb, completely vaporizing one of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific, carving a mile-long, 175-foot-deep crater in the ocean floor, and spilling radioactive dust over thousands of square miles. “You would swear the whole world was on fire,” a sailor wrote home. Nine months later, the Soviets detonated their own H-bomb. The balance of terror escalated.

So, too, did nuclear-generated environmental and health problems. Nuclear tests left minimally protected U.S. soldiers and South Pacific islanders exposed to radiation, and radioactive debris from atomic tests contaminated vast areas of Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and Washington. Although the AEC insisted the fallout was harmless, many people exposed to radiation, as well as unborn children, would pay the cost of an out of control arms race poisoning the atmosphere.

In April 1950, a committee appointed by the president issued a sweeping analysis of U.S. defense policy. **National Security Paper 68 (NSC-68)** emphasized the Soviet Union’s aggressive intentions, territorial greed, and military strength. To counter the Soviets’ “design for world domination,” NSC-68 urged massive increases in America’s nuclear arsenal, vigorous covert action by the CIA, and open-ended increases in the defense budget to resist Communist expansion anywhere and everywhere. Secretary of State Acheson characterized NSC-68 as “the fundamental paper” defining American foreign policy into the foreseeable future. The United States now approached the Cold War as a military confrontation. By the end of 1950, Congress had tripled the defense budget of the self-proclaimed “world policeman.”

The Korean War, 1950–1953

After World War II, the United States and Soviet Union temporarily divided Korea, which had been controlled by Japan since the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, at the thirty-eighth parallel. This line then solidified into a de facto border between the Soviet-backed Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north and the American-supported Republic of

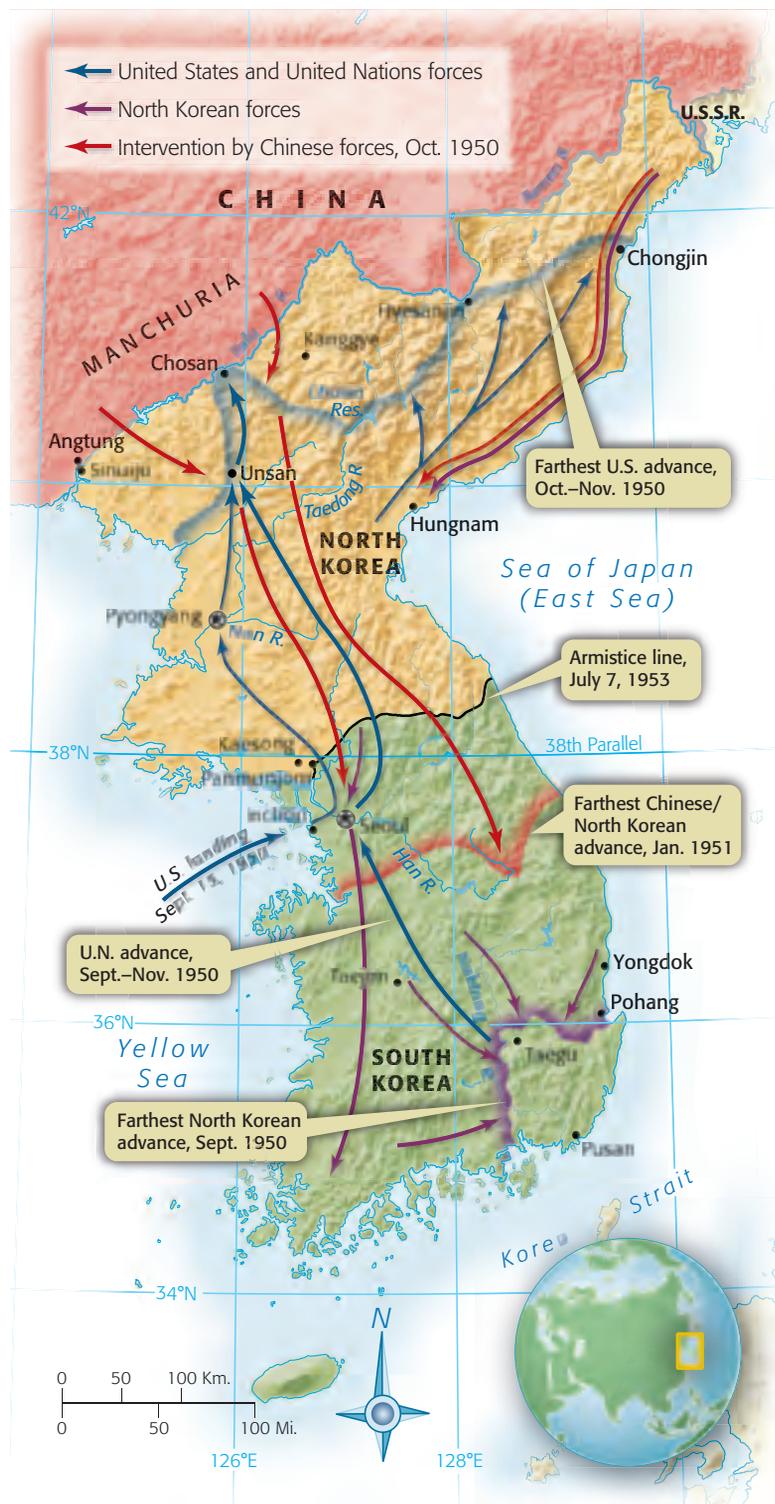
Korea, or South Korea, each claiming the sole right to rule all of Korea.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops swept across the thirty-eighth parallel to attack South Korea (see Map 26.3). Truman decided to fight back, viewing the assault as Stalin's test of U.S. will and containment policy. "Korea is the Greece of the Far East," Truman maintained. "If we are tough enough now, if we stand up to them like we did in Greece... they won't take any next steps." Mindful of the failure of appeasement at Munich in 1938, he believed the communists were doing in Korea exactly what Hitler and the Japanese had done in the 1930s: "Nobody had stood up to them. And that is what led to the Second World War." Having been accused of "selling out" Eastern Europe and "losing" China, Truman needed to prove he could stand up to "the Reds."

Without consulting Congress, Truman ordered air and naval forces to Korea from their bases in Japan on June 27. That same day, he asked the United Nations to authorize action to repel the invasion. Because the Soviets were boycotting the Security Council to protest the UN's unwillingness to seat Mao's China, and could not use their veto power, Truman gained approval for a UN "police action" to restore South Korea's border. He appointed General Douglas MacArthur to command the UN effort and ordered American ground troops into what now became the **Korean War**. The Cold War had turned hot.

North Korean forces initially routed the outnumbered American and South Korean troops. Then, in mid-September, with UN forces cornered on the southeastern tip of the Korean peninsula, struggling to avoid being pushed into the sea, MacArthur executed a brilliant amphibious maneuver, landing his troops at Inchon, 150 miles behind North Korean lines. Within two weeks, UN forces drove the North Koreans back across the thirty-eighth parallel. Basking in victory, MacArthur persuaded Truman to let him go beyond the UN mandate to repel aggression and to cross the border to liberate all of Korea from communism.

As UN troops approached the Yalu River—the boundary between Korea and China—the Chinese warned that they would not "sit back with folded hands and let the Americans come to the border." Dismissing the threat as "hot air," MacArthur deployed his forces in a thin line below the river. On November 25, thirty-three Chinese divisions (about 300,000 men) counterattacked, driving MacArthur's forces back below the thirty-eighth parallel in what *Time* magazine called "the worst military setback the United States has ever suffered." By March 1951, the fighting had deadlocked at roughly the original dividing line between the two Koreas. "We were eyeball to eyeball," recalled Bev Scott, one of the first black



MAP 26.3 THE KOREAN WAR, 1950-1953 The experience of fighting an undeclared war for the limited objective of containing communism confused the generation of Americans who had just fought an all-out war for the total defeat of the Axis. General MacArthur spoke for the many who were frustrated by the Korean conflict's mounting costs in blood and dollars: "There is no substitute for victory."

“There were bodies strewn all over the place. Hundreds of bodies frozen in the snow.”

lieutenants to head a racially integrated infantry squad.

Just 20 meters of no man's land between us. We couldn't move at all in the daytime without getting shot at.... It was like World War I. We lived in a maze of bunkers and deep trenches.... There were bodies strewn all over the place. Hundreds of bodies frozen in the snow. We could see the arms and legs sticking up. Nobody could get their dead out of there.

Stalemated, Truman reversed course and sought a negotiated peace based on the original objective of restoring the integrity of South Korea. MacArthur rocked the boat, however, urging that he be allowed to seek total victory even at the risk of an all-out war with China. Truman refused: “We are trying to prevent a world war—not to start one.” He sought a limited war for a limited objective: to hold the line in Korea. But MacArthur would not accept a stalemate. When he bluntly and repeatedly criticized Truman’s limited war—the “appeasement of Communism”—the president fired the general to protect civilian control of the military. Public opinion, however, backed the general. To Americans accustomed to unconditional victory, the very idea of limited war was baffling. Mounting casualties for no apparent purpose at places named Heartbreak

Ridge or Pork Chop Hill added anger to the mix. Despite warnings from the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that MacArthur’s proposals would result in “the wrong war at the wrong place in the wrong time and with the wrong enemy,” a growing number of Americans agreed with MacArthur that “There is no substitute for victory,” and listened sympathetically to Republican charges that communist agents controlled American policy.

Truman, meanwhile, found himself bogged down in Korea, unable to win a victory or craft a peace. After two more years of fighting, the two sides reached an armistice in July 1953 that left Korea divided. The “limited” conflict cost the United States 54,246 lives (about 33,700 of them battlefield deaths), another 103,284 wounded, and some \$54 billion. The Chinese lost 900,000 men, and the two Korean armies lost 800,000. As in World War II, massive U.S. “carpet bombing” killed at least a million civilians and left North Korea looking like a moonscape.

The Korean War had major consequences. It accelerated implementation of NSC-68 and the expansion of the containment doctrine into a global commitment. From 1950 to 1953, defense spending zoomed from \$13 billion to \$60 billion—from one-third to two-thirds of the entire federal budget—the U.S. army grew from half a million men to 3.6 million, and the American atomic stockpile mushroomed from 150 to 750 nuclear warheads. The United States acquired new bases around the world, committed itself to rearm West Germany, and joined a mutual-defense pact with Australia and New Zealand. Increased military aid flowed to Jiang Jieshi on Taiwan and to France’s fight against communist insurgents in Indochina.

Truman’s intervention in Korea preserved a precarious balance of power in Asia and stepped up the administration’s commitment to the anticommunist struggle. Containment, originally advanced to justify U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey, had become the ideological foundation for a major war in Korea and, ominously, for a deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Truman’s actions enhanced the powers of an already powerful presidency and set a precedent for future undeclared wars. They also augmented an economic boom, intensified the second Red Scare, and fostered Cold War attitudes that lasted long after the war ended.



A RACIALLY INTEGRATED UNIT IN THE KOREAN WAR The Korean War was the first war in U.S. history in which most soldiers fought in racially integrated units. President Truman ordered the integration of the armed forces in 1948, despite the opposition of many military officers, and the successful performance of African-Americans in Korea accelerated acceptance of military integration. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

The Truman Administration at Home, 1945–1952

The Cold War profoundly changed the United States for better and for worse. It weakened the nation’s commitment to civil liberties while

propelling research in medicine and science that, for the most part, made lives longer and better. It spurred more than a quarter of a century of economic growth and prosperity, the longest such period in American history. That, along with a vast expansion of higher education, enabled many Americans to become middle class, diminishing support for federal regulation of business and the expansion of the welfare state. The Cold War context, vastly different than the context in which FDR operated, largely determined the domestic record of Truman as well as of Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy.

Truman's Domestic Program

Americans' hunger for the fruits of affluence left them with little appetite for extending the New Deal. Truman agreed. "I don't want any experiments," he confided. "The American people have been through a lot of experiments and they want a rest." His only major domestic accomplishment in the Seventy-ninth Congress was the **Employment Act of 1946**. It committed the federal government to ensuring economic growth and established the Council of Economic Advisers to confer with the president and formulate policies for maintaining employment, production, and purchasing power. Congress, however, gutted both the goal of full employment and the enhanced executive powers to achieve that objective.

Congressional eagerness to dismantle wartime controls worsened the nation's chief economic problem: inflation. Consumer demand outran the supply of goods, intensifying the pressure on prices. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) sought to hold the line by enforcing price controls, but food producers, manufacturers, and retailers opposed continuing wartime controls. While some consumers favored the OPA, others deplored it as an irksome relic of wartime regulations. In June 1946, Truman vetoed a bill that would have extended the OPA's life, but deprived it of power, effectively ending all price controls. Consequently, food costs rose 16 percent within a week and the price of beef doubled. "PRICES SOAR, BUYERS SORE, STEERS JUMP OVER THE MOON," headlined the *New York Daily News*.

Congress then passed, and Truman signed, a second bill extending price controls in weakened form. Protesting any price controls, however, farmers and meat producers threatened to withhold food from the market. Knowing that "meatless voters are opposition voters," Truman lifted controls on food prices just before the 1946 midterm elections. When Democrats fared poorly anyway, Truman ended all

price controls. By then, the consumer price index had jumped nearly 25 percent since the end of the war.

Sharp price rises and shrinking paychecks shorn of overtime goaded organized labor to demand higher wages. More than 4.5 million workers went on strike in 1946. When a United Mine Workers walk-out paralyzed the economy for forty days, Truman ordered the army to seize the mines. A week later, after Truman had pressured owners to grant most of the union's demands, the miners returned to work, only to walk out again six months later. Meanwhile, on the heels of the first mine workers settlement, railway engineers and trainmen announced they would shut down the nation's railroad system for the first time in history. "If you think I'm going to sit here and let you tie up this whole country," Truman shouted at the heads of the two unions, "you're crazy as hell." In May, he asked Congress for authority to draft workers who struck vital industries. Before he could finish his speech, the unions gave in. Still, Truman's threat alienated labor leaders.

By the fall of 1946, Truman had angered most major interest groups. Less than a third of Americans polled approved of his performance. "To err is Truman," some gibe. Summing up the public discontent, Republicans asked, "Had enough?" In the 1946 elections, they captured twenty-five governorships and, for the first time since 1928, won control of both houses of Congress.

The public mood reflected more than just economic discontent. Under the surface, laughter at stores advertising atomic sales or bartenders mixing atomic cocktails ran a new, deep current of fear, symbolized by the rash of "flying saucer" sightings that had begun after the war. An NBC radio program depicted a nuclear attack on Chicago in which most people died instantly. "Those few who escaped the blast, but not the gamma rays, died slowly after they had left the ruined city," intoned the narrator. "No attempt at identification of the bodies or burial ever took place. Chicago was simply closed." There was much talk of urban dispersal—resettling people in small communities in the country's vast open spaces—and of how to protect oneself in a nuclear attack. The end of World War II had brought an uneasy peace.

The Eightieth Congress, 1947–1948

Many Republicans in the Eightieth Congress interpreted the 1946 elections as a mandate to

"I don't want any experiments. The American people have been through a lot of experiments and they want a rest."

“We have got to break with the corrupting idea that we can legislate prosperity, legislate equality, legislate opportunity.”

reverse the New Deal. As “Mr. Republican,” Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, declared, “We have got to break with the corrupting idea that we can legislate prosperity, legislate equality, legislate opportunity.” Congress defeated Democratic bills to raise the minimum wage and to provide federal funds for education and hous-

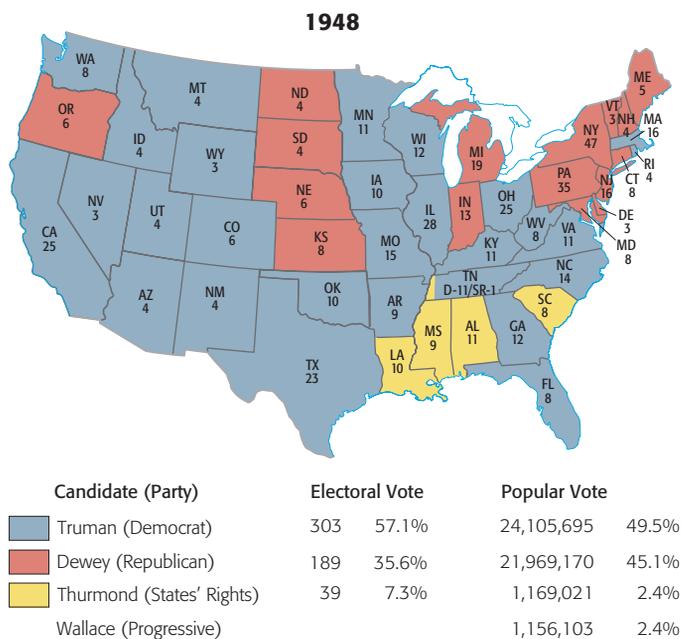
ing and, capitalizing on the national consensus for curbing labor union power generated by the waves of postwar strikes, passed the **Taft-Hartley Act** in 1947. Officially the Labor-Management Relations Act, it barred the closed shop—a workplace where all employees had to join the union; outlawed secondary boycotts—strikes against suppliers of a targeted business; required union officials to sign anticommunist loyalty oaths; and permitted the president to call a cooling-off period to delay strikes that might endanger national safety or health. The act weakened organizing drives in the nonunion South and West, hastening the relocation of labor-intensive industries, such as textiles, from the Northeast and Midwest to the Sunbelt, and it drove leftist leaders out of the CIO, weakening organized labor as a force for social justice.

Truman vetoed the bill, and Congress easily overrode the veto. Yet Truman had taken a major step in regaining organized labor’s political support and reforging FDR’s New Deal coalition. Now an unabashed liberal, Truman urged Congress to

repeal Taft-Hartley and to provide federal aid to education and housing, national health insurance, and high farm-price supports. To woo ethnic voters of Eastern European descent, Truman railed against Soviet communism; and to court Jewish-American voters, as well as express his deep sympathy toward Holocaust survivors, he overrode the objections of the State Department, which feared alienating the oil-rich Arab world, and extended diplomatic recognition to the new state of Israel within hours of its establishment in May 1948.

Still, Truman’s chances for victory dimmed as southern segregationists, alarmed by the president’s support for civil rights, bolted the Democrats and nominated Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as the candidate of the States’ Rights (“Dixiecrat”) party, a significant step toward the eventual breakup of the Democratic political coalition of southern conservatives and northern liberals. Further diminishing Truman’s chances, leftwing Democrats joined with communists to launch a new Progressive Party headed by former vice president Henry A. Wallace. To capitalize on Democratic divisions, Republicans played it safe, nominating the moderate governor of New York, Thomas E. Dewey, for president, and of California, Earl Warren for vice president. Confident of victory, Dewey ran a complacent campaign designed to offend the fewest people. Truman, in contrast, campaigned aggressively, blasting the “no-good, do-nothing” Republicans as “gluttons of privilege.” Pollsters applauded Truman’s spunk but predicted a Dewey victory.

Instead, the president won the biggest electoral upset in U.S. history (see Map 26.4). The Progressives and Dixiecrats, ironically, helped Truman. Their radicalism kept most moderates safely in the Democratic fold. Most importantly, Truman succeeded as the defender of the New Deal against the party of Herbert Hoover and the depression. Accordingly, the Roosevelt coalition—organized labor, farmers, urban ethnics, blacks, and most white southerners—held together one more time.



MAP 26.4 THE ELECTION OF 1948

The Fair Deal

Despite his slim victory, Truman proposed a vast liberal agenda—the **Fair Deal**—that included civil rights, national health-care legislation, and federal aid to education. Unlike New Deal liberalism, the Fair Deal counted on continual economic growth. An expanding economic pie would mean a bigger piece for most Americans (so they would not resent helping those left behind) and more tax revenue for the government (so it would have the funds to pay for more social-welfare programs).

Despite prosperity, the bipartisan conservative coalition of northern Republicans and southern Democrats, which had largely controlled Congress since 1938, rejected the Fair Deal. While extending some existing programs, such as the minimum wage and Social Security, and authorizing the construction of 800,000 units of low-income housing, Congress would go no further. Special interest groups, such as the American Medical Association and the National Association of Manufacturers, lobbied extensively against what they called “creeping socialism,” and prosperity sapped public enthusiasm for liberal initiatives. By 1950, Truman was once again subordinating domestic issues to foreign policy.

The Politics of Anticommunism

As the Cold War worsened, some Americans concluded that the roots of the nation’s difficulties abroad lay in domestic treason and subversion. How else could the communists have taken China and built an atomic bomb? Millions of fearful Americans enlisted in a crusade that equated dissent with disloyalty and blamed scapegoats for the nation’s problems.

Similar intolerance had prevailed in the Red Scare of 1919–1920 (see Chapter 22), but the Second Red Scare lasted longer, affected more people, and had greater consequences. It took root in the creation of the House Committee on Un-American Activities—later called the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)—in 1938 to ferret out Fascists, but it quickly became a platform for right-wing denunciations of the New Deal as a communist plot. After World War II, mounting numbers of conservative Democrats and Republicans found it popular to climb aboard the anti-Red bandwagon.

The **Second Red Scare** influenced both governmental and personal actions. Millions of Americans were subjected to security investigations and loyalty oaths. Anticommunist extremism destroyed the Left, undermined labor militancy, and discredited liberalism. It spawned a “silent generation” of college students and ensured anticommunist foreign-policy rigidity.

Loyalty and Security

The U.S. Communist Party had claimed eighty thousand members during the Second World War, and no one knew how many of its members or sympathizers occupied sensitive government positions. In mid-1945, a raid on the offices of a procommunist

magazine revealed that classified documents had been stolen from government offices. Ten months later, the Canadian government exposed a major spy network that had passed American atomic secrets to the Soviets during the war. Republicans accused the Democratic administration of being “soft on communism.”

A week after his Truman Doctrine speech of March 1947, the president issued Executive Order 9835 establishing the Federal Employee Loyalty Program to root out subversives in the government. It authorized the Attorney General to prepare a list of “subversive” organizations and made association with such groups grounds for dismissal. The drive for security overran civil liberties, as those suspected could neither face their accusers nor require investigators to reveal sources.

Mere criticism of American foreign policy could result in an accusation of disloyalty. People lost jobs because they liked foreign films, associated with radical friends, or favored the unionization of federal workers. “Of course the fact that a person believes in racial equality doesn’t prove he’s a communist,” mused an Interior Department Loyalty Board chairman, “but it certainly makes you look twice, doesn’t it?” Of the 4.7 million jobholders and applicants who underwent loyalty checks by 1952, 560 were fired or denied jobs, and several thousand resigned or withdrew their applications. Although Loyalty Board probes uncovered no evidence of espionage or subversion, it spread fear among government employees. “If communists like apple pie and I do,” claimed one federal worker, “I see no reason why I should stop eating it. But I would.”

The Anticommunist Crusade

The very existence of a federal loyalty probe fed fears of domestic subversion. It promoted hysteria about communist infiltrators and legitimated a witch-hunt for subversives. College administrators cooperated with the FBI in spying on students and faculty, universities banned controversial speakers, and popular magazines featured articles like “Reds Are After Your Child.” By the end of Truman’s term, thirty-nine states had created loyalty programs. Few had any procedural safeguards. Schoolteachers, college professors, and state and city employees throughout the nation had to sign loyalty oaths or lose their jobs. No one knows for sure how many were dismissed, denied tenure, or drifted away, leaving behind colleagues too frightened to speak out.

In 1947, blurring distinctions between dissent and disloyalty,

“Reds Are After Your Child.”



THE RED MENACE, 1949 Although Hollywood generally avoided overtly political films, it released a few dozen explicitly anticommunist films in the postwar era. Depicting American communists as vicious hypocrites, if not hardened criminals, Hollywood's Cold War movies, like its blacklist, were an effort to protect its imperiled public image after HUAC's widely publicized investigation of the movie industry. (*The Michael Barson Collection/Past Perfect*)

between radicalism and subversion, the **House Un-American Activities Committee** (HUAC) held widely publicized hearings to expose communist infiltration of Hollywood. When some prominent film directors and screenwriters, dubbed the Hollywood Ten, refused to testify about past political associations, claiming the free-speech protections of the First Amendment, HUAC had them cited for contempt of Congress and sent to federal prison. Despite HUAC's failure to prove that Hollywood had produced "flagrant communist propaganda films," blacklists in the motion picture industry and in radio broadcasting quickly followed. They barred the employment of those with a questionable past or those who had associated, however remotely, with others deemed "subversive" or "un-American" (see *Going to the Source*). They silenced many talented people, and prompted the entertainment media either to shun controversial issues or to tilt politically to the right.

HUAC also frightened the labor movement into expelling communists and avoiding progressive causes. Fearful of appearing "red," or even "pink,"

most unions shunned politics to focus on securing better pay and benefits for their members.

The 1948 presidential election campaign also fed national anxieties. Truman lambasted Wallace as a Stalinist dupe and the GOP dubbed the Democrats "the party of treason." To blunt such accusations, Truman's Justice Department prosecuted eleven top leaders of the American Communist Party under the Smith Act of 1940, which outlawed any conspiracy advocating the overthrow of the government. The Supreme Court upheld the Smith Act's constitutionality (*Dennis v. United States*, 1951), declaring that Congress could curtail freedom of speech if national security required such restriction. Ironically, the Communist Party was fading into obscurity at the very time politicians magnified its threat. By 1950, its membership had shrunk to fewer than thirty thousand.

McCarthyism

Nothing set off more alarms of a diabolic Red conspiracy than the matter of **Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers**, discussed at the beginning

Remembering the Hollywood Blacklist

In 1947, attorney Bartley Crum helped represent the Hollywood Ten before HUAC. In 1997, Crum's daughter, Patricia Bosworth, wrote to the *New York Times* about her memories of the

subsequent blacklist and its effects on the people involved. Bosworth emphasizes the chilling hardships that HUAC's assault on civil liberties brought down on individuals.

I first learned about the Hollywood blacklist on Nov. 24, 1947. I remember the exact moment. I was standing with my father, Bartley Crum, by a phone booth near Union Square in San Francisco, feeding him nickels and dimes while he made a series of intense phone calls to Dore Schary, who was the head of MGM.

If you're wondering why he had to make calls from a pay phone, it's because our house was bugged by the F.B.I. At that point I was too young to quite grasp the bugged calls, but I did know that my father had been one of six lawyers who had just defended the "Hollywood 10" in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in Washington.

These were the writers, directors, and producers who had been subpoenaed to testify about their political beliefs. But they stood on their First Amendment rights and refused to reveal whether they were Communists. After the hearings, in October, the Hollywood 10 were indicted for contempt, sent to jail, and "blacklisted" from working in Hollywood.

On that foggy afternoon in San Francisco so long ago, my father stopped making phone calls and turned to me to try to explain why the Hollywood 10 would have to be sacrificed to appease HUAC. It was the start of the Red Scare and America's paranoia about Russia and Communism.

Today, almost nobody I know has anything but the vaguest memories of the Hollywood blacklist. Nobody remembers that HUAC continued its investigations into the film community well into 1956 and that hundreds of witnesses were called to testify and to inform on colleagues to prove their loyalty and their patriotism.

Back in the 50s, there wasn't any talk of selling out when blacklisted writers, just out of jail, huddled in our living room. Instead, my father's conversations with them focused on the meaning of loyalty and questions about censorship and how

one could survive in the writers' black market. All the best writers had been blacklisted, and everyone was writing under pseudonyms and being paid in cash; it was hard to open a bank account, impossible to get life insurance. Nobody had enough money. Everyone was being hounded by the F.B.I.

My father was being hounded too. Because he had defended the Hollywood 10 and taken on numerous loyalty cases as well, he was labeled subversive. He was followed relentlessly by the F.B.I., and our phones remained tapped. My father was even put on the F.B.I. security index, which meant that in the event of an "emergency" he would be put in a concentration camp. He lost most of his clients. Close to bankruptcy and in despair, my father informed on two colleagues already known to be Communists. In 1959, he committed suicide.

The cold war lasted until 1991. During much of the time between the 1950's and then HUAC was still active in various forms. Many movie executives were afraid to stand up for anything, least of all blacklisted writers. And nobody wanted to seem soft on Communism.

Today there are still threats to our freedom of expression, many of them the work of self-appointed guardians of decency. We can put them in historical context by remembering the blacklist of the 1950's.

Source: Patricia Bosworth's books include biographies of Marlon Brando and the photographer Diane Arbus as well as the memoir "Anything Your Little Heart Desires—An American Family Story." It's the story of her father Bartley Crum, but it's also a cultural history of the 40s and 50s about the fall of liberalism and the dawn of the Cold War and the political turmoil that ensued, which created an environment of anti-communist hysteria that ruined many lives full of promise. This letter first appeared in the *New York Times*, April 20, 1997. Copyright © 1997 by Patricia Bosworth. Reprinted with permission.

QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the consequences of defying the House Un-American Activities Committee?
2. In what ways does the postwar assault on domestic radicalism shed light on developments in American life today? How is it similar? How does it differ?



Go to the website at www.cengage.com/history/boyerending7e for additional primary sources on this period.



LEFT AND RIGHT IN COLD WAR AMERICA Arrested in 1950 and charged with being members of a Soviet atomic spy ring during World War II, American communists Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were found guilty of conspiring to commit espionage and were executed in 1953. Although they and their defenders protested their innocence, Soviet documents made public in the 1990s identified Julius Rosenberg as a secret communist agent. (© Elliot Erwit/Magnum Photos, Inc.)

of this chapter. That an eminent official such as Hiss had been disloyal intensified the widespread fears of a communist underground in the government. Then, a month after Hiss's perjury conviction, another spy case shocked Americans. In February 1950, the British arrested Klaus Fuchs, a German-born scientist involved in the Manhattan Project, for passing atomic secrets to the Soviets in 1944–1945. His confession led to the arrest of an American who then named his brother-in-law and sister, **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg**, as co-conspirators in the wartime spy network. The Rosenbergs insisted they were victims of anti-Semitism being prosecuted for their leftist beliefs. But in March 1951, a jury found them guilty of conspiring to commit espionage, and in June 1953 they each died in the electric chair—the first American civilians to lose their lives for espionage.

The release of classified documents in the 1990s, from the archives of the former Soviet Union, confirm that Hiss did pass secret information to the Soviets

and that Julius Rosenberg, who described himself as a “soldier of Stalin,” was part of a spy ring that gave the USSR data on America's atomic bomb project. Ethel Rosenberg, however, appears to have been merely, “a lever” to pressure Julius into naming other spies.

By 1950, when few Americans could separate fact from fantasy regarding the communist threat, the spy cases tarnished liberalism and fueled other loyalty investigations. Only a conspiracy, it seemed, could explain U.S. setbacks. Frustrated by unexpected failure in the 1948 election, Republicans eagerly exploited the fearful mood and accused the “Commiecrats” of selling out America.

In February 1950, Republican senator **Joseph R. McCarthy** of Wisconsin, desperate for an issue on which to run for reelection in 1952, and parroting a speech given by Richard Nixon, boldly told a West Virginia audience that “the bright young men who were born with silver spoons in their mouths” had betrayed America. McCarthy was referring to the State Department. “I have in my hand 205 cases of

individuals,” he asserted as he waved a laundry list, “who would appear to be either card carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy.” McCarthy subsequently lowered his number to 57, then to 10, and then to one “policy risk.” McCarthy never released any names or proof. A Senate committee found McCarthy’s accusations “a fraud and a hoax,” but he persisted, making so many accusations that the facts could never catch up. “McCarthyism” became a synonym for personal attacks on individuals by means of indiscriminate allegations and unsubstantiated charges.

As the Korean War dragged on, McCarthy’s efforts to “root out the skunks” escalated. He ridiculed Secretary of State Dean Acheson as the “Red Dean” and charged George Marshall with having “aided and abetted a communist conspiracy so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man.” McCarthyism especially appealed to midwestern Republicans opposed to Democratic internationalism and restrictions on business. For many in the American Legion and the Chambers of Commerce, anticommunism was a weapon of revenge against liberals—a means to regain the dominance that conservatism formerly held in American life. McCarthy also won a devoted following among blue-collar workers who felt that all true Americans detested “communists and queers” and among Catholic ethnics, who sought acceptance as “100 percent Americans” through a show of anticommunist zeal. Countless Americans also shared McCarthy’s scorn for State Department liberals as the “bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths.” And McCarthy’s conspiracy theory offered a simple answer to the perplexing questions of the Cold War: the fault is in Washington.

McCarthy’s political power rested on both the Republican establishment and Democratic fears of antagonizing him. In the 1950 elections, when he helped Republicans defeat Democrats who had denounced him, McCarthy appeared invincible. Few dared incur his wrath.

Over Truman’s veto, Congress in 1950 adopted the **McCarran Internal Security Act**, which required organizations deemed communist by the attorney general to register with the Department of Justice. It also authorized the arrest and detention during a national emergency of “any person as to whom there is reason to believe might engage in acts of espionage or sabotage.” In addition, the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also adopted over Truman’s veto, maintained the quota system that severely restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe



JOSEPH MCCARTHY, THE TERROR OF WASHINGTON Although McCarthy never produced any credible evidence to support his charges, his reckless anticommunist demagoguery pinned the Democrats with being responsible for “twenty years of treason,” and made suspect any politician, group, or cause that could be described as “leftist.” (Hank Walker/Getty Images)

and from Asia, but did end the ban on Japanese immigration and made Issei eligible for naturalized citizenship. In the name of national security, moreover, the law increased the attorney general’s authority to exclude or deport “undesirable” aliens, particularly those suspected of homosexuality or supporting communism.

The Election of 1952

In 1952, public apprehension about the loyalty of government employees combined with frustration over the Korean stalemate to sink Democratic hopes to their lowest level since the 1920s. Truman’s approval

Nixon red-baited his opponent, Helen Gahagan Douglas, as “pink right down to her underwear.”

rating plummeted to 23 percent, the lowest ever recorded by a president. Popular resentment of Truman’s handling of the Korean War and revelations of bribery by his political associates gave the GOP ammunition for charging the Democrats with “plunder at home, and blunder abroad” and for campaigning on the “K1 C2”

slogan—“Korea, Communism, and Corruption.”

With Truman too unpopular to run for reelection, dispirited Democrats drafted Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois and, to appease southern white voters, nominated segregationist Senator John A. Sparkman of Alabama for vice president. But Stevenson could not dissociate himself from Truman, and his lofty speeches appealed primarily to intellectuals, not the average voter. Above all, Stevenson could not overcome the sentiment that twenty years of Democratic rule was enough.

Compounding Democratic woes, the GOP nominated the hugely popular war hero **Dwight D. Eisenhower**. Essentially apolitical, he answered the call of the moderate wing of the Republican Party in 1952 and accepted the nomination. As a concession to the hard-line anticommunists in the party, “Ike” chose as his running mate Richard Nixon, who had won a seat in the Senate in 1950 by red-baiting his opponent, Helen Gahagan Douglas, as “pink right down to her underwear.”

Eisenhower and Nixon proved unbeatable. With a captivating grin and an unimpeachable record of public service, Eisenhower projected both personal warmth and the vigorous authority associated with military command. At the same time, Nixon kept public apprehensions at the boiling point. Accusing the Democrats of treason, he charged that the election of “Adlai the appeaser . . . who got a Ph.D. from Dean Acheson’s College of Cowardly Communist Containment” would bring “more Alger Hisses, more atomic spies.”

Less than two weeks before the election, Eisenhower dramatically pledged to “go to Korea” to end the stalemated war. It worked: 62.7 percent of those eligible to vote (compared to just 51.5 percent in 1948) turned out in 1952 and gave the Republican ticket 55 percent of the ballots. Ike cracked the Solid South, carrying thirty-nine states (and 442 electoral votes). Enough Republicans rode his coattails to give the GOP narrow control of both houses of Congress.

The Downfall of Joseph McCarthy

Although he despised Joseph McCarthy, Eisenhower thought it beneath his dignity to “get into the gutter

with that guy.” He also understood the usefulness of anticommunism as a GOP campaign issue. In 1953, 185 of the 221 House Republicans sought a seat on HUAC. So Ike allowed McCarthy to grab plenty of rope in hopes that the demagogue would hang himself. He did.

In 1954, McCarthy accused Army officials of harboring communist spies and trying to blackmail his investigating committee. The resulting Army-McCarthy hearings—the first Senate hearings broadcast nationally on the new medium of television—brought McCarthy down. For more than a month, millions witnessed McCarthy’s boorish behavior on television. His contemptuous combativeness repelled viewers. He behaved like the bad guy in a TV western, observed novelist John Steinbeck: “He had a stubble of a beard, he leered, he sneered, he had a nasty laugh. He bullied and shouted. He looked evil.” When the hearings ended in June, the spell of the inquisitor had been broken. That December, the Senate voted 67 to 22 to censure McCarthy for contemptuous behavior. This powerful rebuke demolished McCarthy as a political force. In 1957, he died from an alcohol-related illness, ignored by the media that had made him powerful. He had uncovered no communists, but had ruined careers and made the United States look pitifully fearful to the rest of the world. Still, the paranoia he exploited lingered. Congress annually funded HUAC into the 1960s, and state and local governments continued to require loyalty oaths from teachers. Accusations of communism remained a useful charge to hurl at one’s opponents. To protect themselves, individuals and organizations continued to avoid any hint of radicalism. Just to be safe, the Cincinnati Reds renamed their baseball team the “Redlegs.”

McCarthyism also remained a rallying call of conservatives disenchanted with the postwar consensus. Young conservatives like William F. Buckley, Jr., and groups like the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, continued to claim that domestic communism was a major subversive threat. The John Birch Society denounced Eisenhower as a conscious agent of communism and equated liberalism with treason. Although few saw the conspiratorial dangers that the John Birch Society did, Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Ronald Reagan, among others, would later use its anticommunist, antigovernment rhetoric to advantage. Stressing victory over communism, rather than its containment, the self-proclaimed “new conservatives” (or radical Right, as their opponents called them) criticized the “creeping socialism” of Eisenhower, advocated a return to traditional moral standards, and condemned the liberal rulings of the Supreme Court.

“Modern Republicanism”

Most Americans in the 1950s did not venture that far right. They voted for a president who would steer a moderate course and got what they wanted. Rarely in history has a president better fit the national mood than “Ike.” Exhausted by a quarter-century of upheaval, Americans craved stability and peace. And Eisenhower, projecting the image of a plain but good man, delivered. He gave a people weary of partisanship a sense of unity; he set a quieter, less angry national mood, a moderate tone between conservatism and liberalism; he inspired confidence and comforted people in an anxious, demanding age.

Born on October 14, 1890, in Denison, Texas, Eisenhower grew up in Abilene, Kansas, in a poor, religious family. More athletic than studious, he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1915. In directing the Allied invasion of North Africa in 1942 and of western Europe in 1944, he revealed himself to be a brilliant war planner and an efficient, diplomatic executive. His approach to the presidency reflected his wartime leadership style. He concentrated on major matters, delegated authority, and worked to reconcile contending factions. His restrained view of presidential authority and his low-key style, combined with frequent fishing and golfing vacations, led Democrats to scoff at Eisenhower as a leader who “reigned but did not rule.”

The image of passivity, however, masked a “hidden-hand” presidency that enabled him to work successfully behind the scenes. More pragmatic than ideological, the president wished to reduce taxes, contain inflation, and when necessary, check downturns by stimulating the economy. After the Democrats retook Congress in 1954, Eisenhower supported extending social-security benefits, raising the minimum wage, adding 4 million workers to those eligible for unemployment benefits, and providing federally financed public housing for low-income families. He also approved construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway, linking the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean, and creation of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In 1956, Eisenhower backed the largest and most expensive public-works program in American history: the Interstate Highway Act, authorizing construction of a 41,000-mile system of expressways that would soon snake across America, accelerating suburban growth, heightening dependence on imported oil, and contributing to urban decay and air pollution.

Republicans renominated Ike by acclamation in 1956, and voters gave him a landslide victory over Democrat Adlai Stevenson. With the GOP crowing, “Everything’s booming but the guns,” the president



IKE AND DICK The Republican ticket of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon won the 1952 election by capitalizing on frustration over the stalemated Korean War, the fear of Communist subversion, and revelations of favoritism and kickbacks on government contracts by the Truman administration. (© David J. & Janice L. Frent Collection/CORBIS)

won by the greatest popular majority since FDR's victory in 1936.

The Cold War Continues

Eisenhower essentially maintained Truman's containment policy. Stalin's death in 1953 and Eisenhower's veiled threat to use nuclear weapons broke the Korean stalemate. The armistice signed in July 1953 set the boundary between North and South Korea once again at the thirty-eighth parallel. Some Americans claimed that communist aggression had been thwarted and containment vindicated; others condemned the truce as peace without honor.

Ike and Dulles

Eager to ease Cold War hostilities, Eisenhower first had to quiet the GOP right wing's clamor to roll back the Red tide. To do so, he chose as his secretary of state **John Foster Dulles**, a rigid, humorless Presbyterian who advocated a holy war against “atheistic communism,” including “instant, massive retaliation” with nuclear weapons. Dulles called for “liberation” of the captive peoples of Eastern Europe and for unleashing Jiang Jieshi against communist China. Believing that the Soviet Union understood only force, Dulles insisted on the necessity of “brinkmanship,” the art of never backing down in a crisis—even at the risk of war.

Such saber rattling pleased the Right, but Eisenhower preferred conciliation, partly to keep the cost of containment at a manageable level and partly because the Soviet Union had tested its own hydrogen bomb in 1953. Eisenhower refused to translate Dulles's rhetoric into action. The United States did nothing to check the Soviet interventions that crushed uprisings in East Germany (1953) and Hungary (1956). There would be no rolling back Red power in Eastern Europe.

As multimegaton thermonuclear weapons replaced atomic bombs in U.S. and Soviet arsenals, and both nations developed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to deliver such bombs, Eisenhower worked to reduce the probability of mutual annihilation. He proposed "atoms for peace," whereby both superpowers would contribute fissionable materials to a new UN agency for use in industrial projects. In the absence of a positive Soviet response, the government constructed an electronic air defense system to provide early warning of a missile attack.

Work also began on commercial nuclear plants in the mid-1950s, promising electricity "too cheap to meter." However, most money continued to go for nuclear research that was military. Radioactive fallout from atomic tests, especially the 1954 U.S. tests that spread strontium 90 over a wide area, heightened world concern about the nuclear-arms race. In 1955, Eisenhower and Soviet leaders met in Geneva for the first East-West conference since World War II. Discussions produced no concrete plan for arms control, but mutual talk of "peaceful coexistence" led reporters to hail the "spirit of Geneva." In March 1958, Moscow suspended atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons, and the United States followed suit.

But the Cold War continued. Dulles negotiated mutual-defense pacts with forty-three nations, and created SEATO in 1954, extending collective security agreements between the United States and Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. Rather than trying to match the communists "man for man, gun for gun," Eisenhower's "New Look" defense program reduced conventional forces and emphasized nuclear weapons. Promising "more bang for the buck," it succeeded in reducing the defense budget yet spurred the Soviets to seek "more rubble for the ruble" by enlarging their nuclear stockpile.

Meanwhile, the focus of the Cold War shifted from Europe to the Third World, the largely nonwhite developing nations. There, the two superpowers waged war by proxy, using local guerrillas and military juntas to do their fighting for them.

There, too, the CIA fought covert wars against those thought to imperil American interests.

CIA Covert Actions

Established in 1947 to conduct foreign intelligence gathering, the CIA soon began to carry out undercover operations to topple regimes friendly to communism. By 1957, half its personnel and 80 percent of its budget were devoted to "covert action." To woo influential foreign thinkers away from communism, the CIA also sponsored intellectual conferences and jazz concerts. It bankrolled anticommunist cultural events, subsidized magazines to publish articles supporting the United States, and recruited college students and businessmen traveling abroad as "fronts" in clandestine CIA activities.

In 1953, the CIA orchestrated a coup to overthrow the government of Iran. Fearing that the prime minister, who had nationalized the oil fields, might open oil-rich Iran to the Soviets, the CIA replaced him with the pro-American Shah Reza Pahlavi. The United States gained a loyal ally on the Soviet border, and Western oil companies prospered when the Shah made low-priced oil available to them. But Iranian hatred of America took root—a hostility that would haunt the United States into the twenty-first century.

The CIA also intervened in Philippine elections in 1953 to ensure a pro-American government. The following year, a CIA-supported band of mercenaries in Guatemala overthrew the elected communist-influenced regime, which had seized land from the American-owned United Fruit Company. The new pro-American government restored United Fruit's properties and trampled political opposition. "Our traditional ideas of international sportsmanship," Eisenhower noted privately in 1955, "are scarcely applicable in the morass in which the world now flounders."

Troubles in the Third World

Eisenhower first followed Truman's course of aiding France in its battle with Indochinese insurgents. When that failed, he pinned his hopes on the CIA-installed President Ngo Dinh Diem to keep South Vietnam an independent anticommunist nation tied to the United States. That policy, too, appeared to be faltering as he left office (to be further discussed in Chapter 28). He faced his greatest crisis, however, in the Middle East. In 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in Egypt, determined to modernize his nation. To woo him, the United States offered financing for a dam at Aswan to harness the Nile River. But when Nasser purchased arms from Czechoslovakia,

"Our traditional ideas of international sportsmanship are scarcely applicable in the morass in which the world now flounders."

John Foster Dulles canceled the loan, and Nasser nationalized the British-controlled Suez Canal.

Viewing the canal as the lifeline of its empire, Britain, in alliance with France, which feared Arab nationalism in their Algerian colony, and with Israel, which feared the Egyptian arms buildup, attacked Egypt to retake the canal in October. Angered that America's three closest allies had not consulted him, and fearful that such military action would drive the Arab world and its precious oil to the Russians, Eisenhower forced his allies to withdraw their troops. Given gas-hungry Americans' need to avoid alienating the Arab world, the United States did nothing as Egypt retook the Suez Canal and built the Aswan Dam with Soviet support.

The **Suez crisis** had major consequences. It swelled Third World antiwestern sentiment, and the United States replaced Britain and France as the protector of western interests in the Middle East. Determined to guarantee the flow of oil to the West from Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, which had some 60 percent of the world's known reserves, the president announced the **Eisenhower Doctrine** in 1957—a proclamation that the United States would send military aid and, if necessary, troops to any Middle Eastern nation threatened by “Communist aggression.”

Such interventions intensified anti-American feelings in Third World nations. Angry crowds in Peru and Venezuela spat at Vice President Nixon and stoned his car in 1958. In 1959, Fidel Castro overturned a dictatorial regime in Cuba and confiscated American properties without compensation. He then established close economic and military ties with the Soviet Union. If the United States dared intervene, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev warned, he would defend Cuba with nuclear weapons. “The Monroe Doctrine has outlived its time,” Khrushchev said.

A tougher blow came on May 1, 1960, two weeks before a scheduled summit conference between Eisenhower and Khrushchev, when Soviet air defenses shot down a U.S. spy plane far inside their border. Khrushchev displayed the captured CIA pilot and the photos taken of Soviet missile sites. Eisenhower refused to apologize, and the summit collapsed.

“The Monroe Doctrine has outlived its time.”

The Eisenhower Legacy

Just before leaving office, Eisenhower offered Americans a farewell and a warning. The demands of national security, he stated, had produced the “conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry.” Swollen defense budgets had yoked American economic health to military expenditures, and military contracts had become the staff of life for research scholars, politicians, and America's largest corporations. This combination of interests, Eisenhower believed, exerted enormous leverage and threatened the traditional subordination of the military in American life. “We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence...by the **military-industrial complex**. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

The president concluded that he had avoided war but that lasting peace was not in sight. Most scholars agreed. Eisenhower ended the Korean War, avoided direct intervention in Vietnam, initiated relaxing tensions with the Soviet Union, and suspended atmospheric nuclear testing. At the same time, he presided over an accelerating nuclear-arms race and a Cold War that encircled the globe. So, too, would his successor.

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| <p>1946 George Kennan's "long telegram."
Winston Churchill's "iron curtain" speech.
Republicans win control of Congress.</p> <p>1947 Truman Doctrine.
Federal Employee Loyalty Program.
Taft-Hartley Act.
National Security Act.
HUAC holds hearings on Hollywood.</p> <p>1948 State of Israel founded.
Berlin airlift.
Congress approves Marshall Plan to aid Europe.
Communist leaders put on trial under the Smith Act.
Truman elected president.</p> <p>1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) established.
East and West Germany founded as separate nations.
Communist victory in China; People's Republic of China established.
Soviet Union detonates an atomic bomb.</p> | <p>1950 Soviet spy ring at Los Alamos uncovered.
Joseph McCarthy launches anticommunist crusade.
Korean War begins.
McCarran Internal Security Act.
Truman accepts NSC-68.</p> <p>1951 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg convicted of espionage.</p> <p>1952 First hydrogen bomb exploded.
Dwight D. Eisenhower elected president.</p> <p>1953 Korean War truce signed.</p> <p>1954 Army-McCarthy hearings.</p> <p>1956 Suez Crisis.
Eisenhower re-elected.</p> <p>1957 Eisenhower Doctrine announced.</p> <p>1959 Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba.</p> <p>1960 U-2 incident.</p> |
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CONCLUSION

After nearly two decades of depression and war, the end of World War II meant the beginning of a new era of hope for most Americans. At the same time, an assertive United States, eager to protect and expand its influence and power in the world, sought to contain a Soviet Union obsessed with its own security and self-interest. Stalin's aggressive posture toward Eastern Europe and the Persian Gulf was met by an American policy of containment, in whose name the United States aided Greece and Turkey, established the Marshall Plan, airlifted supplies into Berlin for a year, approved the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), established NATO, implemented NSC-68, financed France's war in Vietnam, and went to war in Korea. The resulting stalemate would last for four decades, define American politics and society, transform the U.S. economy, and condition the thinking of a generation.

The Cold War obsession with communism, as well as postwar prosperity, weakened the appeal of liberal reform. In a political climate far more conservative than that of the 1930s, New Deal measures remained in place, but Truman's Fair Deal to assist the disadvantaged with new initiatives in education, health insurance, and civil rights failed. Anticommunist

hysteria squashed the Left and narrowed the range of politically acceptable ideas. Most importantly, Truman's actions at home and abroad fed America's fear of communism, which grew with the president's responses to the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb, the fall of China to the communists, the invasion of South Korea, and Truman's own loyalty probe to root out subversive government workers. Witch-hunts for communism in American life and the discovery of a Soviet atomic spy ring added to the paranoia. In this atmosphere, Truman's actions encouraged others to seek scapegoats for American failures abroad and legitimated conservative accusations that equated dissent with disloyalty.

As the Cold War continued throughout the 1950s, continuity would also mark the domestic and foreign policies of Truman's successor. Dwight Eisenhower, in the main, pursued a centrist course in domestic affairs. While tilting to the right in favoring private corporations, the Eisenhower administration left New Deal reforms in place, expanded existing social-welfare benefits, and employed Keynesian deficit spending to curtail economic recessions. The president made no effort to hamper labor unionization and proposed construction of a vast interstate highway system.

Eisenhower also followed Truman in his determination to contain communism abroad, while

putting new emphasis on the need to avoid nuclear war and to fight communism in the Third World. Gaining short-term victories in local conflicts, often by clandestine means, Ike and Secretary of State

Dulles largely ignored the nationalist yearnings and socioeconomic deprivations of local peoples and increasingly allied the United States with reactionary, repressive regimes.

KEY TERMS

George F. Kennan (p. 800)

Containment (p. 800)

Truman Doctrine (p. 801)

National Security Act of 1947
(p. 801)

Marshall Plan (p. 801)

Berlin airlift (p. 804)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization
(NATO) (p. 805)

Mao Zedong (p. 806)

National Security Paper 68
(NSC-68) (p. 806)

Korean War (p. 807)

Employment Act of 1946 (p. 809)

Taft-Hartley Act (p. 810)

Fair Deal (p. 810)

Second Red Scare (p. 811)

House Un-American Activities
Committee (p. 812)

Alger Hiss and Whittaker

Chambers (p. 812)

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

(p. 814)

Joseph R. McCarthy (p. 814)

McCarran Internal Security Act
(p. 815)

Dwight D. Eisenhower (p. 816)

John Foster Dulles (p. 817)

Suez crisis (p. 819)

Eisenhower Doctrine (p. 819)

military-industrial complex
(p. 819)

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