

# Cold War America

1945–1963

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## CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following annotated chapter outline will help you review the major topics covered in this chapter.

### I. Containment and a Divided Global Order

#### A. Origins of the Cold War

##### 1. Yalta

- a. World War II set the basic conditions for Cold War rivalry. The Cold War would produce an arms race through the military-industrial complex, the interconnection of corporate influence of political policy in the interest of producing armaments for global warfare.
- b. At the Yalta Conference, one source of conflict was Stalin's desire for a band of Soviet-controlled satellite states to protect the Soviet Union's western border.
- c. Roosevelt and Churchill agreed in principle on the idea of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. Roosevelt pressed for an agreement that guaranteed self-determination and democratic elections in Poland and neighboring countries but, given the presence there of Soviet troops, had to accept a pledge from Stalin to hold

“free and unfettered elections” at a future time.

- d. Germany was to be divided into four zones controlled by the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union; Berlin would be partitioned among the four powers as well.
  - e. The Big Three (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) made progress toward the establishment of the United Nations; its Security Council would include the five major Allied powers, plus seven other nations participating on a rotating basis, and permanent members of the Council would have veto power over decisions of the General Assembly.
  - f. The United Nations convened for the first time in San Francisco on April 25, 1945.
- #### 2. Potsdam
- a. At the 1945 Potsdam Conference, President Harry Truman decided that the United States had to take a hard line against Soviet expansion; however, he could not eliminate Soviet-imposed governments in Poland, Hungary, and Romania.
  - b. Yalta and Potsdam thus laid the groundwork for communist rule over Eastern Europe. From the American

- perspective, Stalin's refusal to implement self-determination in Eastern Europe was the beginning point of the Cold War.
- c. Disagreements between American delegates at Potsdam, who wanted to revive the German economy to protect democracy in Western Europe, and Stalin, who simply wanted to extract reparations from Germany, paved the way for the division of Germany into East and West.
  - d. Public speeches widened the gulf between the Soviet Union and the West. Stalin suggested that capitalists would cause a future war. Churchill accused Stalin of raising an "iron curtain" around Eastern Europe and suggested that "English-speaking peoples" should set the term of the postwar world.
  - e. As the standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States intensified, Western Europeans and Americans began to fear a cataclysmic war with the Soviet Union.
- B. The Containment Strategy
1. Toward an Uneasy Peace
    - a. Three events—Soviet involvement in Iran and Turkey, civil war in Greece, and Communist parties gaining strength in France and Italy—convinced Americans that the Soviet Union aimed to expand.
    - b. As tensions mounted, a new policy of containment began to take shape. George F. Kennan argued that the United States should adopt "long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." As long as the United States and its allies opposed Soviet expansion everywhere in the world, the unstable government in Moscow would inevitably collapse.
    - c. Just as Kennan thought that the Soviet system was despotic and weak, Stalin believed that the capitalistic West had its own flaws. Neither side entirely understood or trusted the other, and each projected its worst fears onto the other.
    - d. Great Britain's power in the world was declining, owing to economic crisis and independence movements within its empire. The United States replaced it as the leading world power.
    - e. The policy of containment crystallized in 1947 when Britain announced it could no longer support the anticommunists in the Greek civil war, causing the West to worry that Soviet influence in Greece threatened its interests in the eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, especially Turkey.
    - f. American reaction resulted in the Truman Doctrine, which called for large-scale military and economic assistance in order to prevent communism from taking hold in Greece and Turkey. Congress followed up by quickly approving millions of dollars in aid.
    - g. The Marshall Plan sent relief to devastated European countries and helped to make them less susceptible to communism.
    - h. The Marshall Plan met with opposition in Congress until a communist-led coup occurred in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, after which Congress voted overwhelmingly to approve funds for the program.
    - i. Over the next four years, the United States contributed nearly \$13 billion to a highly successful recovery; Western European economies revived, opening new opportunities for international trade. When the Soviet Union refused to participate and ordered Eastern

Europe to do so as well, the West could blame Stalin for intensifying the Cold War.

2. East and West in the New Europe
  - a. The United States, France, and Britain consolidated their zones in 1947, prepared to establish an independent republic, and initiated a program of economic reform for Germany, including West Berlin, which alarmed the Soviets, who responded with a blockade of the city.
  - b. Truman countered the blockade with airlifts of food and fuel; the blockade, lifted in May 1949, made West Berlin a symbol of resistance to communism.
  - c. In April 1949, the United States entered into its first peacetime military alliance since the American revolution—the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)—in which twelve nations agreed that an armed attack against one of them would be considered an attack against all of them.
  - d. NATO also agreed to the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in May 1949; in October, the Soviets created the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).
  - e. The Soviets organized the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in 1949 and the military Warsaw Pact in 1955.
3. NSC-68
  - a. In September 1949, American military intelligence had proof that the Soviets had detonated an atomic bomb; this revelation called for a major reassessment of American foreign policy.
  - b. To devise a new diplomatic and military blueprint, Truman turned to the National Security Council (NSC), an advisory body established by the National Security Act of 1947 that also created the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency.
  - c. The National Security Council gave a report, known as NSC-68, redefining the Soviet Union as a serious threat driven by obsessive desires to dominate the world.
  - d. The report recommended the development of a hydrogen bomb, increasing U.S. conventional forces, establishing a strong system of alliances, and increasing taxes in order to finance defense building.
- C. Containment in Asia
  1. Civil War in China
    - a. American policy in Asia was based as much on Asia's importance to the world economy as on the desire to contain communism.
    - b. After dismantling Japan's military forces and weaponry, American occupation forces drafted a democratic constitution and oversaw the rebuilding of the economy.
    - c. In China, a civil war had been raging since the 1930s between Communist forces, led by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, and conservative Nationalist forces, under Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek).
    - d. For a time, the Truman administration attempted to help the Nationalists by providing more than \$2 billion in aid, but in August 1949, it cut off that aid when reform did not occur; in October 1949, the People's Republic of China was formally established under Mao, and the remnants of Jiang's forces fled to Taiwan.
    - e. The pro-Nationalist "China lobby" in Congress viewed Mao's success as a defeat for the United States; the China lobby's influence blocked U.S. recognition of "Red China" and prevented its admission to the United Nations, leading instead to U.S.

recognition of the exiled Nationalist government in Taiwan.

## 2. The Korean War

- a. At the end of World War II, both the Soviet Union and the United States had troops in Korea and divided the country into competing spheres of influence at the 38th parallel.
- b. The Soviets supported a Communist government, led by Kim Il Sung, in North Korea, and the United States backed a Korean Nationalist, Syngman Rhee, in South Korea.
- c. On June 25, 1950, North Koreans invaded across the 38th parallel; Truman asked the UN Security Council to authorize a “police action” against the invaders.
- d. The Security Council voted to send a “peacekeeping force” to Korea; though fourteen non-Communist nations sent troops, the UN army in Korea was overwhelmingly American and, by request of Truman to the Security Council, headed by General Douglas MacArthur.
- e. MacArthur’s surprise amphibious attack at Inchon gave UN forces control of almost all the territory south of the 38th parallel.
- f. MacArthur ordered troops to invade North Korea and led them to the Chinese border at the Yalu River. A massive Chinese counterattack forced MacArthur’s forces to retreat.
- g. Months of fighting resulted in stalemate; given this military stalemate, a drop in public support, and the fact that the United States did not want large numbers of troops tied down in Asia, Truman and his advisors decided to work toward a negotiated peace.
- h. Truman relieved MacArthur of his command based on insubordination,

though the decision to relieve him was highly unpopular.

- i. Two years after truce talks began, an armistice was signed in July 1953; Korea was divided near the original border at the 38th parallel, with a demilitarized zone between the countries.
  - j. Truman committed troops to Korea without congressional approval, setting a precedent for other undeclared wars. The war also expanded American involvement in Asia, transforming containment into a truly global policy. During the war, American defense expenditures grew from \$13 billion in 1950 to \$50 billion in 1953, nearly two-thirds of the budget.
  - k. American foreign policy had become more global, more militarized, and more expensive; even in times of peace, the United States functioned in a state of permanent mobilization.
- ## 5. The Munich Analogy
- a. The memory of appeasement guided U.S. thinking when it came to drafting containment policy. American presidents believed that instead of appeasing Soviet leaders, which would undoubtedly lead to war, the United States should resist Soviet expansion.
  - b. This thinking often drove the United States into armed conflicts that supported right-wing repressive regimes.

## II. Cold War Liberalism

### A. Truman and the End of Reform

#### 1. The 1948 Election

- a. Truman and the Democratic Party after the war forged what historians call Cold War liberalism. They preserved the core programs of the New Deal welfare state, developed the containment policy to oppose Soviet influence throughout the world, and fought so-called subversives at home.

- b. Organized labor was a key force in Cold War liberalism. Union membership increased to over 14 million by 1945; workers mounted crippling strikes in the automobile, steel, and coal industries.
  - c. In 1946, Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress and set about undoing New Deal measures, especially targeting labor legislation.
  - d. In 1947, the Republican-controlled Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act, a rollback of several pro-union provisions of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act, dismantling the secondary boycott and the union shop, labor rights that workers had fought hard for, and forcing unions to purge communists from their ranks.
  - e. Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act countered some workers' hostility to his earlier antistrike activity and kept labor in the Democratic fold.
  - f. In the election of 1948, the Republicans again nominated Thomas E. Dewey for president, and Democrats nominated Truman.
  - g. Democratic left and right wings split off: the Progressive Party nominated Henry A. Wallace for president; the States' Rights Democratic Party (Dixiecrats) nominated Strom Thurmond.
  - h. To the nation's surprise, Truman won the election handily. But he had to tread carefully to preserve core support within the Democratic Party.
2. The Fair Deal
- a. In 1949, Truman proposed his Fair Deal, an extension of the New Deal's liberalism, including national health insurance, aid to education, a housing program, expansion of Social Security, a higher minimum wage, and new agricultural programs. Its attention to civil rights reflected the growing importance of African Americans to the Democratic coalition.
  - b. Cold War fears over the spread of un-American ideals, such as "socialized medicine," convinced Congress to adopt only parts of the Fair Deal: a higher minimum wage, improvements to Social Security, and the National Housing Act of 1949.
- B. Red Scare: The Hunt for Communists
1. Loyalty-Security Program
- a. Historians have revealed that during the administration of FDR, several high-ranking government officials acted as spies for the Soviet Union. Several hundred more suppliers of information to Moscow were identified, working in a range of government departments and agencies. After World War II, the spying ceased for the most part.
  - b. Many Americans at the time, however, believed that Communist influence predominated within the government. Legitimate suspicions and real fears, as well as political opportunism, fueled a second Red Scare that lasted longer and was more extensive than the first one that followed World War I.
  - c. In 1947, President Truman created the Loyalty-Security Program to permit officials to investigate any employee of the federal government for "subversive" activities.
  - d. Although intended to root out serious threats, the program was broad enough to define anyone as subversive for the slightest reason and thus "unfit" for government employment.
  - e. The Red Scare spread from the federal government to all corners of the nation as many state and local governments, universities, political organizations, and businesses adopted their own antisubversion programs.

## 2. HUAC

- a. In 1938, a group of conservatives had launched the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to investigate Communist influence in labor unions and New Deal agencies.
- b. In 1947, HUAC held widely publicized hearings on alleged Communist activity in the film industry. Those accused of subversion found themselves on an unofficial blacklist that made it impossible to find future work in the industry.
- c. HUAC's sensational investigation of Alger Hiss resulted not in a guilty verdict of spying but in a conviction of lying to Congress. Although many Americans still view the case as exemplifying the out-of-control witch-hunt during the Red Scare, circumstantial evidence has emerged that Hiss may have been a spy.

## 3. McCarthyism

- a. The meteoric rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin marked both the high point and then the finale of the Red Scare.
- b. McCarthy dropped a bombshell on the nation in February of 1950: Communist Party members were active in shaping policy in the State Department.
- c. For nearly four years, McCarthy used his position as chair of the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations to accuse primarily Democrats of subversive activities. Few people attempted to stop him.
- d. Sensationalized events such as the espionage trial and controversial execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, as well as several convictions for members of the American Communist Party for violating the 1940 Smith Act, gave

McCarty's wild accusations some credence.

- e. In early 1954, McCarthy overreached by launching an investigation into subversive activity in the U.S. Army.
- f. In December of 1954, the Senate voted 67 to 22 to censure McCarthy for unbecoming conduct. He died from an alcohol-related illness three years later.

## C. The Politics of Cold War Liberalism

1. In 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower secured the Republican nomination, despite divisions in the party. More conservative party members supported Senator Robert Taft, an ardent anti-Communist and opponent to the New Deal. Moderate Republicans looked to Eisenhower and more liberal-minded leaders such as Nelson Rockefeller, who advocated international programs such as NATO and the Marshall Plan and tolerated labor unions and the New Deal.
2. For eight years, between 1952 and 1960, Eisenhower steered a precarious course from the middle of the party. He signed bills increasing federal outlays for veterans' benefits, housing, highway construction, and Social Security; he also increased the minimum wage from 75 cents an hour to \$1.
3. America Under Eisenhower
  - a. International events transformed the Cold War. Stalin died in 1953, and after a power struggle, Nikita S. Khrushchev emerged as his successor in 1956.
  - b. Although Khrushchev called for "peaceful coexistence" with the West and more flexibility toward dissent, Soviet repression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising for independence illustrated inflexibility.
  - c. Eisenhower's "New Look" in foreign policy, continuing America's commitment to producing nuclear weapons to project U.S. dominance in

the Cold War struggle against international communism, contributed to the arms race as the Soviet Union matched the United States weapon for weapon.

- d. By 1958, both the United States and the Soviet Union possessed intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- e. Eisenhower, although a novice in domestic affairs, was well-liked by the American public and much less confrontational than his Democratic predecessor. He easily won reelection in 1956.
- f. During the Eisenhower administration, Cold War consensus about foreign policy and the economy appeared to have calmed the national political system.

### III. Containment in the Postcolonial World

#### A. The Cold War and Colonial Independence

##### 1. Vietnam

- a. The American policy of containment soon extended to new nations emerging in the Third World.
- b. The United States often failed to recognize that indigenous or nationalist movements in emerging nations had their own goals and were not necessarily under the control of Communists.
- c. The United States created an extensive system of defensive alliances based on the NATO model, including the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954 which connected the U.S. and its major European allies with Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand.
- d. U.S. policymakers tended to support stable governments, as long as they were not Communist; some American allies were governed by dictatorships or repressive right-wing regimes.
- e. The Central Intelligence Agency moved beyond intelligence gathering

into active, albeit covert, involvement in the internal affairs of foreign countries.

- f. In 1953, the CIA helped to overthrow Iran's premier after he seized control of British oil properties; in 1954, it supported a coup in Guatemala against the duly elected government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán after he expropriated land held by the American-owned United Fruit Company and accepted arms from Communist Czechoslovakia.
- g. In Southeast Asia, Truman mismanaged a golden opportunity to bring the Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh into the American camp through domestic and military support against the French attempt after World War II to re-take the colony it had maintained since the mid-1800s. Truman incorrectly viewed Ho Chi Minh as an ardent Communist pledged against American interests.
- h. Eisenhower also failed to understand the importance of embracing a united Vietnam. If the French failed to regain control, Eisenhower argued, the so-called domino theory would lead to the collapse of all non-Communist governments in the region.
- i. Although the United States eventually provided most of the financing, the French still failed to defeat the tenacious Vietminh. After a fifty-six-day siege in early 1954, the French went down to stunning defeat at the huge fortress of Dien Bien Phu.
- j. The result was the 1954 Geneva Accords, which partitioned Vietnam temporarily at the 17th parallel, committed France to withdraw from north of that line, and called for elections within two years that would lead to a unified Vietnam.

- k. The United States rejected the Geneva Accords and immediately set about undermining them. With the help of the CIA, a pro-American government took power in South Vietnam in June 1954.
2. In a rigged election in 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem became president of an independent South Vietnam and called off the scheduled reunification elections. After the last French soldiers left in March 1956, the United States propped up the Diem government with economic aid and military advisors.
3. The Middle East
  - a. The oil-rich Middle East was playing an increasingly central role in the strategic planning of the United States and the Soviet Union, which presented one of the most complicated foreign policy challenges.
  - b. On May 14, 1948, Zionist leaders proclaimed the state of Israel; Truman quickly recognized the new state, alienating the Arabs but winning crucial support from Jewish voters.
  - c. When Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in Egypt in 1952, he pledged to lead not just his country but the entire Middle East out of its dependent, colonial relationship through a form of pan-Arab socialism and declared Egypt's neutrality in the Cold War.
  - d. Unwilling to accept this stance of nonalignment, John Foster Dulles abruptly withdrew his offer of U.S. financial aid to Egypt in 1957; in retaliation, Nasser seized and nationalized the Suez Canal, through which three-quarters of Western Europe's oil was transported.
  - e. After months of negotiation, Britain and France, in alliance with Israel, attacked Egypt and retook the canal. Eisenhower and the United Nations forced France and Britain to pull back; Egypt reclaimed the Suez Canal and built the Aswan Dam on the Nile with Soviet support.
  - f. After the Suez Canal crisis, the Eisenhower Doctrine stated that American forces would assist any nation in the Middle East requiring aid against "International Communism."
  - g. Eisenhower invoked the doctrine when he sent troops to aid King Hussein of Jordan against a Nasser-backed revolt and when he sent troops to back a pro-U.S. government in Lebanon.
  - h. The attention that the Eisenhower administration paid to developments in the Middle East in the 1950s demonstrated how the access to a steady supply of oil increasingly affected foreign policy.
- B. John F. Kennedy and the Cold War
  1. The Election of 1960 and the New Frontier
    - a. Poised to become the youngest man ever elected to the presidency and the nation's first Catholic chief executive, Kennedy practiced what became known as the "new politics," an approach that emphasized youthful charisma, style, and personality more than issues and platforms.
    - b. A series of four televised debates between Kennedy and Nixon showed how important television was becoming in political life; voters who listened to the 1960 presidential debates on the radio concluded that Nixon had won, and those who watched it on TV felt that Kennedy had won.
    - c. Kennedy won only the narrowest of electoral victories, receiving 49.7 percent of the popular vote to Nixon's 49.5 percent; a shift of a few thousand votes in key states would have reversed the outcome.

- d. A resolute Cold Warrior, Kennedy brought to Washington a cadre of young ambitious newcomers, including Robert McNamara, a former head of Ford Motor Company, who would serve as secretary of defense. A host of academics also flocked to Washington to join the New Frontier, including Robert Kennedy, the president's brother, who served as attorney general.
2. Crises in Cuba and Berlin
- a. The Soviet Union's announcement in January 1961 that it intended to support "wars of national liberation" anywhere in the world took on special meaning when applied to Cuba, where Fidel Castro had overthrown Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959.
- b. Intent on keeping Soviet influence out of the Western Hemisphere, Kennedy implemented Eisenhower's plan to foment an anti-Castro uprising in early 1961. The CIA-trained invaders were crushed by Castro's troops after landing at Cuba's Bay of Pigs on April 17.
- c. U.S.-Soviet relations further deteriorated in June 1961 when the Soviets built the Berlin Wall to stop the exodus of East Germans; the Berlin Wall remained a symbol of the Cold War until 1989.
- d. The climactic confrontation of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis, occurred in October 1962, when American reconnaissance planes flying over Cuba photographed Soviet-built bases for intermediate-range ballistic missiles, which could reach U.S. targets as far as 2,200 miles away.
- e. In a televised address, Kennedy confronted the Soviet Union and announced that the United States would impose a "quarantine on all offensive military equipment" intended for Cuba.
- f. After a week of tense negotiations, both Kennedy and Khrushchev made concessions: the United States would not invade Cuba, and the Soviets would dismantle the missile bases. Kennedy also secretly ordered U.S. missiles to be removed from Turkey, at the insistence of Khrushchev.
3. Kennedy and the World
- a. Exhibiting the idealism of the early 1960s, the Peace Corps was a low-cost Cold War weapon intended to show the developing world that there was an alternative to communism.
- b. Wanting to compete with the Soviet Union after it had successfully launched into space the first satellite in 1957 and the first man in 1961, Kennedy committed the United States to landing a man on the moon and increased funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The United States successfully landed a man on the moon in 1969.
- C. Making a Commitment in Vietnam
1. When Kennedy became president, he inherited Eisenhower's involvement in Vietnam. Kennedy saw Vietnam in very much the same Cold War terms.
2. In 1961, Kennedy increased military aid to South Vietnam in the form of U.S. Special Forces ("Green Berets") who trained the South Vietnamese army in unconventional, small-group warfare tactics.
3. Despite American aid, the corrupt and repressive Diem regime installed by Eisenhower in 1954 was losing ground in South Vietnam. Opponents, with backing from North Vietnam, had formed the National Liberation Front. Its guerilla forces, the Vietcong, rallied ordinary citizens, who had experienced forced

resettlement and religious persecution, against the oppressive Diem government, including Buddhist priests who set themselves on fire.

4. South Vietnam represented a dilemma for the United States: support for Diem would create stability and prevent communist victory but also perpetuate oppression. The assassination of Diem on November 3, 1963, only added further complexity.