Students analyze the response of the United States to communism after World War II.

US.73 ... Describe the competition between the two “superpowers” of the United States and the Soviet Union in the areas of arms development, economic dominance, and ideology, including the role and location of NATO, SEATO, and the Warsaw Pact. (C, E, H, P)

US.74 ... Explain examples of containment policies, including the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and the Truman Doctrine. (E, G, H, P)

US.75 ... Draw evidence from informational text to analyze the progression of American foreign policy from containment to retaliation and brinkmanship to the domino theory to flexible response. (H, P)

US.76 ... Analyze the causes and effects of the Red Scare that followed World War II, including Americans’ attitude toward the rise of communism in China, McCarthyism, blacklisting, Alger Hiss, J. Edgar Hoover, Estes Kefauver, and the Rosenbergs. (C, P, H, TN)

US.77 ... Describe the causes, course, and consequences of the Korean War, including the 38th parallel, Inchon, the entry of the Communist Chinese, the power struggle between MacArthur and President Truman, and the final disposition of the Koreas. (G, H, P)

US.78 ... Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats of the fears of Americans about nuclear holocaust and debates over the stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons, including atomic testing, civil defense, bomb shelters, mutually assured destruction, impact of Sputnik, and President Eisenhower’s warning about the military-industrial complex. (C, H, P)

US.79 ... Describe the relationship between Cuba and the United States, including the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis. (G, H, P)

US.80 ... Describe the causes, course, and consequences of the Vietnam War, including the following: (C, G, H, P)

- Geneva Accords
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution

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• Tet Offensive
• Roles played by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon
• Vietnamization
• Ho Chi Minh
• Bombing of Cambodia
• Henry Kissinger- Napalm and Agent Orange

US. 81 ... Present information, findings, and supporting evidence evaluating the impact of the Vietnam War on the home front, including the Anti-War movement, draft by lottery, and the role of television and the media. (C, H, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from Farewell Address, Dwight Eisenhower; “Address at Rice University,” John Kennedy

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Consider: excerpts from The Things They Carried, Tim O’Brien; excerpts from “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” George Kennan; Inaugural Address, 1961, John Kennedy
In 1945, one major war ended and another began. The Cold War lasted about 45 years. There were no direct military campaigns between the two main antagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union. Yet billions of dollars and millions of lives were lost in the fight.

The United States became the leader of the free-market capitalist world. America and its allies struggled to keep the communist, totalitarian Soviet Union from expanding into Europe, Asia, and Africa. Theaters as remote as Korea and Vietnam, Cuba and Grenada, Afghanistan and Angola, became battlegrounds between the two ideologies. One postwar pattern quickly became clear. The United States would not retreat into its former isolationist stance as long as there was a Cold War to wage.

The long-term causes of the Cold War are clear. Western democracies had always been hostile to the idea of a communist state. The United States had refused recognition to the USSR for 16 years after the Bolshevik takeover. Domestic fears of communism erupted in a RED SCARE in America in the early Twenties. American business leaders had long feared the consequences of a politically driven workers’ organization. World War II provided short-term causes as well.

There was hostility on the Soviet side as well. Twenty million Russian citizens perished during World War II. Stalin was enraged that the Americans and British had waited so long to open a front in France. This would have relieved...
pressure on the Soviet Union from the attacking Germans. Further, The United States terminated Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union before the war was complete. Finally, the Soviet Union believed in communism.

Stalin made promises during the war about the freedom of eastern Europe on which he blatantly reneged. At the YALTA CONFERENCE, the USSR pledged to enter the war against Japan no later than three months after the conclusion of the European war. In return, the United States awarded the Soviets territorial concessions from Japan and special rights in Chinese Manchuria.

FIGURE 6.3
This map depicts the situation in Europe around the time of V-E Day. Soviet troops (in red) were able to secure Eastern Europe, while the other Allies worked to win the West.

FIGURE 6.4
Europe in 1946 was becoming increasingly divided by the "iron curtain" seen in this map. Countries to the east of the orange line remained — or became — communist following World War II.

When the Soviet Union entered the war between the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the United States no longer needed their aid, but Stalin was there to collect on Western promises. All these factors contributed to a climate of mistrust that heightened tensions at the outbreak of the Cold War.

At Potsdam, the Allies agreed on the postwar outcome for Nazi Germany. After territorial adjustments, Germany was divided into four OCCUPATION ZONES with the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union each administering one. Germany was to be democratized and de-Nazified. Once the Nazi leaders were arrested and war crimes trials began, a date would be agreed upon for the election of a new German government and the withdrawal of Allied troops.

FIGURE 6.5
For most of the second half of the 20th century, the USSR and the United States were engaged in a Cold War of economic and diplomatic struggles. The communist bloc, as it appeared in 1950, included countries to the west and southeast of the Soviet Union.

This process was executed in the zones held by the western Allies. In the eastern Soviet occupation zone, a puppet communist regime was elected. There was no promise of repatriation with the west. Soon such governments, aided by the Soviet Red Army came to power all across eastern Europe. Stalin was determined to create a buffer zone to prevent any future invasion of the Russian heartland. Winston Churchill remarked in 1946 that an "iron curtain had descended across the continent."
NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.

NATO was the first peacetime military alliance the United States entered into outside of the Western Hemisphere. After the destruction of the Second World War, the nations of Europe struggled to rebuild their economies and ensure their security. The former required a massive influx of aid to help the war-torn landscapes re-establish industries and produce food, and the latter required assurances against a resurgent Germany or incursions from the Soviet Union. The United States viewed an economically strong, rearmed, and integrated Europe as vital to the prevention of communist expansion across the continent. As a result, Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a program of large-scale economic aid to Europe. The resulting European Recovery Program, or Marshall Plan, not only facilitated European economic integration but promoted the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the United States and Europe. Soviet refusal either to participate in the Marshall Plan or to allow its satellite states in Eastern Europe to accept the economic assistance helped to reinforce the growing division between east and west in Europe.

In 1947–1948, a series of events caused the nations of Western Europe to become concerned about their physical and political security and the United States to become more closely involved with European affairs. The ongoing civil war in Greece, along with tensions in Turkey, led President Harry S. Truman to assert that the United States would provide economic and military aid to both countries, as well as to any other nation struggling against an attempt at subjugation. A Soviet-sponsored coup in Czechoslovakia resulted in a communist government coming to power on the borders of Germany. Attention also focused on elections in Italy as the communist party had made significant gains among Italian voters. Furthermore, events in Germany also caused concern. The occupation and governance of Germany after the war had long been disputed, and in mid-1948, Soviet premier Joseph Stalin chose to test Western resolve by implementing a blockade against West Berlin, which was then under joint U.S., British, and French control but surrounded by Soviet-controlled East Germany. This Berlin Crisis brought the United States
and the Soviet Union to the brink of conflict, although a massive airlift to resupply the city for the duration of the blockade helped to prevent an outright confrontation. These events caused U.S. officials to grow increasingly wary of the possibility that the countries of Western Europe might deal with their security concerns by negotiating with the Soviets. To counter this possible turn of events, the Truman Administration considered the possibility of forming a European-American alliance that would commit the United States to bolstering the security of Western Europe.

The Western European countries were willing to consider a collective security solution. In response to increasing tensions and security concerns, representatives of several countries of Western Europe gathered together to create a military alliance. Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty in March, 1948. Their treaty provided collective defense; if any one of these nations was attacked, the others were bound to help defend it. At the same time, the Truman Administration instituted a peacetime draft, increased military spending, and called upon the historically isolationist Republican Congress to consider a military alliance with Europe. In May of 1948, Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg proposed a resolution suggesting that the President seek a security treaty with Western Europe that would adhere to the United Nations charter but exist outside of the Security Council where the Soviet Union held veto power. The Vandenberg Resolution passed, and negotiations began for the North Atlantic Treaty.

In spite of general agreement on the concept behind the treaty, it took several months to work out the exact terms. The U.S. Congress had embraced the pursuit of the international alliance, but it remained concerned about the wording of the treaty. The nations of Western Europe wanted assurances that the United States would intervene automatically in the event of an attack, but under the U.S. Constitution the power to declare war rested with Congress. Negotiations worked toward finding language that would reassure the European states but not obligate the United States to act in a way that violated its own laws. Additionally, European contributions to collective security would require large-scale military assistance from the United States to help rebuild Western Europe’s defense capabilities. While the European nations argued for individual grants and aid, the United States wanted to make aid conditional on regional coordination. A third issue was the question of scope. The Brussels Treaty signatories preferred that membership in the alliance be restricted to the members of that treaty plus the United States. The U.S. negotiators felt there was
more to be gained from enlarging the new treaty to include the countries of the North Atlantic, including Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal. Together, these countries held territory that formed a bridge between the opposite shores of the Atlantic Ocean, which would facilitate military action if it became necessary.

The result of these extensive negotiations was the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. In this agreement, the United States, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom agreed to consider attack against one an attack against all, along with consultations about threats and defense matters. This collective defense arrangement only formally applied to attacks against the signatories that occurred in Europe or North America; it did not include conflicts in colonial territories. After the treaty was signed, a number of the signatories made requests to the United States for military aid. Later in 1949, President Truman proposed a military assistance program, and the Mutual Defense Assistance Program passed the U.S. Congress in October, appropriating some $1.4 billion dollars for the purpose of building Western European defenses.

Soon after the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the outbreak of the Korean War led the members to move quickly to integrate and coordinate their defense forces through a centralized headquarters. The North Korean attack on South Korea was widely viewed at the time to be an example of communist aggression directed by Moscow, so the United States bolstered its troop commitments to Europe to provide assurances against Soviet aggression on the European continent. In 1952, the members agreed to admit Greece and Turkey to NATO and added the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955. West German entry led the Soviet Union to retaliate with its own regional alliance, which took the form of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and included the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe as members.

The collective defense arrangements in NATO served to place the whole of Western Europe under the American “nuclear umbrella.” In the 1950s, one of the first military doctrines of NATO emerged in the form of “massive retaliation,” or the idea that if any member was attacked, the United States would respond with a large-scale nuclear attack. The threat of this form of response was meant to serve as a deterrent against Soviet aggression on the
continent. Although formed in response to the exigencies of the developing Cold War, NATO has lasted beyond the end of that conflict, with membership even expanding to include some former Soviet states. It remains the largest peacetime military alliance in the world.

**WARSAW PACT**

The Warsaw Treaty Organization (also known as the Warsaw Pact) was a political and military alliance established on May 14, 1955 between the Soviet Union and several Eastern European countries. The Soviet Union formed this alliance as a counterbalance to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a collective security alliance concluded between the United States, Canada and Western European nations in 1949.

The Warsaw Pact supplemented existing agreements. Following World War II, the Soviet Union had concluded bilateral treaties with each of the East European states except for East Germany, which was still part of the Soviet occupied-territory of Germany. When the Federal Republic of Germany entered NATO in early May 1955, the Soviets feared the consequences of a strengthened NATO and a rearmed West Germany and hoped that the Warsaw Treaty Organization could both contain West Germany and negotiate with NATO as an equal partner. Soviet leadership also noted that civil unrest was on the rise in Eastern European countries and determined that a unified, multilateral political and military alliance would tie Eastern European capitals more closely to Moscow.

The original signatories to the Warsaw Treaty Organization were the Soviet Union, Albania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and the German Democratic Republic. Although the members of the Warsaw Pact pledged to defend each other if one or more of them came under attack, emphasized non-interference in the internal affairs of its members, and supposedly organized itself around collective decision-making, the Soviet Union ultimately controlled most of the Pact’s decisions. The Soviet Union also used the Pact to contain popular dissent in its European satellites, for example in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Poland in 1981.

By the 1980s, the Warsaw Treaty Organization was beset by problems related to the economic slowdown in all
Eastern European countries. By the late 1980s political changes in most of the member states made the Pact virtually ineffectual. In September 1990, East Germany left the Pact in preparation for reunification with West Germany. By October, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland had withdrawn from all Warsaw Pact military exercises. The Warsaw Pact officially disbanded in March and July of 1991 following the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

**SEATO**

In September of 1954, the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, or SEATO.

The purpose of the organization was to prevent communism from gaining ground in the region. Although called the “Southeast Asia Treaty Organization,” only two Southeast Asian countries became members. The Philippines joined in part because of its close ties with the United States and in part out of concern over the nascent communist insurgency threatening its own government. Thailand, similarly, joined after learning of a newly established “Thai Autonomous Region” in Yunnan Province in South China, expressing concern about the potential for Chinese communist subversion on its own soil. The rest of the region was far less concerned about the threat of communism to internal stability. Burma and Indonesia both preferred to maintain their neutrality rather than join the organization. Malaya (including Singapore) found it politically difficult to give formal support to the organization, though through its ties with Great Britain it learned of key developments. Finally, the terms of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 signed after the fall of French Indochina prevented Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos from joining any international military alliance, though these countries were ultimately included in the area protected under SEATO and granted “observers” status.

Most of the SEATO member states were countries located elsewhere but with an interest in the region or the organization. Australia and New Zealand were interested in Asian affairs because of their geographic position in the Pacific. Great Britain and France had long maintained colonies in the region and were interested in developments
in the greater Indochina region. For Pakistan, the appeal of the pact was the potential for receiving support in its
struggles against India, in spite of the fact that neither country was located in the area under the organization’s
jurisdiction. Finally, U.S. officials believed Southeast Asia to be a crucial frontier in the fight against communist
expansion, so it viewed SEATO as essential to its global Cold War policy of containment.

Headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand, SEATO had only a few formal functions. It maintained no military forces of
its own, but the organization hosted joint military exercises for member states each year. As the communist threat
appeared to change from one of outright attack to one of internal subversion, SEATO worked to strengthen the
economic foundations and living standards of the Southeast Asian States. It sponsored a variety of meetings and
exhibitions on cultural, religious and historical topics, and the non-Asian member states sponsored fellowships for
Southeast Asian scholars.

Beyond its activities, the SEATO charter was also vitally important to the American rationale for the Vietnam War.
The United States used the organization as its justification for refusing to go forward with the 1956 elections intended
to reunify Vietnam, instead maintaining the divide between communist North Vietnam and South Vietnam at the 17th
parallel. As the conflict in Vietnam unfolded, the inclusion of Vietnam as a territory under SEATO protection gave
the United States the legal framework for its continued involvement there.

The organization had a number of weaknesses as well. To address the problems attached to the guerrilla movements
and local insurrections that plagued the region in the post-colonial years, the SEATO defense treaty called only for
consultation, leaving each individual nation to react individually to internal threats. Unlike the North Atlantic Treaty
Organization (NATO), SEATO had no independent mechanism for obtaining intelligence or deploying military
forces, so the potential for collective action was necessarily limited. Moreover, because it incorporated only three
Asian members, SEATO faced charges of being a new form of Western colonialism. Linguistic and cultural
difficulties between the member states also compounded its problems, making it difficult for SEATO to accomplish
many of its goals.

By the early 1970s, members began to withdraw from the organization. Neither Pakistan nor France supported the
U.S. intervention in Vietnam, and both nations were pulling away from the organization in the early 1970s. Pakistan
formally left SEATO in 1973, because the organization had failed to provide it with assistance in its ongoing conflict
against India. When the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the most prominent reason for SEATO’s existence disappeared.
As a result, SEATO formally disbanded in 1977.
Communism was on the march. When the RED ARMY marched on Germany, it quickly absorbed the nearby nations ESTONIA, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA into the Soviet Union. Soon communist forces dominated the governments of ROMANIA and BULGARIA. By the fall of 1945, it was clear that the Soviet-backed LUBLIN REGIME had complete control of Poland, violating the Yalta promise of free and unfettered elections there. It was only a matter of time before Hungary and Czechoslovakia fell into the Soviet orbit. Yugoslavia had an independent communist leader named TITO.

And now Stalin was ordering the creation of a communist PUPPET REGIME in the Soviet sector of occupied Germany. How many dominoes would fall? United States diplomats saw a continent ravaged by war looking for strong leadership and aid of any sort, providing a climate ripe for revolution. Would the Soviets get all of Germany? Or Italy and France? President Truman was determined to reverse this trend.

Greece and Turkey were the first nations spiraling into crisis that had not been directly occupied by the Soviet Army. Both countries were on the verge of being taken over by Soviet-backed guerrilla movements. Truman decided to draw a line in the sand. In March 1947, he asked Congress to appropriate $400 million to send to these two nations in the form of military and economic assistance. Within two years the communist threat had passed, and both nations were comfortably in the western sphere of influence.

A mid-level diplomat in the State Department named GEORGE KENNAN proposed the POLICY OF CONTAINMENT. Since the American people were weary from war and had no desire to send United States troops into Eastern Europe, rolling back the gains of the Red Army would have been impossible.
But in places where communism threatened to expand, American aid might prevent a takeover. By vigorously pursuing this policy, the United States might be able to contain communism within its current borders. The policy became known as the TRUMAN DOCTRINE, as the President outlined these intentions with his request for monetary aid for Greece and Turkey.

In the aftermath of WWII, Western Europe lay devastated. The war had ruined crop fields and destroyed infrastructure, leaving most of Europe in dire need. On June 5, 1947, Secretary of State GEORGE MARSHALL announced the European Recovery Program. To avoid antagonizing the Soviet Union, Marshall announced that the purpose of sending aid to Western Europe was completely humanitarian, and even offered aid to the communist states in the east. Congress approved Truman’s request of $17 billion over four years to be sent to Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium.

The MARSHALL PLAN created an economic miracle in Western Europe. By the target date of the program four years later, Western European industries were producing twice as much as they had been the year before war broke out. Some Americans grumbled about the costs, but the nation spent more on liquor during the years of the Marshall Plan than they sent overseas to Europe. The aid also produced record levels of trade with American firms, fueling a postwar economic boom in the United States.

Lastly and much to Truman’s delight, none of these nations of western Europe faced a serious threat of communist takeover for the duration of the Cold War.
BERLIN, Germany’s wartime capital was the prickliest of all issues that separated the United States and Soviet Union during the late 1940s. The city was divided into four ZONES OF OCCUPATION like the rest of Germany. However, the entire city lay within the Soviet zone of occupation. Once the nation of EAST GERMANY was established, the Allied sections of the capital known as West Berlin became an island of democracy and capitalism behind the IRON CURTAIN.

In June 1948, tensions within Berlin touched off a crisis. The Soviets decided to seal all land routes going into West Berlin. Stalin gambled that the Western powers were not willing to risk another war to protect half of Berlin. The Allies were tired, and their populations were unlikely to support a new war. A withdrawal by the United States would eliminate this democratic enclave in the Soviet zone.

Truman was faced with tough choices. Relinquishing Berlin to the Soviets would seriously undermine the new doctrine of containment. Any negotiated settlement would suggest that the USSR could engineer a crisis at any time to exact concessions. If Berlin were compromised, the whole of West Germany might question the American commitment to German democracy. To Harry Truman, there was no question. "We are going to stay, period," he declared. Together, with Britain, the United States began moving massive amounts of food and supplies into West Berlin by the only path still open — the air.

Truman had thrown the gauntlet at Stalin’s feet. The USSR had to now choose between war and peace. He refused to give the order to shoot down the American planes. Over the next eleven months, British and American planes flew over 4000 tons of supplies daily into West Berlin. As the American public cheered "OPERATION VITTLES," Stalin began to look bad in the eyes of the world. He was clearly willing to use innocent civilians as pawns to quench his expansionist thirst. In May 1949, the Soviets ended the blockade. The United States and Britain had flown over 250,000-supply missions.

Stalin miscalculated when he estimated the strength of western unity. To cement the cooperation that the western allies had shown during the war and immediate postwar years, the NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION was created in April 1949. The pact operated on the basis of collective security. If any one of the member states were attacked, all would retaliate together. The original NATO included Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, and the United States.

NATO was the very sort of permanent alliance GEORGE WASHINGTON warned against in his FAREWELL
ADDRESS, and represented the first such agreement since the FRANCO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE that helped secure victory in the AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

The United States formally shed its ISOLATIONIST past and thrust itself forward as a determined superpower fighting its new rival.
American Foreign Policy During the Cold War

COLD WAR CONTINUES

FIGURE 6.18
Cartoons of the unflappable Bert the Turtle warned American children everywhere during the Cold War to “duck and cover” in the event of a nuclear blast. Although these measures would have proved useless, schools vigorously pursued “duck and cover” drills in which children clambered beneath their desks.

The end of the Korean War in 1953 by no means brought an end to global hostilities. As the British and French Empires slowly yielded to independence movements, a new Third World emerged. This became the major battleground of the Cold War as the United States and the Soviet Union struggled to bring new nations into their respective orbits. Across the Third World, the two superpowers squared off through proxy armies.

The United States’s recognition of Israel in 1948 created a strong new ally, but created many enemies. Arab nations, enraged by American support for the new Jewish state, found supportive ears in the Soviet Union.

When Egyptian President GAMAL ABDEL NASSER sought to strengthen ties with the Soviet bloc, the United States withdrew its pledge to help Nasser construct the all-important ASWAN DAM. Nasser responded by nationalizing the SUEZ CANAL, an action that compelled British, French, and Israeli armies to invade Egypt.

THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

FIGURE 6.19
Egyptian president Gamal Abder Nasser’s 1956 nationalization of the Suez Canal, crippled the ability of Great Britain and France to trade internationally. As a result, the two countries allied with Israel to attack Egypt.

The Western alliance was threatened as President Dwight Eisenhower called upon Britain and France to show restraint. With Soviet influence growing in the oil-rich region, Ike issued the Eisenhower Doctrine, which pledged American support to any governments fighting communist insurgencies in the Middle East. Making good on that promise, he sent over 5,000 marines to LEBANON to forestall an anti-Western takeover.

Asia provided more challenges for American containment policy. China was flexing its muscles on TAIWAN by threatening the takeover of the Taiwanese islands of QUEMOY AND MATSU. United States Secretary of State
JOHN FOSTER DULLES chose to follow a strategy of brinkmanship. He told China that any aggressive actions toward the islands would be met by force from the United States.

In a grown-up version of the children’s game of chicken, Dulles hoped to avoid war by threatening war. The Chinese shelled the islands to save face, but no takeover occurred.

To the south, communist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh successfully defeated the French colonial army to create the new nation of Vietnam. American commitment to the containment of communism led to a protracted involvement that would become the Vietnam War.

**TABLE 6.1: ETHEL AND JULIUS ROSENBERG SENTENCING EXCERPTS**

*One 1950s Cold War catalyst of fear was the capture and conviction of ETHEL AND JULIUS ROSENBERG for selling nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. Although the FBI advised sparing Ethel Rosenberg’s life (she had two children), JUDGE IRVING KAUFMAN refused to do so and sentenced her to death with her husband. The trial and sentencing were controversial, partly due to charges of anti-Semitism.*

Citizens of this country who betray their fellow-countrymen can be under none of the delusions about the benignity of Soviet power that they might have been prior to World War II. The nature of Russian terrorism is now self-evident.

I consider your crime worse than murder. Plain, deliberate, contemplated murder is dwarfed in magnitude by comparison with the crime you have committed. In committing the act of murder, the criminal kills only his victim. The immediate family is brought to grief, and when justice is meted out the chapter is closed. But in your case, I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb has already caused, in my opinion, the Communist aggression in Korea, with the resultant casualties exceeding 50,000 and who knows but that millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason. Indeed, by your betrayal you undoubtedly have altered the course of history to the disadvantage of our country.

No one can say that we do not live in a constant state of tension. We have evidence of your treachery all around us every day — for the civilian defense activities throughout the nation are aimed at preparing us for an atom bomb attack. Nor can it be said in mitigation of the offense that the power which set the conspiracy in motion and profited from it was not openly hostile to the United States at the time of the conspiracy. If this was your excuse the error of your ways in setting yourselves above our properly constituted authorities and the decision of those authorities not to share the information with Russia must now be obvious ....

In the light of this, I can only conclude that the defendants entered into this most serious conspiracy against their country with full realization of its implications ....

The statute of which the defendants at the bar stand convicted is clear. I have previously stated my view that the verdict of guilty was amply justified by the evidence. In the light of the circumstances, I feel that I must pass such sentence upon the principals in this diabolical conspiracy to destroy a God-fearing nation, which will demonstrate with finality that this nation’s security must remain inviolate; that traffic in military secrets, whether promoted by slavish devotion to a foreign ideology or by a desire for monetary gains, must cease.

The evidence indicated quite clearly that Julius Rosenberg was the prime mover in this conspiracy. However, let no mistake be made about the role which his wife, Ethel Rosenberg, played in this conspiracy. Instead of deterring him from pursuing his ignoble cause, she encouraged and assisted the cause. She was a mature woman — almost three years older than her husband and almost seven years older than her younger brother. She was a full-fledged partner in this crime.

Indeed, the defendants, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, placed their devotion to their cause above their own personal safety and were conscious that they were sacrificing their own children should their misdeeds be detected — all of which did not deter them from pursuing their course. Love for their cause dominated their lives — it was even greater than their love for their children.

— excerpt from Judge Kaufman’s sentencing of convicted spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, in which he sentenced them to death (April 5, 1951)
6.3. American Foreign Policy During the Cold War

THE CIA

In the aftermath of World War II, the United States created a new weapon to assist in fighting the Cold War: the CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY. In addition to gathering information on Soviet plans and maneuvers, the CIA also involved itself in covert operations designed to prevent communist dictators from rising to power.

The first such instance occurred in Iran, when Iranian Prime Minister MOHAMMED MOSSADEGH nationalized BRITISH PETROLEUM. Fearing Soviet influence in the powerful oil nation, the CIA recruited a phony mob to drive off Mossadegh and return the American-backed SHAH MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI to power.

When JACOBO ARBENZ came to power in Guatemala, he promised to relieve the nation’s impoverished farmers by seizing land held by the American-owned UNITED FRUIT COMPANY and redistributing it to the peasants. With the support of American air power, a CIA-backed band of mercenaries overthrew Arbenz and established a military dictatorship.

Throughout Latin America, the United States was seen as a brutal defender of thuggish autocrats at the expense of popularly elected leaders. Fidel Castro capitalized on this sentiment by overthrowsing U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista from power in Cuba in January 1959.

POLICY OF MASS RETALIATION

Relations remained icy between the United States and the Soviet Union. Relying on the knowledge that the United States had a much larger nuclear arsenal than the Soviet Union, Eisenhower and Dulles announced a policy of massive retaliation. Any attack by the Soviets on the United States or its allies would be met with nuclear force.

The Soviet crackdown on the HUNGARIAN UPRISING OF 1956 further strained relations. In an effort to reduce tensions, Eisenhower offered an "OPEN SKIES" PROPOSAL to Soviet leader NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV. Planes from each nation would be permitted to fly over the other to inspect nuclear sites. But Khrushchev declined the offer. A summit conference between Eisenhower and Khrushchev was canceled in 1960 when the Soviets shot down an American U-2 SPY PLANE piloted by GARY POWERS.
Despite the passing of Joseph Stalin, Americans continued to view the Soviet Union as the Great Red Menace.

**FIGURE 6.22**
This stamp commemorates Laika, the dog that was sent into space on the second Soviet satellite, Sputnik II, in November 1957. The launch of the first Sputnik earlier that year triggered a massive American effort to catch up to Soviet space technology, culminating in 1969 with the U.S. mission to the Moon.

When the USSR put SPUTNIK into orbit in 1957, panic struck the American heartland. Thousands rushed to Sears and Roebuck to purchase bomb shelter kits, and Congress responded by creating the NATIONAL AERONAUTICAL AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION and by appropriating funds for science education.

**FIGURE 6.23**
The mushroom cloud above was photographed in a 1956 nuclear test known as Operation Plumbbob. The possibility of nuclear war loomed over terrified Americans in the 1950s.

Not even outer space was safe from Cold War confrontation.

**CONTAINMENT**

- American Foreign Policy - Containment
- Kennan and Containment, 1947

**MASSIVE RETALIATION AND BRINKMANSHIP**

- Massive Retaliation
- Dulles announces policy of "massive retaliation"
6.3. American Foreign Policy During the Cold War

DOMINO THEORY

- Domino Theory
- domino theory

FIGURE 6.24
An illustration of the domino theory as it had been predicted in Asia

FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

- Flexible Response
- JFK and Flexible Response
THE RISE OF COMMUNISM IN CHINA

On October 1, 1949, Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The announcement ended the costly full-scale civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT), which broke out immediately following World War II and had been preceded by on and off conflict between the two sides since the 1920’s. The creation of the PRC also completed the long process of governmental upheaval in China begun by the Chinese Revolution of 1911. The “fall” of mainland China to communism in 1949 led the United States to suspend diplomatic ties with the PRC for decades.

The Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921 in Shanghai, originally existed as a study group working within the confines of the First United Front with the Nationalist Party. Chinese Communists joined with the Nationalist Army in the Northern Expedition of 1926–27 to rid the nation of the warlords that prevented the formation of a strong central government. This collaboration lasted until the “White Terror” of 1927, when the Nationalists turned on the Communists, killing them or purging them from the party.

After the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, the Government of the Republic of China (ROC) faced the triple threat of Japanese invasion, Communist uprising, and warlord insurrections. Frustrated by the focus of the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek on internal threats instead of the Japanese assault, a group of generals abducted Chiang in 1937 and forced him to reconsider cooperation with the Communist army. As with the first effort at cooperation between the Nationalist government and the CCP, this Second United Front was short-lived.
Nationalists expended needed resources on containing the Communists, rather than focusing entirely on Japan, while the Communists worked to strengthen their influence in rural society.

During World War II, popular support for the Communists increased. U.S. officials in China reported a dictatorial suppression of dissent in Nationalist-controlled areas. These undemocratic polices combined with wartime corruption made the Republic of China Government vulnerable to the Communist threat. The CCP, for its part, experienced success in its early efforts at land reform and was lauded by peasants for its unflagging efforts to fight against the Japanese invaders.

Japanese surrender set the stage for the resurgence of civil war in China. Though only nominally democratic, the Nationalist Government of Chiang Kai-shek continued to receive U.S. support both as its former war ally and as the sole option for preventing Communist control of China. U.S. forces flew tens of thousands of Nationalist Chinese troops into Japanese-controlled territory and allowed them to accept the Japanese surrender. The Soviet Union, meanwhile, occupied Manchuria and only pulled out when Chinese Communist forces were in place to claim that territory.

In 1945, the leaders of the Nationalist and Communist parties, Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, met for a series of talks on the formation of a post-war government. Both agreed on the importance of democracy, a unified military, and equality for all Chinese political parties. The truce was tenuous, however, and, in spite of repeated efforts by U.S. General George Marshall to broker an agreement, by 1946 the two sides were fighting an all-out civil war. Years of mistrust between the two sides thwarted efforts to form a coalition government.

As the civil war gained strength from 1947 to 1949, eventual Communist victory seemed more and more likely. Although the Communists did not hold any major cities after World War II, they had strong grassroots support, superior military organization and morale, and large stocks of weapons seized from Japanese supplies in Manchuria. Years of corruption and mismanagement had eroded popular support for the Nationalist Government. Early in 1947, the ROC Government was already looking to the island province of Taiwan, off the coast of Fujian Province, as a potential point of retreat. Although officials in the Truman Administration were not convinced of the strategic importance to the United States of maintaining relations with Nationalist China, no one in the U.S. Government wanted to be charged with facilitating the “loss” of China to communism. Military and financial aid to the floundering Nationalists continued, though not at the level that Chiang Kai-shek would have liked. In October of 1949, after a string of military victories, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the PRC; Chiang and his forces fled to Taiwan to regroup and plan for their efforts to retake the mainland.

The ability of the PRC and the United States to find common ground in the wake of the establishment of the new Chinese state was hampered by both domestic politics and global tensions. In August of 1949, the Truman administration published the “China White Paper,” which explained past U.S. policy toward China based upon the principle that only Chinese forces could determine the outcome of their civil war. Unfortunately for Truman, this step failed to protect his administration from charges of having “lost” China. The unfinished nature of the revolution, leaving a broken and exiled but still vocal Nationalist Government and army on Taiwan, only heightened the sense among U.S. anti-communists that the outcome of the struggle could be reversed. The outbreak of the Korean War,
which pitted the PRC and the United States on opposite sides of an international conflict, ended any opportunity for accommodation between the PRC and the United States. Truman’s desire to prevent the Korean conflict from spreading south led to the U.S. policy of protecting the Chiang Kai-shek government on Taiwan.

For more than twenty years after the Chinese revolution of 1949, there were few contacts, limited trade and no diplomatic ties between the two countries. Until the 1970s, the United States continued to recognize the Republic of China, located on Taiwan, as China’s true government and supported that government’s holding the Chinese seat in the United Nations.

- Chinese Revolution
- The United States and China during the Cold War

RED SCARE

Not only did the Cold War shape U.S. foreign policy, it also had a profound effect on domestic affairs. Americans had long feared radical subversion. These fears could at times be overdrawn, and used to justify otherwise unacceptable political restrictions, but it also was true that individuals under Communist Party discipline and many “fellow traveler” hangers-on gave their political allegiance not to the United States, but to the international Communist movement, or, practically speaking, to Moscow. During the Red Scare of 1919-1920, the government had attempted to remove perceived threats to American society. After World War II, it made strong efforts against Communism within the United States. Foreign events, espionage scandals, and politics created an anti-Communist hysteria.

When Republicans were victorious in the midterm congressional elections of 1946 and appeared ready to investigate subversive activity, President Truman established a Federal Employee Loyalty Program. It had little impact on the lives of most civil servants, but a few hundred were dismissed, some unfairly.

In 1947 the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigated the motion-picture industry to determine whether Communist sentiments were being reflected in popular films. When some writers (who happened to be secret members of the Communist Party) refused to testify, they were cited for contempt and sent to prison. After that, the film companies refused to hire anyone with a marginally questionable past.

In 1948, Alger Hiss, who had been an assistant secretary of state and an adviser to Roosevelt at Yalta, was publicly accused of being a Communist spy by Whittaker Chambers, a former Soviet agent. Hiss denied the accusation, but in 1950 he was convicted of perjury. Subsequent evidence indicates that he was indeed guilty.

FIGURE 6.27
Alger Hiss takes the oath
In 1949 the Soviet Union shocked Americans by testing its own atomic bomb. In 1950, the government uncovered a British-American spy network that transferred to the Soviet Union materials about the development of the atomic bomb. Two of its operatives, Julius Rosenberg and his wife Ethel, were sentenced to death. Attorney General J. Howard McGrath declared there were many American Communists, each bearing “the germ of death for society.”

![The Rosenburgs after their arraignment](image)

The most vigorous anti-Communist warrior was Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, a Republican from Wisconsin. He gained national attention in 1950 by claiming that he had a list of 205 known Communists in the State Department. Though McCarthy subsequently changed this figure several times and failed to substantiate any of his charges, he struck a responsive public chord.

McCarthy gained power when the Republican Party won control of the Senate in 1952. As a committee chairman, he now had a forum for his crusade. Relying on extensive press and television coverage, he continued to search for treachery among second-level officials in the Eisenhower administration. Enjoying the role of a tough guy doing dirty but necessary work, he pursued presumed Communists with vigor.

McCarthy overstepped himself by challenging the U.S. Army when one of his assistants was drafted. Television brought the hearings into millions of homes. Many Americans saw McCarthy’s savage tactics for the first time, and public support began to wane. The Republican Party, which had found McCarthy useful in challenging a Democratic administration when Truman was president, began to see him as an embarrassment. The Senate finally condemned him for his conduct.

McCarthy in many ways represented the worst domestic excesses of the Cold War. As Americans repudiated him, it became natural for many to assume that the Communist threat at home and abroad had been grossly overblown. As the country moved into the 1960s, anti-Communism became increasingly suspect, especially among intellectuals and opinion-shapers.

**McCarthyism**

"Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist party?" In the 1950s, thousands of Americans who toiled in the government, served in the army, worked in the movie industry, or came from various walks of life had to answer that question before a congressional panel.

Senator Joseph McCarthy rose to national prominence by initiating a probe to ferret out communists holding prominent positions. During his investigations, safeguards promised by the Constitution were trampled.

Why were so many held in thrall to the Wisconsin lawmaker? Why was an environment that some likened to the Salem Witch Trials tolerated?
FIGURE 6.29
Senator Joe McCarthy and chief counsel Roy Cohn interrogating suspected communists.

FIGURE 6.30
Fears that children would be corrupted by the "communist" practices depicted in Robin Hood led many schools and libraries to ban the classic tale about taking from the rich to give to the poor.

THE ATOMIC ERA

In 1947, President Truman had ordered background checks of every civilian in service to the government. When Alger Hiss, a high-ranking State Department official was convicted on espionage charges, fear of communists intensified.

McCarthy capitalized on national paranoia by proclaiming that COMMUNIST SPIES were omnipresent and that he was America's only salvation.

An atmosphere of fear of world domination by communists hung over America in the postwar years. There were fears of a nuclear holocaust based on the knowledge that the Soviet Union exploded its first A-bomb in 1949. That same year, China, the world’s most populous nation, became communist. Half of Europe was under Joseph Stalin’s influence, and every time Americans read their newspapers there seemed to be a new atomic threat.

FIGURE 6.31
Senator Joseph McCarthy sent this telegram to President Truman two days after claiming that he had identified "205 card-carrying" members of the Communist party working in the U.S. State Department.

At a speech in WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA, on February 9, 1950, McCarthy launched his first salvo. He proclaimed that he was aware of 205 card-carrying members of the Communist Party who worked for the United
States Department of State. A few days later, he repeated the charges at a speech in Salt Lake City. McCarthy soon began to attract headlines, and the Senate asked him to make his case.

- **Speech of Joseph McCarthy, Wheeling, West Virginia, February 9, 1950**

On February 20, 1950, McCarthy addressed the Senate and made a list of dubious claims against suspected communists. He cited 81 cases that day. He skipped several numbers, and for some cases repeated the same flimsy information. He proved nothing, but the Senate called for a full investigation. McCarthy was in the national spotlight. Staying in the headlines was a full-time job. After accusing low-level officials, McCarthy went for the big guns, even questioning the loyalty of DEAN ACHESON and George Marshall. Some Republicans in the Senate were aghast and disavowed McCarthy.

Others such as ROBERT TAFT and Richard Nixon, saw him as an asset. The public rewarded the witch-hunters by sending red-baiters (communist accusers) before the Senate and the House in 1950.

**"TAIL GUNNER JOE" SHOT DOWN**

When Dwight Eisenhower became president, he had no love for McCarthy. Ike was reluctant to condemn McCarthy for fear of splitting the Republican Party. McCarthy’s accusations went on into 1954, when the Wisconsin senator focused on the United States Army. For eight weeks, in televised hearings, McCarthy interrogated army officials, including many decorated war heroes.

But this was his tragic mistake. Television illustrated the mean-spiritedness of McCarthy’s campaign. The army then went on the attack, questioning McCarthy’s methods and credibility. In one memorable fusillade, the Council for the Army simply asked McCarthy, "At long last, have you no sense of decency left?"

Poll after poll showed the American people thought McCarthy unscrupulous in his attack of the army. Fed up, McCarthy’s colleagues censured him for dishonoring the Senate, and the hearings came to a close. Plagued with poor health and alcoholism, McCarthy himself died three years later.

**BLACKLISTING**

McCarthy was not the only individual to seek out potential communists. The HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES (HUAC) targeted the Hollywood film industry. Actors, writers, and producers alike
were summoned to appear before the committee and provide names of colleagues who may have been members of the Communist Party.

Those who repented and named names of suspected communists were allowed to return to business as usual. Those who refused to address the committee were cited for contempt. Uncooperative artists were blacklisted from jobs in the entertainment industry. Years passed until many had their reputations restored.

Sir, I detest, I abhor their [communists’] philosophy, but I detest more than that their tactics, which are those of the fifth column, and are dishonest, but at the same time I never as a citizen want to see our country become urged, by either fear or resentment of this group, that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles through that fear or resentment. I still think that democracy can do it.

– Ronald Reagan, testifying in front of the HUAC as president of the Screen Actors Guild (1947)

Were there in fact communists in America? The answer is undoubtedly yes. But many of the accused had attended party rallies 15 or more years before the hearings — it had been fashionable to do so in the 1930s.

Although the Soviet spy ring did penetrate the highest levels of the American government, the vast majority of the accused were innocent victims. All across America, state legislatures and school boards mimicked McCarthy and HUAC. Thousands of people lost their jobs and had their reputations tarnished.

OTHER WITCH-HUNT VICTIMS

Unions were special target of communist hunters. Sensing an unfavorable environment, the AFL (AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR) and the CIO (CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS) merged in 1955 to close ranks. Books were pulled from library shelves, including Robin Hood, which was deemed communist-like for suggesting stealing from the rich to give to the poor.

No politician could consider opening trade with China or withdrawing from Southeast Asia without being branded a communist. Although McCarthyism was dead by the mid-1950s, its effects lasted for decades.

Above all, several messages became crystal clear to the average American: Don’t criticize the United States. Don’t be different. Just conform.

J. EDGAR HOOVER AND THE FBI

Reacting in part to Republican gains in the midterm elections and allegations that he was soft on communism, President Truman initiated a loyalty review program for federal employees in March 1947. The background investigations
were carried out by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). This was a major assignment that led to a dramatic increase in the number of agents in the Bureau. It also gave more power to the FBI’s director, J. Edgar Hoover, who reigned over the agency for decades as an untouchable. Possessed with an ego that required constant flattering by his subordinates, even Congressmen and Senators were reluctant to challenge his methods (which included illegal wiretapping) for fear that he might have files on them. The legendary Hoover’s extreme anti-communism and loose standards of evidence resulted in thousands of government workers losing their jobs. Hoover insisted on keeping secret the identity of his informers, so most of the investigated were not allowed to cross-examine or even know who had accused them. In many cases they were not even told what they were accused of.

**JULIUS AND ETHEL ROSENBERG**

McCarthyism got a boost when the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, accused of spying for the Soviet Union, began on March 6, 1951. The main prosecution witness was Ethel’s brother, David Greenglass, who claimed to have passed along atomic bomb-related drawings to Julius, along with notes typed up by Ethel (Greenglass later recanted his testimony and claimed that he did it to protect himself and his family, not realizing the death penalty would be invoked). The Rosenbergs were convicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 and sentenced to death. Despite a grassroots campaign to have the conviction overturned, on June 19, 1953, the husband and wife were executed by electric chair. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, former Soviet agents came forward to claim the Rosenbergs were not involved in espionage for the Soviet Union. Other evidence has since surfaced, however, and the general consensus now is that Julius Rosenberg did pass on sensitive atomic information to the Soviet Union—information they already had. The debate continues about Ethel’s involvement, with most historians arguing that she was either not involved or knew about her husband’s activities but did not participate.

Radio News Report: The Execution of the Rosenbergs

**ESTES KEFAUVER**

In April 1950, the body of a Kansas City gambling kingpin was found in a Democratic clubhouse, slumped beneath a large portrait of President Harry S. Truman. His assassination intensified national concerns about the post-World War II growth of powerful crime syndicates and the resulting gang warfare in the nation’s larger cities.

On May 3, 1950, the Senate established a five-member Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce. Sensitive to the desire of several standing committees to conduct the investigation, Senate party leaders selected the special committee’s members from the committees on Interstate Commerce and the Judiciary, including each panel’s senior Republican. As chairman, the Democratic majority designated an ambitious
freshman—Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver.

The committee visited 14 major cities in 15 months, just as increasing numbers of Americans were purchasing their first television sets. When the panel reached New Orleans in January 1951, a local television station requested permission to televise an hour of testimony, perhaps to compete with a radio station that was carrying the entire proceedings. As the committee moved on to Detroit, a television station in that city preempted the popular children’s show, Howdy Doody, to broadcast senators grilling mobsters.

Like a theater company doing previews on the road, the committee headed for Broadway, where the independent television station of the New York Daily News provided live feed to the networks. When the notorious gambler Frank Costello refused to testify on camera, the committee ordered the TV not to show his face. The cameras instead focused on the witness’ nervously agitated hands, unexpectedly making riveting viewing. As the Associated Press explained, "Something big, unbelievably big and emphatic, smashed into the homes of millions of Americans last week when television cameras, cold-eyed and relentless, were trained on the Kefauver Crime hearings."

The Committee received 250,000 pieces of mail from a viewing audience estimated at 30 million. Although the hearings boosted Chairman Kefauver’s political prospects, they helped to end the 12-year Senate career of Democratic Majority Leader Scott Lucas. In a tight 1950 reelection race against former Illinois Representative Everett Dirksen, Lucas urged Kefauver to keep his investigation away from an emerging Chicago police scandal until after election day. Kefauver refused. Election-eve publication of stolen secret committee documents hurt the Democratic Party in Cook County, cost Lucas the election, and gave Dirksen national prominence as the man who defeated the Senate majority leader.
6.5 The Korean War

While many of us have probably seen episodes of the TV show "M*A*S*H," few of us could explain what caused the Korean War. Here’s a chance to understand what "Dr. Benjamin Franklin ("Hawkeye") Pierce from Crabapple Cove, Maine, was doing in Korea.

Containment had not gone so well in Asia. When the Soviet Union entered the war against Japan, they sent troops into Japanese-occupied Korea. As American troops established a presence in the southern part of the Korean peninsula, the Soviets began cutting roads and communications at the 38TH PARALLEL. Two separate governments were emerging, as Korea began to resemble the divided Germany.

Upon the recommendation of the UN, elections were scheduled, but the North refused to participate. The South elected SYNGMAN RHEE as president, but the Soviet-backed North was ruled by KIM IL SUNG. When the United States withdrew its forces from the peninsula, trouble began.

Northern Korean armed forces crossed the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950. It took only two days for President Truman to commit the United States military to the defense of southern Korea. Truman hoped to build a broad coalition against the aggressors from the North by enlisting support from the United Nations.

Of course, the Soviet Union could veto any proposed action by the Security Council, but this time, the Americans were in luck. The Soviets were boycotting the Security Council for refusing to admit RED CHINA into the United Nations. As a result, the Council voted unanimously to "repel the armed attack" of North Korea. Many countries sent troops to defend the South, but forces beyond those of the United States and South Korea were nominal.

The commander of the UN forces was none other than Douglas MacArthur. He had an uphill battle to fight, as the North had overrun the entire peninsula with the exception of the small PUSAN PERIMETER in the South. MacArthur ordered an amphibious assault at Inchon on the western side of the peninsula on September 15.
Caught by surprise, the communist-backed northern forces reeled in retreat. American led-forces from INCHON and the Pusan Perimeter quickly pushed the northern troops to the 38th Parallel — and kept going. The United States saw an opportunity to create a complete indivisible democratic Korea and pushed the northern army up to the Yalu River, which borders China.

![Figure 6.37](image)

**FIGURE 6.37**
The USS Missouri fires on Chongjin, North Korea, in October 1950. The mission of this particular engagement was to disable enemy communications systems.

With anti communism on the rise at home, Truman relished the idea of reuniting Korea. His hopes were dashed on November 27, when over 400,000 Chinese soldiers flooded across the YALU RIVER. In 1949, Mao Tse-tung had established a communist dictatorship in China, the world’s most populous nation. The Chinese now sought to aide the communists in northern Korea.

In no time, American troops were once again forced below the 38th Parallel. General MacArthur wanted to escalate the war. He sought to bomb the Chinese mainland and blockade their coast.

Truman disagreed. He feared escalation of the conflict could lead to World War III, especially if the now nuclear-armed Soviet Union lent assistance to China. Disgruntled, MacArthur took his case directly to the American people by openly criticizing Truman’s approach. Truman promptly fired him for insubordination.

Meanwhile, the war evolved into a stalemate, with the front line corresponding more or less to the 38th Parallel. Ceasefire negotiations dragged on for two more years, beyond Truman’s Presidency. Finally, on July 27, 1953, an armistice was signed at PANMUNJOM. North Korea remained a communist dictatorship, and South Korea remained under the control of Syngman Rhee, a military strong man. Over 53,000 Americans were killed in the conflict.

- A Concise History of the Korean War - Video
In Case of a Nuclear Attack: United States Response at Home

- The Soviet-American Arms Race
- Bert the Turtle

Pamphlet entitled "Facts about Fallout"
SPUTNIK

- Radio News Report: Radio Moscow, Sputnik is Launched
- The Sound of Sputnik I
- Sputnik and Explorer
6.6. In Case of a Nuclear Attack: United States Response at Home

- Sputnik
- Sputnik’s Impact on America

Eisenhower Farewell Address
FIGURE 6.40
An artist’s rendition of a temporary basement fallout shelter, ca. 1957.

FIGURE 6.41
Photograph of a basement family fallout shelter that includes a 14-day food supply that could be stored indefinitely, a battery-operated radio, auxiliary light sources, a two-week supply of water, and first aid, sanitary, and other miscellaneous supplies and equipment, ca. 1957.

MEDIA
Click image to the left or use the URL below.
URL: http://www.ck12.org/flx/render/embeddedobject/136179

- Ike’s Warning Of Military Expansion, 50 Years Later
- Military Industrial Complex - Lesson
6.6. In Case of a Nuclear Attack: United States Response at Home

FIGURE 6.42
The Original Sputnik
FAILURE AND SUCCESS WITH CUBA

Cuba became a hot spot for the Kennedy administration for two reasons during the early 1960s. The failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 was an attempt to incite a popular uprising against Fidel Castro. One year later, the Cuban Missile Crisis saw Kennedy demand an end to Russia’s plan to store nuclear arms just 90 miles from U.S. soil.

The Cold War raged on in the 1960s. President Kennedy faced a confident Soviet Union and a sleeping giant in the PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. Fears of communist expansion plagued American foreign policy in places as distant as Vietnam and as close as Cuba.

Like his predecessors, Kennedy made containment his chief foreign policy goal. Abandoning Dwight Eisenhower’s heavy reliance on nuclear deterrence, Kennedy expanded defense spending. The United States needed a “FLEXIBLE RESPONSE” capability.

To Kennedy, this meant a variety of military options depending upon the specific conditions. Conventional forces were upgraded. Included in this program was the establishment of special forces units similar to the Green Berets. Despite the expense, Kennedy believed communism was a menace that required maximal preparation.

One of Kennedy’s most popular foreign policy initiatives was the PEACE CORPS. Led by SARGENT SHRIVER, this program allowed Americans to volunteer two years of service to a developing nation. Applicants would be placed based upon their particular skill sets. English teachers would be placed where the learning of the language was needed. Entrepreneurs trained local merchants how to maximize profits. Doctors and nurses were needed anywhere.

Kennedy thought the program was a win-win proposition. Third World nations received much needed assistance. The United States promoted goodwill around the world. Countries that received Peace Corps volunteers might be less likely to submit to a communist revolution. American participants obtained experiences that shaped well-rounded, worldly citizens.

John F. Kennedy’s stirring address to the people of West Berlin in 1963 illustrated that the U.S. was committed to working for freedom throughout the region and the world. Kennedy ended his speech by stating: “Ich bin ein Berliner” (I am a citizen of Berlin).
Relations with Latin America had gone sour since Franklin Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy. Latin American nations complained bitterly about United States support of dictatorial military regimes. They pointed out that no large Marshall Plan was designed for Latin America. In that spirit, Kennedy proposed the Alliance for Progress program. Development funds were granted to nations of the Western Hemisphere who were dedicated to fighting communism. After Kennedy’s death, funds for the Alliance for Progress were largely diverted to Vietnam, however.

In 1961, the citizens of West Berlin felt completely isolated when the Soviet Union built the Berlin Wall around the city. Kennedy visited West Berlin in the summer of 1963 to allay their fears. In an attempt to show solidarity between West Berlin and the United States, Kennedy ended his rousing speech with the infamous words: "ICH BIN EIN BERLINER." In essence, Kennedy was saying, "I am a citizen of West Berlin." The visit and the speech endeared him to the people of West Berlin and all of Western Europe.

Kennedy’s greatest foreign policy failure and greatest foreign policy success both involved one nation — Cuba. In 1961, CIA-trained Cuban exiles landed in Cuba at the BAY OF PIGS, hoping to ignite a popular uprising that would oust Fidel Castro from power. When the revolution failed to occur, Castro’s troops moved in. The exiles believed air support would come from the United States, but Kennedy refused. Many of the rebels were shot, and the rest were arrested. The incident was an embarrassment to the United States and a great victory for Fidel Castro.

In October 1962, the United States learned that the Soviet Union was about to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba. Kennedy found this unacceptable. He ordered a NAVAL "QUARANTINE" OF CUBA and ordered Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to turn his missile-carrying boats back to the USSR. Any Soviet attempt to penetrate the American blockade would be met with an immediate military response. The world watched this dangerous game of nuclear chicken unfold. Finally, Khrushchev acceded to Kennedy’s demands, and the world remained safe from global confrontation.

The CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS marked the closest the United States and the Soviet Union came to direct confrontation in the entire Cold War.
6.8 The Vietnam War

THE VIETNAM WAR

FIGURE 6.45
These young soldiers were members of the U.S. 1st Air Cavalry. This picture was taken in 1965, during the first military engagements between U.S. and North Vietnamese ground forces.

The VIETNAM WAR was the longest war in United States history. Promises and commitments to the people and government of South Vietnam to keep communist forces from overtaking them reached back into the Truman Administration. Eisenhower placed military advisers and CIA operatives in Vietnam, and John F. Kennedy sent American soldiers to Vietnam. Lyndon Johnson ordered the first real combat by American troops, and Richard Nixon concluded the war.

Despite the decades of resolve, billions and billions of dollars, nearly 60,000 American lives and many more injuries, the United States failed to achieve its objectives.

One factor that influenced the failure of the United States in Vietnam was lack of public support. However, the notion that the war initially was prosecuted by the government against the wishes of the American people is false. The notion that the vast majority of American youths took to the streets to end the Vietnam War is equally false. Early initiatives by the United States under Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy received broad support.

Only two members of the United States Congress voted against granting Johnson broad authority to wage the war in Vietnam, and most Americans supported this measure as well. The antiwar movement in 1965 was small, and news of its activities was buried in the inner pages of newspapers, if there was any mention at all. Only later in the war did public opinion sour.

The enemy was hard to identify. The war was not fought between conventional army forces. The Viet Cong blended in with the native population and struck by ambush, often at night. Massive American bombing campaigns hit their targets, but failed to make the North Vietnamese concede. Promises made by American military and political leaders that the war would soon be over were broken.

And night after night, Americans turned on the news to see the bodies of their young flown home in bags. Draft injustices like college deferments surfaced, hearkening back to the similar controversies of the Civil War. The average age of the American soldier in Vietnam was nineteen. As the months of the war became years, the public became impatient.
Only a small percentage of Americans believed their government was evil or sympathized with the Viet Cong. But many began to feel it was time to cut losses. Even the iconic CBS newscaster WALTER CRONKITE questioned aloud the efficacy of pursuing the war.

President Nixon signed a ceasefire in January 1973 that formally ended the hostilities. In 1975, communist forces from the north overran the south and unified the nation. Neighboring CAMBODIA and LAOS also became communist dictatorships. At home, returning Vietnam veterans found readjustment and even acceptance difficult. The scars of Vietnam would not heal quickly for the United States. The legacy of bitterness divided the American citizenry and influenced foreign policy into the 21st century.

EARLY INVOLVEMENT AND EMERGENCE OF HO CHI MINH

While Americans were girding to fight the Civil War in 1860, the French were beginning a century-long imperial involvement in Indochina. The lands now known as Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia comprised INDOCHINA. The riches to be harvested in these lands proved economically enticing to the French.

After World War I, a nationalist movement formed in Vietnam led by HO CHI MINH. Ho was educated in the West, where he became a disciple of Marxist thought. Ho resented and resisted the French. When the Japanese invaded Vietnam during World War II, they displaced French rule. Ho formed a liberation movement known as the Viet Minh. Using guerrilla warfare, the VIET MINH battled the Japanese and held many key cities by 1945. Paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence, Ho proclaimed the new nation of Vietnam — a new nation Western powers refused to recognize.

France was determined to reclaim all its territories after World War II. The United States now faced an interesting dilemma. American tradition dictated sympathy for the revolutionaries over any colonial power. However, supporting the Marxist Viet Minh was unthinkable, given the new strategy of containing communism.

DOMINO THEORY

American diplomats subscribed to the DOMINO THEORY. A communist victory in Vietnam might lead to communist victories in Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Such a scenario was unthinkable to the makers of American foreign policy.

President Truman decided to support France in its efforts to reclaim Indochina by providing money and military advisers. The United States financial commitment amounted to nearly $1 billion per year.

The French found Ho Chi Minh a formidable adversary. Between 1945 and 1954 a fierce war developed between the two sides. Slowly but surely, the Viet Minh wore down the French will to fight. On May, 8th, 1954 a large regiment of French troops was captured by the Vietnamese led by communist general VO NGUYEN GIAP at DIEN BIEN PHU.
A NATION DIVIDED

The rest of the French troops withdrew, leaving a buffer zone separating the North and South. Negotiations to end the conflict took place in Geneva. A multinational agreement divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel. The territory north of this line would be led by Ho Chi Minh with Hanoi its capital.

The southern sector named Saigon its capital and Ngo Dinh Diem its leader. This division was meant to be temporary, with nationwide elections scheduled for 1956. Knowing that Ho Chi Minh would be a sure victor, the South made sure these elections were never held.

During the administrations of Eisenhower and Kennedy, the United States continued to supply funds, weapons, and military advisers to SOUTH VIETNAM. Ho Chi Minh turned NORTH VIETNAM into a communist dictatorship and created a new band of GUERRILLAS in the South called the Viet Cong, whose sole purpose was to overthrow the military regime in the South and reunite the nation under Ho Chi Minh.

The United States was backing an unpopular leader in NGO DINH DIEM. Diem was corrupt, showed little commitment to democratic principles, and favored Catholics to the dismay of the Buddhist majority. In November 1963, Diem was murdered in a coup with apparent CIA involvement.

Few of Ngo’s successors fared any better, while Ho Chi Minh was the Vietnamese equivalent of George Washington. He had successfully won the hearts and minds of the majority of the Vietnamese people. Two weeks after the fall of Diem, Kennedy himself was felled by an assassin’s bullet.

By the time Lyndon Johnson inherited the Presidency, Vietnam was a bitterly divided nation. The United States would soon too be divided on what to do in Vietnam.

SITUATION ESCALATES: GULF OF TONKIN, AGENT ORANGE, AND NAPALM

It was David vs. Goliath, with U.S. playing Goliath.

On August 2, 1964, gunboats of North Vietnam allegedly fired on ships of the United States Navy stationed in the GULF OF TONKIN. They had been sailing 10 miles off the coast of North Vietnam in support of the South Vietnamese navy.

When reports that further firing occurred on August 4, President Johnson quickly asked Congress to respond. With nearly unanimous consent, members of the Senate and House empowered Johnson to "take all necessary measures" to repel North Vietnamese aggression. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave the President a "BLANK CHECK" to wage the war in Vietnam as he saw fit. After Lyndon Johnson was elected President in his own right that November, he chose escalate the conflict.

After the end of the First Indochina War and the Viet Minh defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the countries meeting at the Geneva Conference divided Vietnam into northern and southern halves, ruled by separate regimes, and scheduled elections to reunite the country under a unified government. The communists seemed likely...
to win those elections, thanks mostly to their superior organization and greater appeal in the countryside. The United States, however, was dedicated to containing the spread of communist regimes and, invoking the charter of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (1954), supported the South Vietnamese leader, Ngo Dinh Diem, when he refused to hold the elections. Diem held control of the South Vietnamese Government, but he could not halt the communist infiltration of the South. By 1959, the Viet Cong, South Vietnamese communist guerillas, and the Viet Minh, began a large scale insurgency in the South that marked the opening of the Second Indochina War.

Ngo Dinh Diem failed to capture the loyalties of the people of South Vietnam the way that Ho Chi Minh had done among the population of North Vietnam. Despite U.S. support, Diem’s rural policies and ambivalent attitude toward necessary changes like land reform only bolstered support for the Viet Cong in the southern countryside. By 1963, Diem’s rule had so deteriorated that he was overthrown and assassinated by several of his generals with the tacit approval of the Kennedy Administration. Three weeks later, U.S. President John F. Kennedy was also assassinated, and the war continued under new leadership in both countries. Before his death, Kennedy had increased the U.S. advisory presence in South Vietnam in the hopes that a U.S.-supported program of “nation-building” would strengthen the new South Vietnamese government. However, South Vietnam continued to experience political instability and military losses to North Vietnam.

By August, 1964, the Johnson Administration believed that escalation of the U.S. presence in Vietnam was the only solution. The post-Diem South proved no more stable than it had been before his ouster, and South Vietnamese troops were generally ineffective. In addition to supporting on-going South Vietnamese raids in the countryside and implementing a U.S. program of bombing the Lao border to disrupt supply lines, the U.S. military began backing South Vietnamese raids of the North Vietnamese coast. The U.S. Navy stationed two destroyers, the Maddox and the Turner Joy, in the Gulf of Tonkin to bolster these actions. They reported an attack by North Vietnamese patrol boats on August 2, and a second attack on August 4. Doubts later emerged as to whether or not the attack against the Turner Joy had taken place.

Immediately after reports of the second attack, Johnson asked the U.S. Congress for permission to defend U.S. forces in Southeast Asia. The Senate passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution with only two opposing votes, and the House of Representatives passed it unanimously. Congress supported the resolution with the assumption that the president would return and seek their support before engaging in additional escalations of the war.

The Gulf of Tonkin incident and the subsequent Gulf of Tonkin resolution provided the justification for further U.S. escalation of the conflict in Vietnam. Acting on the belief that Hanoi would eventually weaken when faced with stepped up bombing raids, Johnson and his advisers ordered the U.S. military to launch Operation Rolling Thunder, a bombing campaign against the North. Operation Rolling Thunder commenced on February 13, 1965 and continued through the spring of 1967. Johnson also authorized the first of many deployments of regular ground combat troops to Vietnam to fight the Viet Cong in the countryside.
OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

In February 1965, the United States began a long program of sustained bombing of North Vietnamese targets known as OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER. At first only military targets were hit, but as months turned into years, civilian targets were pummeled as well.

The United States also bombed the Ho Chi Minh trail, a supply line used by the North Vietnamese to aid the VIET CONG. The trail meandered through Laos and Cambodia, so the bombing was kept secret from the Congress and the American people. More bombs rained down on Vietnam than the Allies used on the Axis powers during the whole of World War II.

Additional sorties delivered defoliating agents such as AGENT ORANGE and napalm to remove the jungle cover utilized by the Vietcong. The intense bombardment did little to deter the communists. They continued to use the Ho Chi Minh trail despite the grave risk. They burrowed underground, building 30,000 miles of tunnel networks to keep supply lines open.

GROUND TROOPS

It soon became clear to GENERAL WILLIAM WESTMORELAND, the American military commander, that combat troops would be necessary to root out the enemy. Beginning in March 1965, when the first American combat troops waded ashore at Danang, the United States began "search and destroy" missions.

One of the most confounding problems faced by U.S. military personnel in Vietnam was identifying the enemy. The same Vietnamese peasant who waved hello in the daytime might be a VC guerrilla fighter by night. The United States could not indiscriminately kill South Vietnamese peasants. Any mistake resulted in a dead ally and an angrier population.

Search and destroy missions were conducted by moving into a village and inspecting for any signs of Vietcong support. If any evidence was found, the troops would conduct a "ZIPPO RAID" by torching the village to the ground and confiscating discovered munitions. Most efforts were fruitless, as the VC proved adept at covering their tracks. The enemy surrounded and confounded the Americans but direct confrontation was rare.

By the end of 1965, there were American 189,000 troops stationed in Vietnam. At the end of the following year, that
number doubled. Casualty reports steadily increased. Unlike World War II, there were few major ground battles.

Most Vietnamese attacks were by ambush or night skirmishes. Many Americans died by stepping on landmines or by triggering BOOBY TRAPS. Although Vietnamese body counts were higher, Americans were dying at a rate of approximately 100 per week through 1967. By the end of that year there were nearly 500,000 American combat troops stationed in Vietnam.

General Westmoreland promised a settlement soon, but the end was not in sight.

THE TET OFFENSIVE

During the BUDDHIST holiday of TET, over 80,000 Vietcong troops emerged from their tunnels and attacked nearly every major metropolitan center in South Vietnam. Surprise strikes were made at the American base at DANANG, and even the seemingly impenetrable American embassy in SAIGON was attacked.

During the weeks that followed, the South Vietnamese army and U.S. ground forces recaptured all of the lost territory, inflicting twice as many casualties on the Vietcong as suffered by the Americans. The showdown was a military victory for the United States, but American morale suffered an insurmountable blow.

DOVES OUTNUMBER HAWKS

When Operation Rolling Thunder began in 1965, only 15 percent of the American public opposed the war effort in Vietnam. As late as January 1968, only a few weeks before Tet, only 28 percent of the American public labeled themselves "doves." But by April 1968, six weeks after the TET OFFENSIVE, "DOVES" outnumbered "HAWKS" 42 to 41 percent.

Only 28% of the American people were satisfied with President Johnson’s handling of the war. The Tet Offensive convinced many Americans that government statements about the war being nearly over were false. After three years of intense bombing, billions of dollars and 500,000 troops, the VC proved themselves capable of attacking anywhere they chose. The message was simple: this war was not almost over. The end was nowhere in sight.

SAGGING U.S. TROOP MORALE

Declining public support brought declining troop morale. Many soldiers questioned the wisdom of American involvement. Soldiers indulged in alcohol, marijuana, and even heroin to escape their daily horrors. Incidents of "FRAGGING," or the murder of officers by their own troops increased in the years that followed Tet. Soldiers who completed their yearlong tour of duty often found hostile receptions upon returning to the states.
After Tet, General Westmoreland requested an additional 200,000 troops to put added pressure on the Vietcong. His request was denied. President Johnson knew that activating that many reserves, bringing the total American commitment to nearly three quarters of a million soldiers was not politically tenable.

The North Vietnamese sensed the crumbling of American resolve. They knew that the longer the war raged, the more antiwar sentiment in America would grow. They gambled that the American people would demand troop withdrawals before the military met its objectives.

For the next five years they pretended to negotiate with United States, making proposals they knew would be rejected. With each passing day, the number of "hawks" in America decreased. Only a small percentage of Americans objected to the war on moral grounds, but a growing majority saw the war as an effort whose price of victory was way too high.

**VIETNAMIZATION, BOMBING OF CAMBODIA, AND WITHDRAWAL**

President Nixon had a plan to end American involvement in Vietnam. By the time he entered the White House in 1969, he knew the American war effort was failing. Greater military power may have brought a favorable outcome, but there were no guarantees. And the American people were less and less willing to support any sort of escalation with each passing day.

Immediate American withdrawal would amount to a defeat of the noncommunist South Vietnamese allies. Nixon announced a plan later known as VIETNAMIZATION. The United States would gradually withdraw troops from Southeast Asia as American military personnel turned more and more of the fighting over to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. In theory, as the South Vietnamese became more able to defend themselves, United States soldiers could go home without a communist takeover of Saigon.

Troop withdrawals did little to placate the antiwar movement. Demonstrators wanted an immediate and complete departure. Events in Vietnam and at home gave greater strength to the protesters.

In the spring of 1970, President Nixon announced a temporary invasion of neighboring Cambodia. Although
Cambodia was technically neutral, the Ho Chi Minh trail stretched through its territory. Nixon ordered the Viet Cong bases located along the trail to be bombed.

**KENT STATE AND MY LAI MASSACRES**

The unspeakable horror of the 1968 My Lai massacre was not revealed to the American public until investigative journalist Seymour Hersh published his findings in November, 1969. According to troops who either witnessed or took part in the massacre, orders had been given "to destroy My Lai and everything in it." Over 300 civilians were killed and the village itself was burned to the ground.

Peace advocates were enraged. They claimed that Nixon was expanding the war, not reducing it as promised. Protests were mounted across America.

At KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, students rioted in protest. The burned down the ROTC building located on campus, and destroyed local property. The governor of Ohio sent the National Guard to maintain order. A state of high tension and confusion hung between the Guard and the students. Several soldiers fired their rifles, leading to deaths of four students and the wounding of several others. This became known as the Kent State massacre.

The following year the American public learned about the My Lai massacre. In 1968, American soldiers opened fire on several hundred women and children in the tiny hamlet of My Lai. How could this happen? It was not unusual for Viet Cong guerilla activity to be initiated from small villages. Further, U.S. troops were tired, scared, and confused.

At first the Lieutenant who had given the order, WILLIAM L. CALLEY, JR., was declared guilty of murder, but the ruling was later overturned. Moral outrage swept through the antiwar movement. They cited My Lai as an example of how American soldiers were killing innocent peasants.

**THE PENTAGON PAPERS**

In 1971, the New York Times published excerpts from the PENTAGON PAPERS, a top-secret overview of the history of government involvement in Vietnam. A participant in the study named DANIEL ELLSBERG believed the American public needed to know some of the secrets, so he leaked information to the press. The Pentagon Papers revealed a high-level deception of the American public by the Johnson Administration.

Many statements released about the military situation in Vietnam were simply untrue, including the possibility that even the bombing of American naval boats in the Gulf of Tonkin might never have happened. A growing credibility gap between the truth and what the government said was true caused many Americans to grow even more cynical about the war.

By December 1972, Nixon decided to escalate the bombing of North Vietnamese cities, including Hanoi. He hoped this initiative would push North Vietnam to the peace table. In January 1973, a ceasefire was reached, and the remaining American combat troops were withdrawn. Nixon called the agreement "peace with honor," but he knew the South Vietnamese Army would have difficulty maintaining control.

The North soon attacked the South and in April 1975 they captured Saigon. Vietnam was united into one communist nation. Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City. Cambodia and Laos soon followed with communist regimes of their own. The United States was finally out of Vietnam. But every single one of its political objectives for the region met with failure. Over 55,000 Americans perished fighting the Vietnam War.
The North Vietnamese Army captured Saigon in April, 1975, and renamed the capital Ho Chi Minh City. It was at this time that the last remaining American personnel in Vietnam were forced to flee.

Both Truman and Eisenhower, eager to maintain French support for the policy of containment in Europe, provided France with economic aid that freed resources for the struggle in Vietnam. But the French suffered a decisive defeat in Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. At an international conference in Geneva, Laos and Cambodia were given their independence. Vietnam was divided, with Ho in power in the North and Ngo Dinh Diem, a Roman Catholic anti-Communist in a largely Buddhist population, heading the government in the South. Elections were to be held two years later to unify the country. Persuaded that the fall of Vietnam could lead to the fall of Burma, Thailand, and Indonesia, Eisenhower backed Diem’s refusal to hold elections in 1956 and effectively established South Vietnam as an American client state — a nation that was officially independent but effectively under U.S. control.

Kennedy increased assistance, and sent small numbers of military advisors, but a new guerrilla struggle between North and South continued. Diem’s unpopularity grew and the military situation worsened. In late 1963, Kennedy secretly assented to a coup d’etat. In the coup, Diem and his powerful brother-in-law, Ngo Dien Nu, were killed.

A series of South Vietnamese strong men proved little more successful than Diem in mobilizing their country. The Viet Cong, insurgents supplied and coordinated from North Vietnam, gained ground in the countryside.

Determined to halt Communist advances in South Vietnam, Johnson made the Vietnam War his own. After a North Vietnamese naval attack on two American destroyers, Johnson won from Congress on August 7, 1964, passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which allowed the president to “take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack
against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.” After his re-election in November 1964, he embarked on a policy of escalation. From 25,000 troops at the start of 1965, the number of soldiers – both volunteers and draftees – rose to 500,000 by 1968. A bombing campaign wrought havoc in both North and South Vietnam.

Grisly television coverage with a critical edge dampened support for the war. Some Americans thought it immoral; others watched in dismay as the massive military campaign seemed to be ineffective. Large protests, especially among the young, and a mounting general public dissatisfaction pressured Johnson to begin negotiating for peace.

ROLE OF PRESIDENT RICHARD NIXON

Determined to achieve “peace with honor,” Nixon slowly withdrew American troops while redoubling efforts to equip the South Vietnamese army to carry on the fight. He also ordered strong American offensive actions. The most important of these was an invasion of Cambodia in 1970 to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines to South Vietnam. This led to another round of protests and demonstrations. Students in many universities took to the streets. At Kent State in Ohio, the national guard troops who had been called in to restore order panicked and killed four students.

By the fall of 1972, however, troop strength in Vietnam was below 50,000 and the military draft, which had caused so much campus discontent, was all but dead. A cease-fire, negotiated for the United States by Nixon’s national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, was signed in 1973. Although American troops departed, the war lingered on into the spring of 1975, when Congress cut off assistance to South Vietnam and North Vietnam consolidated its control over the entire country.

The war left Vietnam devastated, with millions maimed or killed. It also left the United States traumatized. The nation had spent over $150,000-million in a losing effort that cost more than 58,000 American lives. Americans were no longer united by a widely held Cold War consensus, and became wary of further foreign entanglements.

HENRY KISSINGER AND THE END OF THE VIETNAM WAR

President Richard M. Nixon assumed responsibility for the Vietnam War as he swore the oath of office on January 20, 1969. He knew that ending this war honorably was essential to his success in the presidency. He expected that the American people would give him a year to end U.S. involvement in the war, and he expected to succeed during that time—believing that his experience in foreign relations, his toughness, and his willingness to bring to bear military
and political pressure on North Vietnam would yield a settlement in the public negotiations just opening in Paris.

In his first months in office, Nixon directed the U.S. military to increase its pressure on the battlefield, while ordering the secret B-52 bombings of North Vietnamese base camps in Cambodia—the “Menu bombings”—as a signal of his willingness to further escalate the war. He expected to complement this military pressure with conciliatory negotiating terms in the newly begun negotiations, and with diplomatic pressure on the Soviet Union, hoping the Soviet Union would encourage their North Vietnamese allies to engage in serious negotiations. These forms of pressure, however, brought him no closer to ending the war. In order to buy time with the American people, Nixon began to withdraw forces from Vietnam, meeting with South Vietnam’s President Nguyen Van Thieu on Midway Island on June 8 to announce the first increment of redeployment. From that point on, the U.S. troop withdrawal never ceased. As U.S. troop strength and capabilities declined, the United States worked toward building South Vietnam’s military capacity through a program known as “Vietnamization.” It would remain a constant question over the remaining years of the administration, whether the South Vietnamese could build the combat capability, logistics and planning capacity, and leadership at the national and military levels to face the North Vietnamese on their own.

It quickly became apparent that the public peace talks in Paris were being used as propaganda theater by both sides, and that any productive negotiations would have to be done in private. On August 4, the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger conducted his first private session with the North Vietnamese leadership. He would meet with North Vietnamese Politburo member Le Duc Tho intermittently over the following months, with no apparent progress toward a settlement.

In the fall of 1969, disappointed with the lack of any visible results from this strategy, Nixon and Kissinger directed an extensive planning effort assessing the possibility of coercing the North Vietnamese into negotiations through a series of “short, sharp blows” inflicted by air and naval forces. The political-military planning included a cell of National Security Council staff members examining strategic issues, and a military planning team comprised of Joint Staff, Pacific Command (PACOM), and Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) officers working at
MACV Headquarters in Saigon. Nixon met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on October 11, and it became clear that the planning had satisfied neither the White House nor the JCS. With American casualties on the decline, the anti-war movement still a powerful force, and no satisfactory political-military solution in sight, Nixon turned away from that option to deliver the “silent majority” speech on November 3, 1969, rallying the American people toward patient support for a protracted war. The administration would continue its dual strategy of Vietnamization and negotiation.

In March 1970 the fall of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia destroyed the fragile neutrality of that state, as his successor Lon Nol demanded the North Vietnamese withdraw from their base camps along the South Vietnamese border. The North Vietnamese reacted by extending their presence toward the west. Nixon responded by ordering a US-South Vietnamese “incursion” into Cambodia on April 30. Limited by Nixon to a 30-kilometer strip along the border, and limited in time to the end of June, this action sparked violent protests on campuses across the United States. These culminated in the deaths of four students at Kent State University on May 4. The incursion into the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) base camps yielded a great quantity of rice, weapons, and ammunition, and disrupted the North Vietnamese command and logistics structures for months, buying time for Vietnamization and further U.S. troop withdrawals.

The following spring, Nixon ordered a theater-wide offensive, seeking to seize the initiative in the war. South Vietnamese forces crossed into Cambodia and Laos in early February 1971. The North Vietnamese had anticipated the incursion into Laos, known as Lam Son 719, and massed their forces in an attempt to annihilate the South Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese withdrawal disintegrated into a disorderly retreat.

Meanwhile, Nixon and Kissinger sought to reshape the international context of the war through building relationships with North Vietnam’s superpower allies in Moscow and Beijing. Nixon wanted to create a dilemma for the Soviet and Chinese—give them “bigger fish to fry,” in his phrase—in choosing between their support of North Vietnam, and a closer relationship with the United States. The 1972 summits in Beijing and Moscow reflected this strategy, though the Communist powers continued their material support of Hanoi.

The North Vietnamese opened a three-pronged offensive in South Vietnam, known in the United States as the Easter Offensive, in late March 1972, expecting that a victory on the battlefield would translate into a triumph at the negotiating table. Rather than accept the prospect of defeat, Nixon sent massive air force and naval reinforcements to bases in Indochina and Guam. On May 4 he decided to mine North Vietnam’s harbors and open a sustained air offensive, Operation Linebacker, against North Vietnam. These actions, along with intensive air attacks in the battle areas and improved South Vietnamese defenses, stymied North Vietnam’s offensive, leading the Politburo, for the first time, to engage in serious negotiations.

On October 11–12 Kissinger and Le Duc Tho reached agreement on a peace settlement, both sides working to reach that end before the U.S. presidential election on November 7. President Thieu rejected the settlement, refusing to accept a peace that left North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam, and legitimized the Hanoi-controlled Communist shadow government, the Provisional Revolutionary Government. His rejection forced Kissinger to resume negotiations with Le Duc Tho.

Kissinger was unable to find any common ground acceptable to both Vietnamese parties in two renewed rounds of negotiations. Finally, in order to break the deadlock, on December 14 Nixon ordered massive B–52 attacks on the North Vietnamese heartland—the “Christmas Bombing.” Meanwhile he continued to exert intense pressure on Thieu, threatening to cut off U.S. economic, military, and political support of South Vietnam if Thieu refused to accept the agreement. Negotiations resumed on January 8, 1973, and the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam initialed the agreement on January 23. Thieu reluctantly accepted the settlement despite his continued misgivings, and the peace agreement was signed on January 27.

The peace settlement enabled the United States to withdraw from the war and welcome the American prisoners of war back home. Neither of the Vietnamese parties abided by the settlement, however, and the war continued.

Nixon had gained Thieu’s adherence to the agreement through a series of letters and envoys, all promising U.S. military support in the event of a North Vietnamese violation of the accords. On November 14, 1972, for example, Nixon wrote Thieu that “I repeat my personal assurances to you that the United States will react very strongly and
rapidly to any violation of the agreement.” Both sides understood this to mean the recommitment of B–52s to combat. In the end, these commitments were not upheld due to a combination of factors—domestic and Congressional reluctance to re-engage in the war, economic constraints, and finally the Watergate scandal, which weakened and distracted Nixon. Having rebuilt their forces and upgraded their logistics system, North Vietnamese forces triggered a major offensive in the Central Highlands in March 1975. On April 30, 1975, NVA tanks rolled through the gate of the Presidential Palace in Saigon, effectively ending the war.

- **Kissinger and Vietnam**

**FIGURE 6.59**
Le Duc Tho (left) and Henry Kissinger (right) were both awarded the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize for their roles in brokering a Vietnam cease fire at the Paris Peace Accords.
6.9 Vietnam's Effect on the American Homefront

THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

FIGURE 6.60
Following Richard Nixon's announcement that U.S. troops would be sent into Cambodia, protests began on college campuses throughout the nation. At Kent State University in Ohio, four demonstrators were killed by shots fired by the Ohio National Guard.

Of all the lessons learned from Vietnam, one rings louder than all the rest — it is impossible to win a long, protracted war without popular support.

When the war in Vietnam began, many Americans believed that defending South Vietnam from communist aggression was in the national interest. Communism was threatening free governments across the globe. Any sign of non-intervention from the United States might encourage revolutions elsewhere.

As the war dragged on, more and more Americans grew weary of mounting casualties and escalating costs. The small antiwar movement grew into an unstoppable force, pressuring American leaders to reconsider its commitment.

Peace movement leaders opposed the war on moral and economic grounds. The North Vietnamese, they argued, were fighting a patriotic war to rid themselves of foreign aggressors. Innocent Vietnamese peasants were being killed in the crossfire. American planes wrought environmental damage by dropping their defoliating chemicals.

Ho Chi Minh was the most popular leader in all of Vietnam, and the United States was supporting an undemocratic, corrupt military regime. Young American soldiers were suffering and dying. Their economic arguments were less complex, but as critical of the war effort. Military spending simply took money away from Great Society social programs such as welfare, housing, and urban renewal.

THE DRAFT

The draft was another major source of resentment among college students. The age of the average American soldier serving in Vietnam was 19, seven years younger than its World War II counterpart. Students observed that young Americans were legally old enough to fight and die, but were not permitted to vote or drink alcohol. Such criticism led to the 26th Amendment, which granted suffrage to 18-year-olds.

Slogans like "How Many More?" "I’m a Viet Nam Dropout" and "Ship the GI’s Home Now!" graced the buttons, flags and banners of the anti-war movement.
Because draft deferments were granted to college students, the less affluent and less educated made up a disproportionate percentage of combat troops. Once drafted, Americans with higher levels of education were often given military office jobs. About 80 percent of American ground troops in Vietnam came from the lower classes. Latino and African American males were assigned to combat more regularly than drafted white Americans.

Anti War demonstrations were few at first, with active participants numbering in the low thousands when Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Events in Southeast Asia and at home caused those numbers to grow as the years passed. As the Johnson Administration escalated the commitment, the peace movement grew. Television changed many minds. Millions of Americans watched body bags leave the Asian rice paddies every night in their living rooms.

**GIVE PEACE A CHANCE**

The late 1960s became increasingly radical as the activists felt their demands were ignored. Peaceful demonstrations turned violent. When the police arrived to arrest protesters, the crowds often retaliated. Students occupied buildings across college campuses forcing many schools to cancel classes. Roads were blocked and ROTC buildings were burned. Doves clashed with police and the National Guard in August 1968, when antiwar demonstrators flocked to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago to prevent the nomination of a pro war candidate.


Despite the growing anti war movement, a silent majority of Americans still supported the Vietnam effort. Many admitted that involvement was a mistake, but military defeat was unthinkable. When Richard Nixon was inaugurated in January 1969, the nation was bitterly divided over what course of action to follow next.

**VIETNAM: TELEVISION AND THE MEDIA**

- Media Coverage of the Vietnam War
- Vietnam on Television
6.9. Vietnam’s Effect on the American Homefront

- "Selling of the Pentagon"
- The Media and the Vietnam War