**CHAPTER 24**

**Cold War America**

**Learning Outcomes**

* 1. Explain the causes of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and discuss some of the more serious incidents between the two superpowers.

**Objectives**

1. Provide the main reasons for the distrust that developed between the United States and the Soviet Union.
2. Describe how the policy of containment developed in America, and explain the role the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan played in that policy.
3. Discuss the events in China and the Korean peninsula during the 1940s and early 1950s that demonstrated containment as America’s policy.
4. Describe the actions by the United States and the Soviet Union that avoided direct military conflict yet gave the era its name: The Cold War.
   1. Describe American life as it developed during the 1950s, including social, economic, and political issues, and evaluate the significance of the Cold War on these changes.

**Objectives**

1. Explain Truman’s ideas behind the Fair Deal, and describe American reactions to it.
2. Discuss the economic growth in America during the post-war years, and explain how such changes affected the entire structure of America’s social and economic lifestyles.
3. Discuss the social and cultural “happenings” of the 1950s, including the development of suburbs, segregation, and religious revivalism.
4. Discuss Truman’s domestic policies that caused him political problems, and explain how he recovered from them.
   1. Explain the rise and effects of McCarthyism.

**Objectives**

1. Explain how the fear of communism affected both ordinary citizens and the American government.
2. Detail the political use of communism by Richard Nixon, J. Edgar Hoover, and Joseph McCarthy.
   1. Describe breakthroughs forged by African Americans in the 1950s and the retaliatory movement that came to be called “massive resistance.”

**Objectives**

1. Discuss desegregation in the military, sports, and schools.
2. Detail the growing massive resistance against legal racism in the south.

**Chapter Summary**

The World War II alliance between the U.S. and the Soviet Union quickly fell apart after the war as both sides prepared to administer the conquered nations of Europe and Asia. American decision makers quickly looked to contain any communist threat to the areas they currently occupied, leading to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The breaking of the Berlin Blockade demonstrated that the U.S. would stand up to Soviet aggression. But historians have also noted the role of misguided and reactionary U.S. foreign policy in escalating the Cold War.

As nationalist battles in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia threatened Western colonial power (and would later lead to the Vietnam War), more immediate issues loomed in China. The situation in China sent shock waves through the United States. Truman was accused of having “lost” China to communism. The U.S. got a chance to test its newly rearmed military in the Korean War. Starting in 1950, the war heated upon the intervention of China when UN forces approached the latter’s border. Eventually, an armistice essentially paused the war between North and South Korea; an armistice that is yet to be revoked or made permanent.

By the end of the decade, the U.S. was countering the Soviets with spies, alliances, and nuclear weapons. The United States matched the feat of Sputnik—the world’s first artificial satellite launched by the Soviets—in January 1958, by placing Explorer I into orbit. They also established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as a central body for space research.

Well-founded fears of a collapsing post-war economy haunted President Truman. The country experienced turbulence when it was required to integrate the millions of returning war veterans. Truman responded with his Fair Deal policies which led to the loss of power for unions. Years of savings and thrift prompted Americans to splurge on goods and, especially, cars and TVs. Booming conformist suburbs masked a nation that raised new barriers for the advancement of women and the integration of minorities.

A religious revival was matched by growing critics of conformity and the slow awareness that modern life left a lasting impact on the American landscape. Truman had an unexpected victory in the 1948 election. Despite a difference in rhetoric, his Republican successor Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 continued investments in public infrastructure, such as the interstate highway project.

Even though the Democrats started the Second Red Scare, it was the Republicans who took political advantage of this domestic scare campaign. Truman required loyalty oaths from government employees. Nixon, J. Edgar Hoover, and Joseph McCarthy successfully ratcheted up Communist hysteria in American life and politics. The congressional House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) focused on Hollywood beginning in 1947. As part of the anticommunist purge, writers, directors, actors, and film executives were called to testify about their political beliefs and also those of their families, friends, and colleagues.

Minorities continued their post-WWII resistance against the lack of civil rights in the nation. By 1948, the American military desegregated its troops, followed by a similar policy in organized sports. The Supreme Court made a landmark decision in *Brown v. Board* striking down the “separate but equal” falsehood of segregation. Predominately black and allied white activists began organized attacks of massive, non-violent resistance, inspiring not only fellow Americans but also people across the globe. In the South, black advances were almost always met by massive resistance from the dominant white population. The Ku Klux Klan also experienced a revival in the middle 1950s, especially in the South.

One of the most-discussed acts of racist violence occurred in 1955, when a fourteen-year-old Chicago-born African American boy named Emmett Till was beaten and murdered for supposedly whistling at a white woman who worked at a grocery store in Money, Mississippi. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, a remarkable success that mobilized the black community and demonstrated the possibilities of a widespread social movement, led directly to the formation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), founded in January 1957 to challenge Jim Crow laws in a direct way. The Sixties was a decade of major upheavals, but the Fifties was the decade when most things seemed possible.

**Chapter Outline**

I. The Cold War

1. Decade of Build-up
2. The Policy of Containment
3. The Policy
4. Institutions of Containment
5. The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan
6. Hardened Lines
7. The Berlin Crisis
8. Breaking the Blockade
9. NATO
10. Conflicts in Asia
11. “Losing” China
12. American Rearmament
13. The Korean War
14. The American Response
15. China Intervenes
16. Stalemate
17. Armistice
18. A Cold War, Not a Hot One
19. Covert Operations
20. Alliances
21. Nuclear Weaponry
22. The Arms Race Begins
23. From Arms Race to Space Race

II. The Cold War Home Front

1. Truman and the Postwar Economy
2. The Fair Deal
3. The Conversion Economy and Labor Unrest
4. Taft-Hartley
5. Economic Growth
6. Consumerism
7. Television and the Automobile
8. Suburban Nation
9. Gendered Spheres
10. Racial Segregation
11. Religious Revival
12. Critics of Conformity
13. The Large Environmental Footprint
14. Postwar Domestic Politics
15. Truman’s Decline
16. Truman’s Resurgence
17. Democratic Eclipse
18. Republicans Return

III. The Second Red Scare

1. Loyalty Oaths
2. Nixon, Hoover, and McCarthy

IV. Civil Rights Breakthroughs

1. Desegregation in the Military
2. Desegregation in Sports
3. *Brown* v. *Board*
4. Massive Resistance and the Black Response
5. Emmett Till
6. Montgomery Bus Boycott and SCLC

V. Looking Ahead…

**Suggested Lecture Topics**

1. George Kennan and the “Long Telegram”
2. Ah, Suburbia!
3. Happy Days: Real, or a Wistful Memory?
4. The Berlin Blockade
5. “Give ‘Em Hell, Harry!” James Whitmore’s one-man show on Harry Truman. [This 1975 film is available at several online stores for about $25.00. Truman has never been captured better than here. The students will love it.]
6. From William Levitt to Dr. Spock: American Women are “Put in Their Place”
7. The Communist Witch-hunt of Joseph McCarthy
8. “The Forgotten Conflict”: The Korean War
9. The Rise of Rock and Roll: Black and White contributions to popular music

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| **The Reasons Why…** |
| (24-1a). In addition to historic fears about the threat of communism, there were at least two issues that pushed a basic mistrust into a volatile Cold War:   1. Atomic fears 2. Communism “on the march”   Fear of enemies is often reflected in popular culture. Have students examine the influence that foreign and domestic fears have on villains or nightmare scenarios (such as atomic fallout). Which villains in the movies, TV shows, and other media are best represented or are most symbolic of their period? Which groups have taken over as significant threats in popular culture over time? How does that reflect on the fears and concerns of people (and Hollywood) in the second half of the twentieth century? This exercise would work well as a small-group project, provided students consider the question of villains in popular culture in advance of the discussion. |

**Research Topics—Projects and Papers**

Students might choose to complete a project to be presented in class or to write a more traditional research paper. Or, as an instructor, he or she could assign topics to the students. Given below are a few topics that are relevant to this chapter. Instructors may, of course, choose to develop their own topics.

* + 1. Protests against Suburbia: Go to the following site for the lyrics of the song “Little Boxes,” by Malvina Reynolds: <http://ingeb.org/songs/littlebo.html>
    2. At this Google Music site, one can hear Reynolds perform her famous song: https://play.google.com/music/m/T7x2pcxx4xt3rrneeiv6jghofii?t=Little\_Boxes\_-\_Malvina\_Reynolds
    3. Search for songs about other 1950s topics: Write an informal paper about the findings.
    4. The Hollywood Ten: Research the hearings of HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee. Find out who in Hollywood was blacklisted, and who turned in others to save themselves. Write a reaction paper describing how one feels about such a use of the government’s time.
    5. Research *Brown* v. *The Board of Education of Topeka* (1954): Look for articles that give information about the family that filed that lawsuit.
    6. Study the story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott: Prepare a timeline of events to share with the class. Read primary sources from those closest to Mrs. Parks and Dr. King, and pull five or six quotes to bring to class and share with other students.
    7. Find out the details about the Berlin Blockade: Specific supplies and foods; the number of people who helped; how many flights were made; and any other interesting facts about it. Write an informal paper to hand in for credit. Prepare these on note cards so that students can share them with their classmates while discussing the Blockade in detail.

**Additional www Resources**

Korean War Project. Dallas, Texas. Home page.

<http://www.koreanwar.org/index.html>

Jackie Changed Face of Sports. ESPL Sports Century. ESPN.com

<http://espn.go.com/sportscentury/features/00016431.html>

Duck and Cover. Internet Archive. Animated educational video in case of nuclear attack.

<http://www.archive.org/details/DuckandC1951>

**Primary Source Discussions**

**Assignment Name: The Marshall Plan (1947)**

*Introduction:* The European Recovery Program, better known as the Marshall Plan (1947), was the U.S.’s European counterpart to the Truman Doctrine. Allotting $13 billion dollars to rebuilding the economies and infrastructure of war-torn Europe, the United States viewed the economic stability and even prosperity that the Marshall Plan (named after General George Marshall who justified the agreement in a speech at Harvard University) would bring as an important means of preventing the rise of Communism in Europe. The Soviets, however, viewed it as a blatant attempt at capitalist imperialism and accused the U.S. of attempting to buy off the nations of Europe.

*Visit URL:* *http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth\_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/marshal1.html*

[The Marshall Plan (1947)](http://college.cengage.com/history/wadsworth_9781133309888/unprotected/ps/marshal1.html)

*Instructions:* Answer the following questions in the fields below.

1. What was the state of the European economy during the first years after World War Two?
2. What did the Marshall Plan propose?
3. Why was it in the interest of the United States to rebuild Europe’s economy?

**Assignment Name: George F. Kennan’s “Long Telegram”**

*Introduction:* Most historians consider George F. Kennan to have been the American who understood the Soviet communist regime better than any other person of his era. Stationed in Moscow during much of the time from 1933 to 1946 with the U.S. diplomatic service, Kennan became an astute observer of the Soviets. In 1946 he provided President Harry Truman with an assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union. His message contributed to Truman’s decision to issue the Truman Doctrine in 1947, and it also helped provide a rationale for the very successful Marshall Plan.

*Visit URL*: http://wadsworth.com/history\_d/special\_features/ilrn\_legacy/waah2c01c/content/amh2/readings/kennan.html

[Read George F. Kennan’s “Long Telegram”](http://wadsworth.com/history_d/special_features/ilrn_legacy/waah2c01c/content/amh2/readings/kennan.html) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions:*

1. What were the basic features of the Soviet Union’s government in the post-World War II era?
2. How did Kennan differentiate between the Russian people and the government of the Soviet Union?
3. How did Kennan suggest that the United States deal with the Soviet government?

**Assignment name: NSA Briefing Book on the Iranian Coup**

*Introduction:* The United States’ role in the 1953 overthrow of Iranian Premier Mohammad Mossadeq was long shrouded in secrecy. Only in the past two decades have materials concerning the coup become available to the public. This Briefing Book, an after-the-fact report compiled shortly after the coup, is 200 pages in length. Though this site contains only excerpts, it is still long, and you are not expected to read the entire document. The link takes you to a description of how the papers were obtained and the efforts of the CIA to keep them secret. There is also a brief summary of the coup itself. Read these pages at a minimum, and then skim the document itself. Sifting through this many pages of doublespeak makes one wonder just how much information remains “classified.”

*Visit URL*: http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/index.html

[Read the NSA’s briefing book on the Iranian coup](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB28/index.html) and then take a brief quiz to check your understanding.

*Reflection Questions:*

* + 1. What makes this document so interesting and valuable to historians today?
    2. How did this document come to be released into the public domain? In what year did Americans finally hear details of this CIA operation?
    3. What role did the British play in the CIA operation to remove Mossadeq?
    4. What impresses you most about appendix E, “Military Critique: Lessons Learned… re Military Planning Aspects of Coup d’Etat"?
    5. How has the Internet changed ordinary people’s access to declassified documents? Do you think this is a good thing, or are there potential problems?