

**I. Global Insecurities at War's End | WHAT STEPS** did the Allies take to promote growth in the postwar global economy?

The war that had engulfed the world from 1939 to 1945 created an international interdependence that no country could ignore. The legendary African American folk singer Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter) added a fresh lyric to an old spiritual melody: "We're in the same boat, brother. . . . And if you shake one end you're going to rock the other." Never before, not even at the end of World War I, had hopes been so strong for a genuine "community of nations." But, as a 1945 opinion poll indicated, most Americans believed that prospects for a durable peace rested to a large degree on harmony between the Soviet Union and the United States.

**American Communities.** University of Washington, Seattle: Students and Faculty Face the Cold War

In May 1948, a philosophy professor at the University of Washington in Seattle answered a knock on his office door. Two state legislators, members of the state's Committee on Un-American Activities, entered. "Our information," they charged, "puts you in the center of a Communist conspiracy."

The accused professor, Melvin Rader, had never been a Communist. A self-described liberal, Rader drew fire because he had joined several organizations supported by Communists. During the 1930s, in response to the rise of Nazism and fascism, Rader had become a prominent political activist in his community. At one point he served as president of the University of Washington Teacher's Union, which had formed during the upsurge of labor organizing during the New Deal. When invited to join the Communist Party, Rader bluntly refused. "The experience of teaching social philosophy had clarified my concepts of freedom and democracy," he later explained. "I was an American in search of a way—but it was not the Communist way."

Despite this disavowal, Rader was caught up in a Red Scare that curtailed free speech and political activity on campuses throughout the United States. At some universities, such as Yale, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) set up camp with the consent of the college administration, spying on students and faculty, screening the credentials of job or scholarship applicants, and seeking to entice students to report on their friends or roommates. The University of Washington administration turned down the recommendation of the Physics Department to hire J. Robert Oppenheimer because the famed atomic scientist, and former director of Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, had become a vocal opponent of the arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Although one state legislator claimed that "not less than 150 members" of the University of Washington faculty were subversives, the state's Committee on Un-American Activities turned up just six members of the Communist Party. These six were brought up before the university's Faculty Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom, charged with violations ranging from neglect of duty to failing to inform the university administration of their party membership. Three were ultimately dismissed, while the other three were placed on probation.

What had provoked this paranoia? Instead of peace in the wake of World War II, a pattern of cold war—icy relations—prevailed between the United States and the Soviet Union. Uneasy allies during World War II, the two superpowers now viewed each other as archenemies, and nearly all other nations lined up with one or the other of them. Within the United States, the cold war demanded pledges of absolute loyalty from citizens in every institution, from the university to trade unions and from the mass media and Hollywood to government itself. If not for the outbreak of the cold war, this era would have marked one of the most fruitful in the history of higher education. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, passed by Congress in 1944, offered stipends covering tuition and living expenses to veterans attending vocational schools or college. By the 1947–48 academic year, the federal government was subsidizing nearly half of all male college students. Between 1945 and 1950, 2.3 million students benefited from the G.I. Bill, at a cost of more than \$10 billion.

At the University of Washington the student population in 1946 had grown by 50 percent over its prewar peak of 10,000, and veterans represented fully two-thirds of the student body. A quickly expanded faculty taught into the evening to use classroom space efficiently. Meanwhile, the state legislature pumped in funds for the construction of new buildings, including dormitories and prefabricated units for married students. These war-weary undergraduates had high expectations for their new lives during peacetime.

The cold war put a damper on many such activities. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover testified that the college campuses were centers of "red propaganda," full of teachers "tearing down respect for agencies of government, belittling tradition and moral custom and . . . creating doubts in the validity of the American way of life." Due to Communist teachers and "Communist-line textbooks," a senator lamented, thousands of parents sent "their sons and daughters to college as good Americans," only to see them return home "four years later as wild-eyed radicals."

Although these extravagant charges were never substantiated, several states, including Washington, enacted or revived loyalty-security programs, obligating all state employees to swear in writing their loyalty to the United States and to disclaim membership in any subversive organization. Nationwide, approximately 200 faculty

members were dismissed outright and many others were denied tenure. Thousands of students simply left school, dropped out of organizations, or changed friends after “visits” from FBI agents or interviews with administrators. The main effect on campus was the restraint of free speech generally and fear of criticizing U.S. racial, military, or diplomatic policies in particular.

This gloomy mood reversed the wave of optimism that had swept through America only a few years earlier. V-J Day, marking victory over Japan, had erupted into a two-day national holiday of wild celebrations, complete with ticker-tape parades, spontaneous dancing, and kisses for returned G.I.s. Americans, living in the richest and most powerful nation in the world, finally seemed to have gained the peace they had fought and sacrificed to win. But peace proved fragile and elusive.

### **Financing the Future**

In 1941 Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, had forecast the dawn of “the American Century.” Americans must, he wrote, “accept wholeheartedly our duty and our opportunity as the most powerful and vital nation in the world and in consequence to assert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such means as we see fit.” Indeed, immediately after the bombing of Hiroshima, President Truman pronounced the United States “the most powerful nation in the world—the most powerful nation, perhaps, in all history.” The president and his advisors declared a definitive end to the era of isolation.

Americans had good reason to be confident about their prospects for setting the terms of reconstruction. Unlike Great Britain and France, the United States had not only escaped the ravages of the war but had actually prospered. By June 1945, the capital assets of manufacturing had increased 65 percent over prewar levels and were equal in value to approximately half the entire world’s goods and services.

Yet many Americans recognized that it was the massive government spending to pay for the war—more than \$340 billion—rather than New Deal programs, that had ended the nightmare of the 1930s. A great question loomed: What would happen when wartime production slowed and millions of troops returned home?

“We need markets—big markets—in which to buy and sell,” answered Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Will Clayton. Just to maintain the current level of growth, the United States needed an estimated \$14 billion in exports—an unprecedented amount. Many business leaders even looked to the Soviet Union as a potential trading partner. With this prospect vanishing, eastern European markets threatened, and large chunks of former colonial territories closed off, U.S. business and government leaders became determined to integrate western Europe and Asia into a liberal international economy open to American trade and investment.

During the final stages of the war, President Roosevelt’s advisers laid plans to establish U.S. primacy in the postwar global economy. In July 1944 representatives from forty-four Allied nations met at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, and established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) to help rebuild war-torn Europe and to assist development in other nations. By stabilizing exchange rates to permit the expansion of international trade, the IMF would deter currency conflicts and trade wars—two maladies of the 1930s that were largely responsible for the political instability and national rivalries leading to World War II. As the principal supplier of funds for the IMF and the World Bank—more than \$7 billion to each—the United States had the greatest influence over policy, including the allocation of loans.

The Soviet Union participated in the Bretton Woods conference but refused to ratify the agreements that, in essence, allowed the United States to rebuild the world economy along capitalist lines. By spurning both the World Bank and the IMF, the Soviet Union cut off the possibility of aid to its own people as well as to its Eastern European client states and, equally important, isolated itself economically.

### **The Division of Europe**

The Atlantic Charter of 1941 committed the Allies to recognize the right of all nations to self-determination and to renounce all claims to new territories as the spoils of war. The Allied leaders themselves, however, violated the charter’s main points before the war had ended by dividing occupied Europe into spheres of influence.

So long as Franklin Roosevelt remained alive, this strategy had seemed reconcilable with world peace. The president had balanced his own international idealism with his belief that the United States was entitled to extraordinary influence in Latin America and the Philippines and that other great powers might have similar privileges or responsibilities elsewhere. Roosevelt also recognized the diplomatic consequences of the brutal ground war that had been fought largely on Soviet territory: the Soviet Union’s unnegotiable demand for territorial security along its European border.

From the early days of the war, the USSR was intent on reestablishing its 1941 borders, and by the time of the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 the Soviets had not only regained but extended their territory. Much of eastern Europe, including a large portion of Poland and the little Baltic nations, was now under its control as client states. But the question remained: Did the USSR aim to bring all of Europe into the Communist domain?

When the Allies turned to plan the future of Germany, this question loomed over all deliberations. They ultimately decided to divide the conquered nation into four occupation zones, each governed by one of the Allied nations. But the Allies could not agree on long-term plans. Having borne the brunt of German aggression, France and the USSR both opposed reunification. The latter, in addition, demanded heavy reparations along with a limit on postwar reindustrialization. Although Roosevelt appeared to agree with the Soviets, Truman shared Winston Churchill's hope of rebuilding Germany into a powerful counterforce against the Soviet Union and a strong market for U.S. and British goods.

After the war, continuing disagreements about the future Germany darkened hopes for cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States. By July 1946, Americans had begun to withhold reparations from their zone and to institute a program of amnesty for former Nazis. Then, in December, the American and British merged their zones and extended an invitation to France and the USSR to join. Although France accepted the offer, the Soviets, fearing a resurgence of united Germany, held out.

The United States and the Soviet Union were now at loggerheads. Twice in the twentieth century, Germany had invaded Russia, and the USSR now interpreted these moves toward German reunification an act of supreme hostility. For its part, the United States envisioned a united Germany as a bulwark against Soviet expansion.

### **The United Nations and Hopes for Collective Security**

The dream of postwar international cooperation had been seeded earlier by President Roosevelt. In late summer and fall 1944 at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in Washington, D.C., and again in April 1945 in San Francisco, the Allies worked to shape the United Nations as a world organization that would arbitrate disputes among members as well as impede aggressors, by military force if necessary.

The terms of membership, however, limited the UN's ability to mediate disputes. Although all of the fifty nations that signed the UN charter enjoyed representation in the General Assembly, only five members (the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and Nationalist China) served permanently on the Security Council, which had the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," and each enjoyed absolute veto power over the decisions of the other members. By this arrangement, the Security Council could censure one of its members only if that nation made the unlikely decision of abstaining from voting.

The UN achieved its greatest success with its humanitarian programs. Its relief agency provided the war-torn countries of Europe and Asia with billions of dollars for medical supplies, food, and clothing. The UN also dedicated itself to protecting human rights, and its high standards of human dignity owed much to the lobbying of Eleanor Roosevelt, one of the first delegates from the United States.

On other issues, however, the UN operated strictly along lines dictated by the cold war. The western nations allied with the United States held the balance of power and maintained their position by controlling the admission of new member nations. They successfully excluded Communist China, for example. Moreover, the polarization between East and West made negotiated settlements virtually impossible.

## II. The Policy of Containment | HOW DID the Truman Doctrine shape U.S. postwar foreign policy?

With the world seemingly dividing into two hostile camps, the dream of a community of nations dissolved. But perhaps it had never been more than a fantasy contrived to maintain a fragile alliance amid the urgency of World War II. In March 1946, in a speech delivered in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill spoke to the new reality. With President Harry Truman at his side, the former British prime minister declared that “an iron curtain has descended across the [European] continent.” He called directly upon the United States, standing “at this time at the pinnacle of world power,” to recognize its “awe-inspiring accountability to the future” and, in alliance with Great Britain, act aggressively to turn back Soviet expansion.

Although Truman at first responded cautiously to Churchill’s pronouncement, within a short time he committed the United States to leadership in a worldwide struggle against the spread of communism. As a doctrine uniting military, economic, and diplomatic strategies, the “containment” of communism also fostered an ideological opposition, an “us”-versus-“them” theme that divided the world into “freedom” and “slavery,” “democracy” and “autocracy,” and “tolerance” and “coercive force.” The Truman Doctrine laid down the first plank in a global campaign against communism.

### The Truman Doctrine

Many Americans believed that Franklin D. Roosevelt, had he lived, would have been able to stem the tide of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. His successor sorely lacked FDR’s talent for diplomacy. More comfortable with machine politicians than with polished New Dealers, the new president liked to talk tough and act defiantly. “I do not think we should play compromise any longer,” Truman decided, “I’m tired of babying the Soviets.”

A perceived crisis in the Mediterranean prompted President Truman to show his colors. On February 21, 1947, amid a civil war in Greece, Great Britain informed the U.S. State Department that it could no longer afford to prop up the anti-Communist government there and announced its intention to withdraw all aid. Without U.S. intervention, Truman concluded, Greece, Turkey, and perhaps the entire oil-rich Middle East would fall under Soviet control.

On March 12, 1947, the president made his argument before Congress: “At the present moment in world history, nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. . . . One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions . . . and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed on the majority . . . and the suppression of personal freedoms.” Never mentioning the Soviet Union by name, he appealed for all-out resistance to a “certain ideology” wherever it appeared in the world.

Congress approved a \$400 million appropriation in aid for Greece and Turkey, which helped the monarchy and right-wing military crush the rebel movement. Truman’s victory buoyed his popularity for the upcoming 1948 election. It also helped to generate popular support for his campaign to “contain” communism, both at home and abroad.

The significance of what became known as the Truman Doctrine far outlasted the events in the Mediterranean: the United States had declared its right to intervene to save other nations from communism. As early as February 1946, foreign policy adviser George F. Kennan had sent an 8,000-word “long telegram” to the State Department insisting that Soviet fanaticism made cooperation impossible. The USSR intended to extend its realm not by military means alone, he explained, but by “subversion” within “free” nations. It was now the responsibility of the United States, Truman and his advisors insisted, to safeguard the “Free World” by diplomatic, economic, and, if necessary, military means. They had, in sum, fused anticommunism and internationalism into an aggressive foreign policy.

### The Marshall Plan

The Truman Doctrine complemented the European Recovery Program, commonly known as the Marshall Plan. Introduced in a commencement speech at Harvard University on June 5, 1947, by secretary of state and former army chief of staff George C. Marshall, the plan sought to reduce “hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos” and to restore “the confidence of the European people in the economic future of their own countries and of Europe as a whole.” Indirectly, the Marshall Plan aimed to turn back both socialist and Communist electoral bids for power in northern and western Europe.

Considered by many historians the most successful postwar U.S. diplomatic venture, the Marshall Plan improved the climate for a viable capitalist economy in western Europe and, in effect, brought recipients of aid into a bilateral agreement with the United States. In addition, the western European nations, seventeen in all, ratified the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which reduced commercial barriers among member nations

and opened all to U.S. trade and investment. The plan was costly to Americans, in its initial year taking 12 percent of the federal budget, but effective. Industrial production in the European nations covered by the plan rose by 200 percent between 1947 and 1952. Although deflationary programs cut wages and increased unemployment, profits soared and the standard of living improved. The Marshall Plan also introduced many Europeans to American consumer goods and lifestyle.

The Marshall Plan drove a deeper wedge between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although invited to participate, Stalin denounced the plan for what it was, an American scheme to rebuild Germany and to incorporate it into an anti-Soviet bloc. The president readily acknowledged that the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine were “two halves of the same walnut.”

### **The Berlin Crisis and the Formation of NATO**

As Stalin recognized, the Marshall Plan also sought to rebuild and integrate the western zones of Germany into a unified region compatible with U.S. political and economic interests. Within a year of its introduction, the United States and Britain moved closer to this goal by introducing a common currency in the western zones. Stalin reacted to this challenge on June 24, 1948, by halting all traffic to West Berlin, formally controlled by the western allies but situated deep within the Soviet-occupied zone.

The Berlin blockade created both a crisis and an opportunity for the Truman administration to test its mettle. With help from the Royal Air Force, the United States began an around-the-clock airlift of historic proportions—Operation Vittles—that delivered nearly 2 million tons of supplies to West Berliners. The Soviet Union finally lifted the blockade in May 1949, clearing the way for the western powers to merge their occupation zones into a single nation, the Federal Republic of West Germany. The USSR countered by establishing the German Democratic Republic in their sector. The Berlin Crisis made a U.S.-led military alliance against the USSR attractive to western European nations. In April 1949 ten European nations, Canada, and the United States formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a mutual defense pact in which “an armed attack against one or more of them . . . shall be considered an attack against them all.” NATO complemented the Marshall Plan, strengthening economic ties among the member nations by, according to one analyst, keeping “the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” It also deepened divisions between eastern and western Europe, making a permanent military mobilization on both sides almost inevitable.

Congress approved \$1.3 billion in military aid, which involved the creation of U.S. Army bases and the deployment of American troops abroad. Critics, such as isolationist senator Robert A. Taft, warned that the United States could not afford to police all Europe without sidetracking domestic policies and undercutting the UN. But opinion polls revealed strong support for Truman’s tough line against the Soviets.

Between 1947 and 1949, the Truman administration had defined the policies that would shape the cold war for decades to come. The Truman Doctrine explained the ideological basis of containment; the Marshall Plan put into place its economic underpinnings in western Europe; and NATO created the mechanisms for military enforcement. When NATO extended membership to a rearmed West Germany in May 1955, the Soviet Union responded by creating a counterpart, the Warsaw Pact, including East Germany. The division of East and West was complete.

### **Atomic Diplomacy**

The policy of containment depended on the ability of the United States to back up its commitments through military means, and Truman invested his faith in the U.S. monopoly of atomic weapons. The United States began to build atomic stockpiles and to conduct tests on the Bikini Islands in the Pacific. By 1950, as a scientific adviser subsequently observed, the United States “had a stockpile capable of somewhat more than reproducing World War II in a single day.”

Despite warnings to the contrary by leading scientists, U.S. military analysts estimated it would take the Soviet Union three to ten years to produce an atomic bomb. In August 1949, the Soviet Union proved them wrong by testing its own atomic bomb. “There is only one thing worse than one nation having the atomic bomb,” Nobel Prize-winning scientist Harold C. Urey said, “that’s two nations having it.”

Within a few years, both the United States and the Soviet Union had tested hydrogen bombs a thousand times more powerful than the weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Both proceeded to stockpile bombs attached to missiles, inaugurating the fateful nuclear arms race that scientists had feared since 1945.

The United States and the Soviet Union were now firmly locked into the cold war. The nuclear arms race imperiled their futures, diverted their economies, and fostered fears of impending doom. Prospects for global peace had dissipated, and despite the Allied victory in World War II, the world had again divided into hostile camps.

### III. Cold War Liberalism | HOW DID the “Fair Deal” differ from the “New Deal”?

Truman’s aggressive, gutsy personality suited the confrontational mood of the cold war. He linked the Soviet threat in Europe to the need for a strong presidency. Pressed to establish his own political identity, “Give ’em Hell Harry” successfully portrayed himself as a fierce fighter against all challengers, yet loyal to Roosevelt’s legacy.

Truman set out to enlarge the New Deal but settled on a modest domestic agenda to promote social welfare and an anti-isolationist, fiercely anti-Communist foreign policy. Fatefully, during the course of his administration, domestic and foreign policy became increasingly entangled to lay the basis of a distinctive brand of liberalism—cold war liberalism.

#### **“To Err Is Truman”**

Within a year of assuming office, Harry Truman rated lower in public approval than any twentieth-century president except Roosevelt’s own predecessor, Herbert Hoover, who had been blamed for the Great Depression. The responsibilities of reestablishing peacetime conditions seemed to overwhelm the new president’s administration. “To err is Truman,” critics jeered.

In handling the enormous task of reconverting from a wartime to a peacetime economy, the president faced millions of restless would-be consumers tired of rationing and eager to spend their wartime savings on shiny cars, new furniture, choice cuts of meat, and colorful clothing. The demand for consumer items rapidly outran supply, fueling inflation and creating a huge black market. Truman asked Congress to extend wartime price controls, but the Republicans, backed by business leaders, refused and instead cut back the powers of the Office of Price Administration (OPA). Prices continued to skyrocket.

In 1945 and 1946, the country appeared ready to explode. While homemakers protested rising prices by boycotting neighborhood stores, industrial workers struck in unprecedented numbers. Employers, fearing a rapid decline to Depression-level profits, determined to slash wages or at least hold them steady; workers wanted a bigger cut of the huge war profits they had heard about. The spectacle of nearly 4.6 million workers on picket lines alarmed the new president. In May 1946, Truman proposed to draft striking railroad workers into the army. The usually conservative Senate killed this plan.

Congress defeated most of Truman’s proposals to revive the New Deal. One week after Japan’s surrender, the president introduced a twenty-one-point program that included greater unemployment compensation, higher minimum wages, and housing assistance. Later he added proposals for national health insurance and atomic energy legislation. Congress turned back the bulk of these bills, passing the Employment Act of 1946 only after substantial modification. The act created a new executive body, the Council of Economic Advisers, which would confer with the president and formulate policies for maintaining employment, production, and purchasing power. But the measure did not include funding mechanisms to guarantee full employment, thus falling far short of the bill’s intent.

By 1946 Truman’s popularity had dipped. Republicans, sensing victory in the upcoming off-year elections, asked the voters, “Had enough?” Apparently the voters had. They gave Republicans majorities in both houses of Congress and in the state capitols. And in a symbolic repudiation of Roosevelt, they passed an amendment to the Constitution establishing a two-term limit for the presidency.

The Republicans, dominant in Congress for the first time since 1931, prepared a counteroffensive against the New Deal, beginning with an attack on organized labor. Unions had by this time reached a peak in size and prestige, with membership topping 15 million and encompassing nearly 40 percent of all wage earners. Concluding that labor had gone too far, the Republican-dominated Eightieth Congress aimed to outlaw many practices approved by the Wagner Act of 1935.

The Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947, better known as the Taft-Hartley Act, brought to an end the closed shop, the secondary boycott, and the use of union dues for political activities. It also mandated an eighty-day cooling-off period in the case of strikes affecting national safety or health. Taft-Hartley furthermore required all union officials to swear under oath that they were not Communists—a cold war mandate that abridged freedoms ordinarily guaranteed by the First Amendment. Unions that refused to cooperate were denied the services of the National Labor Relations Board, which arbitrated strikes and issued credentials to unions Truman regained some support from organized labor when he vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act, saying it would “conflict with important principles of our democratic society.” Congress, however, overrode his veto, and Truman himself went on to invoke the act against strikers.

#### **The 1948 Election**

Harry Truman had considered some of Roosevelt’s advisers to be “crackpots and the lunatic fringe,” and by 1946 had forced out most of the social planners who staffed the New Deal for more than a decade. Truman also fired the secretary of commerce, Henry Wallace, for advocating a more conciliatory policy toward the Soviet Union.

Wallace, however, refused to retreat and made plans to run against Truman for president. He pledged to expand New Deal programs by moving boldly to establish full employment, racial equality, and stronger labor unions. He also promised peace with the Soviet Union. As the 1948 election neared, Wallace appeared a viable candidate on the New Progressive party ticket until Truman accused him of being a tool of Communists.

In addition to Wallace, Truman had to contend with Democrats defecting from the Right. At the party convention, the Democrats endorsed a civil rights platform, proposed by liberal Minneapolis mayor Hubert Humphrey, that called on Congress to “wipe out discrimination.” When the plank narrowly passed, the bulk of the conservative southern delegation bolted. Just days later, southern Democrats endorsed the States’ Rights (“Dixiecrat”) ticket, headed by Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, known for his racist views. With the South as good as lost, and popular New York governor Thomas E. Dewey heading the Republican ticket, Truman appeared hopelessly far from victory.

Truman set out to reposition himself by discrediting congressional Republicans. He proposed bold programs calling for federal funds for education and new housing and a national program of medical insurance that he knew the Republicans would oppose. He also called a reluctant Congress back for a special session. On opening day, July 26, 1948, Truman signed two executive orders, one integrating the federal workforce, the other the U.S. armed forces. He then began to hammer away at the Republican controlled “do-nothing Congress.”

As the election neared, “Give ‘em Hell Harry” campaigned vigorously and garnered lots of grassroots support. Fear of the Republicans won back the bulk of organized labor, while the recognition of the new State of Israel in May 1948 helped prevent the defection of many liberal Jewish voters from Democratic ranks. The success of the Berlin airlift also buoyed the president’s popularity. By election time, Truman had deprived Henry Wallace of nearly all his liberal support and gone far in reviving the New Deal coalition. Meanwhile, Dewey, who had run a hard-hitting campaign against Roosevelt in 1944, expected to coast to victory.

Truman won the popular vote by a margin of 5 percent and trounced Dewey 303 to 189 in the Electoral College. Moreover, Democrats again had majorities in both houses of Congress. But, as it turned out, Truman had hit the highest point of his popularity and was about to begin a steady slide downhill.

### **The Fair Deal**

“Every segment of our population and every individual has a right,” Truman announced in January 1949, “to expect from our Government a fair deal.” The return of Democratic congressional majorities, he hoped, would enable him to translate campaign promises into concrete legislative achievements and expand the New Deal. But a powerful bloc of conservative southern Democrats and mid-western Republicans turned back his domestic agenda.

Truman broke no new ground. Congress passed a National Housing Act in 1949, promoting federally funded construction of low-income housing. It also raised the minimum wage from 40 to 75 cents per hour and expanded the Social Security program to cover an additional 10 million people. Otherwise, Truman made little headway. He and congressional liberals introduced a variety of bills to weaken southern segregationism: a federal anti-lynching law; outlawing the poll tax; prohibiting discrimination in interstate transportation. These measures were all defeated by southern-led filibusters. Proposals to create a national health insurance plan, provide federal aid for education, and repeal or modify Taft-Hartley remained bottled up in committees.

Truman managed best to lay out the basic principles of cold war liberalism. Toning down the rhetoric of economic equality espoused by the visionary wing of the Roosevelt coalition, his Fair Deal exalted economic growth—not the reapportionment of wealth or political power—as the proper mechanism for ensuring social harmony and national welfare. His administration insisted, therefore, on an ambitious program of expanded foreign trade, while relying on the federal government to encourage high levels of productivity at home. Equally important, Truman further reshaped liberalism by making anticommunism a key element in both foreign policy and the domestic agenda.

#### **IV. The Cold War at Home | WHAT FACTORS contributed to the rise of McCarthyism?**

“Communists . . . are everywhere—in factories, offices, butcher shops, on street corners, in private businesses,” Attorney General J. Howard McGrath warned in 1949: “At this very moment [they are] busy at work—undermining your government, plotting to destroy the liberties of every citizen, and feverishly trying in whatever way they can, to aid the Soviet Union.” Republican senator Joseph R. McCarthy even claimed to have in his personal possession a list of Communists serving secretly in government agencies. By this time, the Communist Party, U.S.A., which had formed in 1919, was steadily losing ground.

Nevertheless, during the earliest days of the cold war, anticommunism already occupied center stage in domestic politics. Thus FBI director J. Edgar Hoover characteristically warned Americans not to be complacent in the face of low numbers of Communists because “for every party member there are ten others ready, willing, and able to do the Party’s work” in infiltrating and corrupting “various spheres of American life.” Hoover also helped to set the tone, using hyperbolic rhetoric to describe “the diabolic machinations of sinister figures engaged in un-American activities.”

The federal government, with the help of the media, would lead the campaign, finding in the threat of communism a rationale for the massive reordering of its operation and the quieting of the voices of dissent. In this far-reaching quest for security, Americans moved toward a greater concentration of power in government, and, while promising to lead the “free world,” allowed many of their own rights to be circumscribed.

#### **The National Security Act of 1947**

The imperative of national security destroyed old-fashioned isolation, forcing the United States into international alliances such as NATO and into the role of world leader. “If we falter in our leadership,” Truman warned, “we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.” Such a responsibility required a massive amount of resources. Truman went on, therefore, to argue successfully that national security demanded a substantial increase in the size of the federal government, including both military forces and surveillance agencies. Security measures were required to keep the nation in a steady state of preparedness, readily justified during wartime, now extended into the very uneasy peacetime.

The National Security Act of 1947, passed by Congress in July, laid the foundation for this expansion. The act established the Department of Defense and the National Security Council (NSC) to administer and coordinate defense policies and to advise the president. The Department of Defense replaced the War Department and united the armed forces—the army, navy, and air force—under the jurisdiction of a single secretary with cabinet-level status. As result, with the distinction between citizen and soldier blurred, the ties between the armed forces and the State Department grew closer, as former military officers routinely began to fill positions in the State Department and diplomatic corps. The act also created the National Security Resources Board (NSRB) to coordinate plans throughout the government “in the event of war” and, for the first time in American history, to maintain a program of military preparedness in peacetime.

The Department of Defense, together with the NSRB, became the principal sponsor of scientific research during the first ten years of the cold war. It was commonly recognized at the time that World War II had been “a physicists’ war,” leading to the creation of the ultimate weapon, the atom bomb, but also to major advances in military technology in areas of systems of navigation and detection, strategic targeting, and communication. The National Science Foundation was created in 1950 for education and research, although the Office of Naval Research conducted basic research and development on a much larger budget. Federal agencies tied to military projects meanwhile supplied well over 90 percent of funding for research in the physical sciences, a large part of the research being located in major universities.

The National Security Act added to this system of defense in 1947 by establishing the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). With roots in the wartime Office of Strategic Services, the CIA now became a permanent operation devoted to collecting political, military, and economic information for security purposes throughout the world. Although information about the CIA was classified—that is, secret from both Congress and the public—historians have estimated that the agency soon dwarfed the State Department in number of employees and size of budget.

The national security state required a huge workforce. Before World War II, approximately 900,000 civilians worked for the federal government, with about 10 percent engaged in security work; by the beginning of the cold war, nearly 4 million people were on the government’s payroll, with 75 percent working in national security agencies. The Pentagon, which had opened in 1943 as the largest office building in the world, now housed the Joint Chiefs of Staff and 35,000 military personnel.

National security took up increasingly large portions of the nation’s resources. By the end of Truman’s second term, defense allocations accounted for 10 percent of the gross national product, directly or indirectly

employed hundreds of thousands of well-paid workers, and subsidized some of the nation's most profitable corporations. This vast financial outlay created the rationale for permanent, large-scale military spending as a basic stimulus to economic growth.

### **The Loyalty-Security Program**

National security also required increased surveillance at home. Within two weeks of proclaiming the Truman Doctrine, the president signed Executive Order 9835 on March 21, 1947, and thereby established a loyalty program for all federal employees. The new Federal Employees Loyalty and Security Program, directed at members of the Communist Party—as well as fascists and anyone guilty of “sympathetic association” with either—in effect established a political test for federal employment. It also outlined procedures for investigating current and prospective federal employees. The loyalty review boards often asked employees about their opinions on the Soviet Union, the Marshall Plan, or NATO, or if they would report fellow workers if they found out they were Communists. Any employee could be dismissed merely on “reasonable grounds” rather than on proof of disloyalty. Later amendments added “homosexuals” as potential security risks on the grounds that they might succumb to blackmail by enemy agents.

Many state and municipal governments enacted loyalty programs and required public employees, including teachers at all levels, to sign loyalty oaths. In all, some 6.6 million people underwent loyalty and security checks. An estimated 500 government workers were fired and perhaps as many as 6,000 more chose to resign. Numerous private employers and labor unions also instituted loyalty programs.

Attorney General Tom Clark aided this effort by publishing a list of hundreds of potentially subversive organizations selected by criteria so vague that any views “hostile or inimical to the American form of government” (as Clark’s assistants noted in a memo) could make an organization liable for investigation and prosecution. There was, moreover, no right of appeal. Although designed primarily to screen federal employees, the attorney general’s list effectively outlawed many political and social organizations, indirectly stigmatizing hundreds of thousands of individuals who had done nothing illegal. Church associations, civil rights organizations, musical groups, and even summer camps appeared on the list. Fraternal and social institutions, especially popular among aging European immigrants of various nationalities, were among the largest organizations destroyed. The state of New York, for example, legally dismantled the International Workers’ Order, which had provided insurance to nearly 200,000 immigrants and their families. Only a handful of organizations had the funds to challenge the listing legally; most simply closed their doors.

In 1950 Congress overrode the president’s veto to pass a bill that Truman called “the greatest danger to freedom of press, speech, and assembly since the Sedition Act of 1798.” The Internal Security (McCarran) Act required Communist organizations to register with the Subversive Activities Control Board and authorized the arrest of suspect persons during a national emergency. The Immigration and Nationality Act, also sponsored by Republican senator Pat McCarran of Nevada and adopted in 1952, again over Truman’s veto, barred people deemed “subversive” or “homosexual” from becoming citizens or even from visiting the United States. It also empowered the attorney general to deport immigrants who were members of Communist organizations, even if they had become citizens. Challenged repeatedly on constitutional grounds, the Subversive Activities Control Board remained in place until 1973, when it was terminated.

### **The Red Scare in Hollywood**

Anti-Communist Democratic representative Martin Dies of Texas, who had chaired a congressional committee on “un-American activities” since 1938, told reporters at a press conference in Hollywood in 1944:

Hollywood is the greatest source of revenue in this nation for the Communists and other subversive groups. . . . Two elements stand out in . . . the making of pictures which extoll foreign ideology—propaganda for a cause which seeks to spread its ideas to our people[,] and the “leftist” or radical screenwriters. . . . In my opinion, [motion picture executives] will do well to halt the propaganda pictures and eliminate every writer who has un-American ideas.

A few years later, Dies’s successor, J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey directed the committee to investigate supposed Communist infiltration of the movie industry. Renamed and made a permanent standing committee in 1945, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had the power to subpoena witnesses and to compel them to answer all questions or face contempt of Congress charges. In well-publicized hearings held in Hollywood in October 1947, the mother of actress Ginger Rogers defended her daughter by saying that she had been duped into appearing in the pro-Soviet wartime film *Tender Comrade* (1943) and “had been forced” to read the subversive line “Share and share alike, that’s democracy.” HUAC encouraged testimony by “friendly witnesses,” including Ronald Reagan and Gary Cooper. The committee intimidated many others into naming former friends and co-workers. A small but

prominent minority refused to cooperate with HUAC. Known as “unfriendly witnesses,” they declined to testify by claiming the freedoms of speech and association guaranteed by the First and Sixth Amendments. Several received prison sentences for contempt of Congress. A stars’ delegation to “Defend the First Amendment,” led by Humphrey Bogart, appeared before Congress but generated only headlines.

Hollywood studios refused to employ any writer, director, or actor who refused to cooperate with HUAC. The resulting blacklist remained in effect until the 1960s and limited the production of films dealing directly with social or political issues.

### **Spy Cases**

In August 1948, Whittaker Chambers, a Time magazine editor, appeared before HUAC to name Alger Hiss as a fellow Communist in the Washington underground during the 1930s. Hiss, then president of the prestigious Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former member of FDR’s State Department, denied the charges and sued his accuser for slander. Chambers then revealed his trump card, a cache of films of secret documents—hidden in and then retrieved from a hollowed-out pumpkin on his farm in Maryland—that he claimed Hiss had passed to him for transmission to the USSR. Republican representative Richard Nixon of California described the so-called “Pumpkin Papers” as proof of “the most serious series of treasonable activities . . . in the history of America.” The statute of limitations for espionage having run out, a federal grand jury in January 1950 convicted Hiss of perjury (for denying he knew Chambers), and he received a five-year prison term. Hiss was released two years later, still proclaiming his innocence.

Many Democrats, including Truman himself, at first dismissed the allegations against Hiss—conveniently publicized at the start of the 1948 election campaign—as a red herring, a Republican maneuver to gain votes. Indeed, Nixon himself circulated a pamphlet entitled *The Hiss Case* to promote his own candidacy for vice president. Nevertheless, the highly publicized allegations against Hiss proved detrimental to Democrats, suggesting that both FDR and Truman had allowed Communists to infiltrate the federal government.

The most dramatic spy case of the era involved Julius Rosenberg, former government engineer, and his wife, Ethel, who were accused of stealing and plotting to convey atomic secrets to Soviet agents during World War II. The government had only a weak case against Ethel Rosenberg, hoping that her conviction would force her husband to “break.” The case against Julius Rosenberg depended on documents too highly classified to present as evidence at a public trial and therefore rested on the testimony of his supposed accomplices, some of them secretly coached by the FBI. Although the Rosenbergs maintained their innocence to the end, in March 1951 a jury found them guilty of conspiring to commit espionage. The American press showed them no sympathy, but their convictions were protested in large demonstrations in the United States and abroad. Scientist Albert Einstein, the pope, and the president of France, among many prominent figures, all pleaded for clemency. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg died in the electric chair on June 19, 1953.

### **McCarthyism**

In a sensational Lincoln Day speech to the Republican Women’s Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, Republican senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin announced that the United States had been sold out by the “traitorous actions” of men holding important positions in the federal government. These “bright young men who have been born with silver spoons in their mouths”—such as Secretary of State Dean Acheson, whom McCarthy called a “pompous diplomat in striped pants, with a phony English accent”—were part of a conspiracy, he charged, of 205 card-carrying Communists working in the State Department.

McCarthy refused to reveal names, however, and a few days later, after a drinking bout, he told persistent reporters: “I’m not going to tell you anything. I just want you to know I’ve got a pailful [of dirt] . . . and I’m going to use it where it does the most good.” Although investigations uncovered not a single Communist in the State Department, McCarthy succeeded in launching a flamboyant offensive against New Deal Democrats and the Truman administration for failing to defend the nation’s security. His name provided the label for the entire campaign to silence critics of the cold war: McCarthyism.

Behind the blitz of publicity, the previously obscure junior senator from Wisconsin had struck a chord. Communism seemed to many Americans to be much more than a military threat—indeed, nothing less than a demonic force capable of undermining basic values. It compelled patriots to proclaim themselves ready for atomic warfare: “Better Dead Than Red.” McCarthy also had help from organizations such as the American Legion and the Chamber of Commerce, and prominent religious leaders and union leaders.

Civil rights organizations faced the severest persecution since the 1920s. The Civil Rights Congress and the Negro Youth Council, for instance, were destroyed after frequent charges of Communist influence. W. E. B. Du Bois, the renowned African American historian, and famed concert singer (and former All-American football hero) Paul Robeson had public appearances canceled and their right to travel abroad abridged.

In attacks on women's organizations and homosexual groups, meanwhile, anti-Communist rhetoric cloaked deep fears about changing sexual mores. Deputy under-secretary John Peurifoy, in defending the State Department against McCarthy's charges of Communist infiltration, boasted that its screening system was so effective that a large number of employees had already been dismissed as security risks, including more than ninety homosexuals. A short time later, a high-ranking officer in the Washington, D.C. vice squad testified that more than 5,000 homosexuals were living in the nation's capital, three-quarters of them employees of the federal government. Some in the news media and politics responded to these revelations with alarm and called for a "purge of the perverts." A senate committee investigated homosexuality in the federal government and concluded that "sex perverts" represented a risk to national security because they were vulnerable to blackmail. Aided by the FBI, the federal government proceeded to fire up to sixty homosexuals per month in the early 1950s. Dishonorable discharges from the U.S. armed forces for homosexuality, an administrative procedure without appeal, also increased dramatically, to 2,000 per year.

Much of McCarthy's rhetoric was merely opportunistic, his campaign a ruthless attempt to gain power and fame by exploiting cold war fears. He succeeded partly because he brilliantly used the media to his own advantage. McCarthy also perfected the inquisitorial technique, asking directly, "Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?"

Joseph McCarthy eventually brought on his own demise. In 1954 he accused several high-ranking officers in the Army of plotting subversion. During televised congressional hearings, not only did McCarthy fail to prove his wild charges, but in the glare of the television cameras he appeared deranged. Cowed for years, the Senate finally censured him for "conduct unbecoming a member." The news media quickly lost interest in him, and McCarthy succumbed to alcoholism. He died just three years later.

## V. Cold War Culture | HOW DID the cold war affect American culture?

As the Truman Doctrine clearly specified, the cold war did not necessarily depend on military confrontation; nor was it defined exclusively by a quest for economic supremacy. The cold war embodied the struggle of one “way of life” against another. It was, in short, a contest of values. The president therefore pledged the United States to “contain” communism from spreading beyond the parameters of the Soviet Union and its client states and simultaneously called for fortifications at home. The cold war therefore required a total mobilization covering all aspects of American life, not just its formal political institutions. And to prepare Americans for this challenge, it might be necessary first—as Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg advised Truman—to “scare hell out of the country.”

### An Anxious Mood

“We have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth,” George Kennan noted in 1948, “but only 3.6 percent of its population.” However, prosperity did not dispel an anxious mood, fueled in part by the reality and the rhetoric of the cold war. Many Americans also feared an economic backslide. If war production had ended the hardships of the Great Depression, how would the economy fare in peacetime? No one could say. Above all, peace itself seemed precarious. President Truman himself suggested that World War III appeared inevitable, and his secretary of state, Dean Acheson, warned the nation to keep “on permanent alert.”

Anxieties intensified by the cold war surfaced as major themes in popular culture. One of the most acclaimed Hollywood films of the era, the winner of nine Academy Awards, *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), followed the stories of three returning veterans as they tried to readjust to civilian life. The former soldiers found that the dreams of reunion with family and loved ones that had sustained them through years of fighting now seemed hollow. In some cases, their wives and children had become so self-reliant that the men had no clear function to perform in the household; in other cases, the prospect for employment appeared dim. The feeling of community shared with wartime buddies dissipated, leaving only a profound sense of loneliness.

The genre of film noir (French for “black”) deepened this mood into an aesthetic. Movies like *Out of the Past*, *Detour*, and *They Live by Night* featured stories of ruthless fate and betrayal. Their protagonists were usually strangers or loners falsely accused of crimes or trapped into committing them. The high-contrast lighting of these black and white films accentuated the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe. Feelings of frustration and loss of control came alive in tough, cynical characters played by actors such as Robert Mitchum and Robert Ryan.

Plays and novels also described alienation and anxiety in vivid terms. Playwright Arthur Miller in *Death of a Salesman* (1949) sketched an exacting portrait of self-destructive individualism. Willy Loman, the play’s hero, is obsessively devoted to his career in sales but is nevertheless a miserable failure. Worse, he has trained his sons to excel in personal presentation and style—the very methods prescribed by standard American success manuals—making them both shallow and materialistic. J. D. Salinger’s widely praised novel *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) explored the mental anguish of a teenage boy estranged from the crass materialism of his parents.

Cold war anxiety manifested itself in a flurry of unidentified flying object (UFO) sightings. Thousands of Americans imagined that a Communist-like invasion from outer space was already under way, or they hoped that superior creatures might arrive to show the way to world peace. The U.S. Air Force discounted the sightings of flying saucers, but dozens of private researchers and faddists claimed to have been contacted by aliens. Hollywood films fed these beliefs. In *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), for example, a small town is captured by aliens who take over the minds of its inhabitants when they fall asleep, a subtle warning against apathy toward the threat of Communist “subversion.”

### The Family as Bulwark

Postwar prosperity helped to strengthen the ideal of domesticity, although many Americans interpreted their rush toward marriage and parenthood, as one writer put it, as a “defense—an impregnable bulwark” against the anxieties of the era.

The ultimate symbol of postwar prosperity, the new home in the suburbs, reflected more than simple self-confidence. In 1950 the *New York Times* ran advertisements that captured a chilling quality of the boom in real estate: country properties for the Atomic Age located at least fifty miles outside major cities—the most likely targets, it was believed, of a Soviet nuclear attack. Not a few suburbanites built underground bomb shelters made of steel-reinforced concrete and outfitted with provisions to maintain a family for several weeks after an atomic explosion.

Young couples were marrying younger and producing more children than at any time in the past century. The U.S. Census Bureau predicted that the “baby boom” would be temporary. To everyone’s surprise, the birthrate continued to grow at a record pace, peaking at more than 118 per 1,000 women in 1957.

The new families who enjoyed postwar prosperity inaugurated a spending spree of trailblazing proportions. “The year 1946,” *Life* magazine proclaimed, “finds the U.S. on the threshold of marvels, ranging from run-less stockings and shine-less serge suits to jet-propelled airplanes that will flash across the country in just a little less than

the speed of sound.” The conversion from wartime to peacetime production took longer than many eager shoppers had hoped, but by 1950 the majority of Americans could own consumer durables, such as automatic washers, and small appliances, from do-it-yourself power tools to cameras. By the time Harry Truman left office two-thirds of all American households claimed at least one television set.

These two trends—the baby boom and high rates of consumer spending—encouraged a major change in the middle-class family. Having worked during World War II, often in occupations traditionally closed to them, many women wished to continue in full-time employment. Reconversion to peacetime production forced the majority from their factory positions, but most women quickly returned, taking jobs at a faster rate than men and providing half the total growth of the labor force. By 1952, 2 million more wives worked than during the war. Gone, however, were the high-paying unionized jobs in manufacturing. Instead, most women found minimum-wage jobs in the expanding service sector: clerical work, health care and education, and restaurant, hotel, and retail services. Older women whose children were grown might work because they had come to value a job for its own sake. Younger women often worked for reasons of “economic necessity”—that is, to maintain a middle-class standard of living that now required more than one income. Indeed, mothers of young children were the most likely to be employed.

Even though most women sought employment primarily to support their families, they ran up against popular opinion and expert advice urging them to return to their homes. Public opinion registered resounding disapproval—by 86 percent of those surveyed—of a married woman’s working if jobs were scarce and her husband could support her. Noting that most Soviet women worked outside the home, many commentators appealed for a return to an imaginary “traditional” family where men alone were breadwinners and American women were exclusively homemakers.

This campaign began on a shrill note. Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham, in their best-selling *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), attributed the “super-jittery age in which we live” to women’s abandonment of the home to pursue careers. To counter this trend, they proposed federally funded psychotherapy to readjust women to their housewifely roles and cash subsidies to encourage them to bear more children.

Articles in popular magazines, television shows, and high-profile experts chimed in with similar messages. Talcott Parsons, the distinguished Harvard sociologist, delineated the parameters of the “democratic” family: husbands served as breadwinners while wives—“the emotional hub of the family”—stayed home to care for their families. In the first edition of *Baby and Child Care* (1946), the child-rearing advice manual that soon outsold the Bible, Benjamin Spock similarly advised women to devote themselves full time, if financially possible, to their maternal responsibilities.

Patterns of women’s higher education reflected this conservative trend. Having made slight gains during World War II when college-age men were serving in the armed forces or working in war industries, women lost ground after the G.I. Bill created a huge upsurge in male enrollment. Women represented 40 percent of all college graduates in 1940 but only 25 percent a decade later.

With a growing number of middle-class women working to help support their families, these cold war policies and prescriptions worked at cross-purposes. As early as 1947, *Life* magazine registered concern in a thirteen-page feature, “American Woman’s Dilemma.” How could women comfortably take part in a world beyond the home and at the same time heed the advice of FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who exhorted the nation’s women to fight “the twin enemies of freedom—crime and communism” by fulfilling their singular role as “homemakers and mothers”?

### **Military-Industrial Communities in the West**

All regions of the United States felt the impact of the cold war but perhaps none so directly as the trans-Mississippi West. Defense spending during World War II had stimulated the western economy and encouraged a mass migration of people eager to find employment in wartime industry. Following the war, many cities successfully converted to peacetime production; Los Angeles, for example, attracted one-eighth of all new business in the nation during the late 1940s. However, the cold war, by reviving defense funding, provided the most important boost to the western economy. The Department of Defense and private corporations and subcontractors generated billions of dollars for research and development of military equipment.

The federal government poured so much defense money—nearly 10 percent of the entire military budget—into California that the state’s rate of economic growth between 1949 and 1952 outpaced that of the nation as a whole, with nearly 40 percent coming from the manufacture of aircraft alone. Ten years later, it was estimated that one-third of all workers in Los Angeles were employed by defense industries, particularly aerospace, and that their absolute number was far greater than during the peak of production in World War II. The concentration of defense workers was even greater in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Orange County, for example, grew quickly during the cold war to become a major producer of communication equipment. The San Francisco Bay Area also benefited economically from defense spending, and cities such as Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and San Jose began their ascendance as home to the nation’s budding high-technology industry.

The cold war also pumped new life into communities that had grown up during World War II. Hanford, Washington, and Los Alamos, New Mexico, both centers of the Manhattan Project, employed a greater number of people in the construction of the cold war nuclear arsenal than in the development of the atom bomb that brought an end to World War II. Los Alamos grew from its rural origins at such a fast pace that thirty years later its population density was one of the highest in the state, second only to the metropolitan region of Albuquerque. The community lost little of its secretive quality, with entry restricted to mainly well-paid workers and residents who could neither own land nor homes within its boundary. Meanwhile, the federal government continued to place its distinctive stamp on the architecture, with institutional and purely functional aesthetics governing the design of concrete structures with hospital-green interiors.

Other parts of New Mexico were virtually transformed by cold war exigencies. Three hundred miles southeast of Los Alamos, Espanola Valley, home to a population nearly 90 percent Hispanic and Native American, saw its economy grow as it became the location of Waste Isolation Pilot Project, the dump site of the laboratory's waste projects. Alamogordo, New Mexico, experienced more than a 200 percent increase in population during the first decade of the cold war because of its location next to White Sands Missile Range and Holloman Air Force Base.

New communities accompanied the growth of the U.S. military bases and training camps in the western states. Many of these installations, as well as hospitals and supply depots, not only survived but expanded during the transition from the actual warfare of World War II to the virtual warfare of the cold war. Between 1950 and 1953 approximately twenty western bases were reopened. California became at least a temporary home to more military personnel than any other state, but Texas was not far behind. The availability of public lands with areas of sparse population made western states especially attractive to military planners commissioned to design dangerous and secretive installations such as the White Sands Missile Range in the New Mexican desert.

Local politicians, real estate agents, and merchants usually welcomed these developments as sources of revenue and employment for the residents of their communities. There were, however, heavy costs for speedy and unplanned federally induced growth. To accommodate the new populations, the government poured money into new highway systems and did little to bolster or build public transportation. Uncontrolled sprawl, traffic congestion, air pollution, and strains on limited water and energy resources all grew with the military-industrial communities in the West. For those populations living near nuclear weapons testing grounds, environmental degradation complemented the ultimate threat to their own physical well-being, as cancer rates soared over the next forty years.

### **Zeal for Democracy**

World War II revitalized patriotism by rallying Americans to define themselves and their institutions against Nazi and fascist forces abroad. Pledging allegiance to the flag, for example, gained new symbolic meaning as school children were directed to avoid saluting, a gesture now perceived as disturbingly similar to the militaristic Nazi hand-raising, and were instead told to hold their right hand steadily over their heart. By 1941, the celebration of Flag Day moved even President Roosevelt, who previously showed no interest in the event, to implore Americans to show their colors "when the principles of unity and freedom symbolized by Old Glory are under attack."

Following the massive V-J Day celebrations that marked the end of World War II, Americans began to retreat from public displays of patriotism but were soon chastised for their "national apathy" by organizations like the Freedoms Foundation of Valley Forge, which aimed to mobilize a "vast articulate, creative army of ministers, teachers, professional people, students, men and women from the farm and factory" to defend "the American Way." Soon, other new groups, such as the American Heritage Foundation, founded in 1947, joined such stalwarts as the American Legion, the Chamber of Commerce, and local business and veterans groups in this endeavor.

During the tense election year of 1948, for example, the Junior Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City, Missouri, sponsored "Democracy Beats Communism" Week and prepared a small army of speakers to explain the virtues of American democracy over Soviet slavery, focusing to a large extent on superiority of free enterprise over a state-controlled economy. Students in the city's high schools thus learned that whereas one in every five Americans had a phone, only one in 188 Russians did. The week climaxed in a "Torch of Freedom" parade, a caravan of automobiles, trucks, and marching bands carrying the message to all parts of the city.

The American Legion of Mosinee, Wisconsin, utilized political theatre to inculcate the virtues of the American way, orchestrating an imaginary Communist coup of the small community. In 1950 on May Day, the traditional Communist holiday, "Communist agents," followed by more than sixty reporters, forced the mayor from his home and announced that the Council of People's Commissars had taken over the local government. The chief of police met with a similar fate, and roadblocks were put up to prevent any of the residents from escaping to "free" territory. The restaurants served only Soviet fare: black bread, potato soup, and coffee. The local newspaper, the Mosinee Times, printed a special edition on pink stock under its new masthead, "Red Star." The citizens of Mosinee discovered that all private property had been confiscated by the state and that all rights guaranteed by the Constitution had been annulled. Moreover, every adult was required "to contribute to the State four extra hours of labor without compensation." That evening, after a full day of Communist indoctrination, the local residents rallied

in “Red Square” where they declared an end to the Communist rule of their community. Mosinee’s defenders of freedom raised the American flag and headed home to the refrain of “God Bless America.” The national media, including Life magazine and all the radio networks, covered Mosinee’s “Day Under Communism.”

Meanwhile, Attorney General Tom Clark, with the support of President Truman, funding from private donors, and planning by the American Heritage Foundation, had been putting on track the “Freedom Train.” Carrying copies of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, the Freedom Train traveled to various cities across the United States where local citizens got aboard to view various patriotic displays at the average rate of 8,500 people per day. The popular songwriter Irving Berlin memorialized the Freedom Train, lyrically assuring the expectant viewers who endured long lines that inside “you’ll find a precious freight.”

Patriotic messages also permeated public education. According to guidelines set down by the Truman administration, teachers were to “strengthen national security through education,” specifically designing their lesson plans to illustrate the superiority of the American democratic system over Soviet communism. In 1947 the federal Office of Education launched the “Zeal for Democracy” program for implementation by school boards nationwide. The program veered toward propaganda, announcing its intention to “promote and strengthen democratic thinking and practice, just as the schools of totalitarian states have so effectively promoted the ideals of their respective cultures.” Meanwhile, as part of a separate program in civil defense, schoolchildren were taught to “duck” under their desks and “cover” their heads to protect themselves in the event of a surprise nuclear attack by the Soviets.

There were voices of protest to these cold war programs. The black poet Langston Hughes, for example, expressed his skepticism in verse, writing that he hoped the Freedom Train would carry no Jim Crow car. A fearless minority of scholars protested infringements on their academic freedom by refusing to sign loyalty oaths and by writing books pointing out the potential dangers of aggressively nationalistic foreign and domestic policies. But the chilling atmosphere, such as the political climate pervading the campus of the University of Washington, made many individuals reluctant to express contrary opinions or ideas.

## **VI. Stalemate for the Democrats | WHAT ISSUES were at the center of the election of 1952?**

With cold war tensions festering in Europe, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would have predicted that events in Asia would bring them to the brink of a war that threatened to destroy the world. Yet, in 1949, Communists in China seized power in the most populous nation in the world. Then, a few months later, in June 1950, Communists threatened to take over all of Korea.

Truman asked Americans to sanction a “police action” in Korea, and within a few years more than 1.8 million Americans had been sent to fight a war with no victory in sight. For Truman, the “loss” of China to communism and the stalemate in Korea proved political suicide, bringing to an end the twenty-year Democratic lock on the presidency and the greatest era of reform in U.S. history.

### **The “Loss” of China**

At the close of World War II, the United States acted deliberately to secure Japan as a stabilizing force in Asia, particularly in relation to China. General Douglas MacArthur directed an interim government in a modest reconstruction program that included land reform, the creation of independent trade unions, the abolition of contract marriages, the granting of woman suffrage, sweeping demilitarization, and, eventually, a constitutional democracy that barred Communists from all posts. American leaders worked to rebuild the nation’s economy along capitalist lines and integrate Japan, like West Germany, into an anti-Soviet bloc. Japan also housed huge U.S. military bases, thus placing U.S. troops and weapons strategically close to the Soviet Union’s Asian rim.

The situation in China could not be handled so easily. After years of civil war, the pro-western Nationalist government of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) collapsed. Since World War II, the United States had been sending aid to the unpopular government while warning Jiang that without major reforms the Nationalists were heading for defeat. Moreover, they tried to convince him to accept a coalition government. After refusing to intervene on their behalf, the United States watched as Jiang’s troops were finally forced to surrender to the Communists, led by Mao Zedong, who enjoyed the support of the Chinese countryside, where 85 percent of the population lived. Surrendering to Mao the entire China mainland, the defeated Nationalist government withdrew to the island of Formosa (Taiwan). On October 1, 1949, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was formally established.

The news of China’s “fall” to communism created an uproar in the United States. The Asia First wing of the Republican Party, which envisioned the Far East rather than Europe as the prime site of U.S. trade and investment, blamed the Truman administration for the “loss” of China. For Truman, the situation worsened when, in February 1950, the USSR and the PRC joined in a formal alliance. The president’s adversaries, capitalizing on the growing threat of “international” communism, called the Democrats the “party of treason.”

### **The Korean War**

At the end of World War II, the Allies had divided the small peninsula of Korea, ceded by Japan, at the 38th parallel. Although all parties hoped to reunite the nation under its own government, the line between North and South instead hardened. The United States backed the unpopular government of Syngman Rhee (the Republic of Korea), and the Soviet Union sponsored a rival government in North Korea under Kim Il Sung.

On June 25, 1950, the U.S. State Department received a cablegram reporting a military attack on South Korea by the Communist-controlled North. “If we are tough enough now,” President Truman pledged, “if we stand up to them like we did in Greece three years ago, they won’t take any next steps.” The Soviet Union, on the other hand, regarded the invasion as Kim Il Sung’s affair. Despite Soviet disclaimers, Truman sought approval from the UN Security Council to send in troops to South Korea. Because of the absence of the Soviet delegate, who could have vetoed the decision, the Security Council agreed. Two-thirds of Americans polled approved the president’s decision to send troops under the command of General Douglas MacArthur.

Military events seemed at first to justify the president’s decision. Seoul, the capital of South Korea, had fallen to North Korean troops within weeks of the invasion, and Communist forces continued to push south until they had taken most of the peninsula. The situation appeared grim until Truman authorized MacArthur to carry out an amphibious landing at Inchon, which he did on September 15, 1950. With tactical brilliance and good fortune, the general orchestrated a military campaign that halted the Communist drive. By October, UN troops had retaken South Korea.

Basking in victory, the Truman administration could not resist the temptation to expand its war aims. Hoping to prove that Democrats were not “soft” on communism, the president and his advisers decided to roll back the Communists beyond the 38th parallel and ultimately to reunite Korea as a showcase for democracy. Until this point, China had not been actively involved in the war. But it now warned that any attempt to cross the dividing line would be interpreted as a threat to its own national security. Truman flew to Wake Island in the Pacific on October 15 for a conference with MacArthur, who assured the president of a speedy victory.

MacArthur had sorely miscalculated. Chinese troops massed just above the UN offensive line, at the Yalu River. Suddenly, and without any air support, the Chinese attacked in human waves. MacArthur's force was all but crushed. The Chinese drove the UN troops back into South Korea, where they regrouped along the 38th parallel. By summer 1951 a stalemate had been reached very near the old border. Negotiations for a settlement went on for the next eighteen months amid heavy fighting.

"There is no substitute for victory," MacArthur insisted as he tried without success to convince Truman to prepare for a new invasion of Communist territory. Encouraged by strong support at home, he continued to provoke the president by speaking out against official policy, calling for bombing of supply lines in China and a naval blockade of the Chinese coast—actions certain to lead to a Chinese-American war. Finally, on April 10, 1951, Truman dismissed MacArthur for insubordination and other unauthorized activities.

### **The Price of National Security**

The Korean War had profound implications for the use of executive power. By instituting a peacetime draft in 1948 and then ordering American troops into Korea, Truman had bypassed congressional authority. Republican Senator Robert Taft called the president's actions "a complete usurpation" of democratic checks and balances and charged Truman with transforming his office into an "imperial presidency." For a while, Truman sidestepped such criticisms and their constitutional implications by declaring a national emergency and by carefully referring to the military deployment not as a U.S. war but as a UN-sanctioned "police action."

The president derived his authority from NSC-68, a paper released to him by the National Security Council in April 1950 that reinterpreted both the basic policy of containment and decision making at the highest levels of government. Demonizing communism as "a new fanatic faith" that "seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world," NSC-68 pledged the United States not only to "contain" communism but to take a further step to drive back Communist influence wherever it appeared and to "foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet Union." Moreover, the document designated the struggle between the United States and Soviet Union as "permanent," the era one of "total war." It specified that American citizens must be willing to make sacrifices—"to give up some of the benefits which they have come to associate with their freedom"—to defend their way of life. NSC-68 articulated the intellectual and psychological rationale behind U.S. national security policies for the next forty years.

Initially reluctant, Truman fulfilled the prescriptions of NSC-68 after the outbreak of the Korean War and agreed to its mandate for a rapid and permanent military buildup. By the time the conflict subsided, the defense budget had quadrupled, from \$13.5 billion to more than \$52 billion in 1953. The U.S. Army had grown to 3.6 million, or six times its size at the beginning of the conflict. At the same time, the federal government accelerated the development of both conventional and nonconventional weapons. In the first instance, it began to stockpile nuclear bombs and weapons, including the first hydrogen, or H-bomb, which was tested in November 1952. NSC-68 also proposed expensive "large-scale covert operations" for the "liberation" of Communist countries, particularly in Eastern Europe.

The Korean War also provided the rationale for the expansion of anti-Communist propaganda. At the end of World War II President Truman had taken steps to transform the Office of War Information into a peacetime program that operated on a much smaller budget. But by 1948 Congress was ready to pass with bipartisan support the Smith-Mundt Act, designed "to promote the better understanding of the United States among the peoples of the world and to strengthen cooperative international relations." Within a year, Congress doubled the budget for such programming, granting \$3 million to revive the Voice of America, the short-wave international radio program that had been established in 1942. The new legislation also funded the development of film, print media, cultural exchange programs, and exhibitions, and it created a foundation to promote anti-Communist propaganda throughout the world. By mid-1950, the immediate goal was the "reorientation" of North Korea toward the Free World.

The government's vast "information programs" were designed less to "contain" communism than to "liberate" those countries already under Communist rule by causing disaffection among the people. By 1951 a massive "Campaign of Truth" was reaching 93 nations, and the Voice of America was broadcasting anti-Communist programming in 45 languages. Project Troy, which was initially designed by professors from Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, aimed to penetrate the Iron Curtain, for example, by using air balloons to distribute leaflets and cheap American goods, such as playing cards and plastic chess sets. Army pilots joined the effort, dropping leaflets on North Korean troops reading "ENJOY LIFE and plenty of cigarettes away from the war by coming over to the UN side. Escape. Save your life." On April 4, 1951, President Truman signed the order that created the Psychological Strategy Board to coordinate various operations aimed to rollback Soviet power. In his annual message to Congress that year, he had requested \$115 million to fund these programs but, as the Korean War bogged down, he managed to get only \$85 million.

By the time it ended, the Korean War had cost the United States approximately \$100 billion and inaugurated an era of huge deficits in the federal budget and massive national debt but did nothing to improve the case for rolling back communism. Negotiations and fighting proceeded in tandem until the summer of 1953, when a settlement was reached in which both North Korea and South Korea occupied almost the same territory as when the war began. Approximately 54,000 Americans died in Korea; the North Koreans and Chinese lost well over 2 million people. The UN troops had employed both “carpet bombing” (an intense, destructive attack on a given area) and napalm (jellied gasoline bombs), destroying most of the housing and food supplies in both Koreas. True to the pattern of modern warfare, which emerged during World War II, the majority of civilians killed were women and children. Nearly 1 million Koreans were left homeless.

For the United States, the Korean War enlarged the geographical range of the cold war to include East Asia. The war also lined up the People’s Republic of China and the United States as unwavering enemies for the next twenty years and heightened the U.S. commitment to Southeast Asia. Now, as one historian commented, the “frontiers on every continent were going to remain frontiers in the traditional American meaning of a frontier—a region to penetrate and control and police and civilize.”

The Korean War, moreover, did much to establish an ominous tradition of “unwinnable” conflicts that left many Americans skeptical of official policy. Truman had initially rallied popular support for U.S. intervention by contrasting the Communist North with the “democratic” South, thus casting the conflict in the ideological terms of the cold war. MacArthur’s early victories had promised the liberation of North Korea and even the eventual disintegration of the Soviet and Chinese regimes. But with the tactical stalemate came mass disillusionment.

In retrospect many Americans recognized that Truman, in fighting communism in Korea, had pledged the United States to defend a corrupt government and a brutal dictator. Decades later the Korean War inspired the dark comedy *M\*A\*S\*H*, adapted for television from the film written by Hollywood screenwriter Ring Lardner Jr., an “unfriendly witness” before HUAC, who was jailed during the Korean War for contempt of Congress. As late as 1990, members of Congress were still debating the terms of a Korean War memorial. “It ended on a sad note for Americans,” one historian has concluded, “and the war and its memories drifted off into a void.”

### **“I like Ike”: The Election of 1952**

There was only one burning issue during the election campaign of 1952: the Korean War. Truman’s popularity had wavered continually since he took office in 1945, but it sank to an all-time low in the early 1950s shortly after he dismissed MacArthur as commander of the UN troops in Korea. Congress received thousands of letters and telegrams calling for Truman’s impeachment. “Oust President Truman” bumper stickers could be seen. MacArthur, meanwhile, returned home a hero, welcomed by more than 7 million fans in New York City alone.

Popular dissatisfaction with Truman increased. The Asia First lobby argued that if the president had acted more aggressively to turn back communism in China, the “limited war” in Korea would not have been necessary. Following these charges were accusations of large-scale corruption in his administration. Newspapers reported that several agencies had been dealing in 5 percent kickbacks for government contracts. Business and organized labor complained about the price and wage freezes imposed during the Korean War. A late-1951 Gallup poll showed the president’s approval rating at 23 percent. In March 1952, Truman announced he would not run for reelection, a decision rare for a president eligible for another term.

In accepting political defeat and disgrace, Truman turned to the popular but uncharismatic governor of Illinois, Adlai E. Stevenson Jr. Admired for his honesty and intelligence, Stevenson offered no solutions to the conflict in Korea, the accelerating arms race, or the cold war generally. Accepting the Democratic nomination, he candidly admitted that “the ordeal of the twentieth century is far from over,” a prospect displeasing to voters aching for peace.

The Republicans made the most of the Democrats’ dilemma. Without proposing any sweeping answers of their own, they pointed to all the obvious shortcomings of their opponents. Their campaign strategy, known as “K1C2”—Korea, Communism, and Corruption—took steady aim at the Truman administration, and when opinion polls showed that Dwight Eisenhower possessed an “unprecedented” 64 percent approval rating, they found in “Ike” the perfect candidate to head the ticket.

Eisenhower styled himself the representative of “modern Republicanism.” He wisely avoided the negative impressions made by the unsuccessful 1948 Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey, who had seemed as aggressive as Truman on foreign policy and simultaneously eager to overturn the New Deal domestic legislation. Eisenhower knew better: voters wanted peace and a limited welfare state. He referred to New Deal reforms as “a solid floor that keeps all of us from falling into the pit of disaster.” And although he did not go into specifics, he promised to end the Korean War with “an early and honorable” peace. Whenever he was tempted to address questions of finance or the economy, his advisers warned him: “The chief reason that people want to vote for you is because they think you have more ability to keep us out of another war.”

Meanwhile, Eisenhower's vice presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, waged a relentless and defamatory attack on Stevenson, calling him "Adlai the Appeaser." Senator Joseph McCarthy chimed in, proclaiming that with club in hand he might be able to make "a good American" of Stevenson. A month before the election, McCarthy went on network television with his requisite "exhibits" and "documents," this time purportedly showing that the Democratic presidential candidate had promoted communism at home and abroad. These outrageous charges kept the Stevenson campaign off balance. The Republican campaign was itself not entirely free of scandal: Nixon had been caught accepting personal gifts from wealthy benefactors. Pleading his case on national television, he described his wife Pat's "good Republican cloth coat" and their modest style of living. He then contritely admitted that he had indeed accepted one gift, a puppy named Checkers that his daughters loved and that he refused to give back. "The Poor Richard Show," as critics called the event, defused the scandal without answering the most important charges. Unaffected by the scandal, Eisenhower continued to enchant the voters as a peace candidate. Ten days before the election he dramatically announced, "I shall go to Korea" to settle the war. Eisenhower received 55 percent of the vote and carried thirty-nine states, in part because he brought out an unusually large number of voters in normally Democratic areas. He won the popular vote in much of the South and in the northern cities of New York, Chicago, Boston, and Cleveland. Riding his coattails, the Republicans regained narrow control of Congress. The New Deal coalition of ethnic and black voters, labor, northern liberals, and southern conservatives no longer commanded a majority.

### **Conclusion**

In his farewell address, in January 1953, Harry Truman reflected: "I suppose that history will remember my term in office as the years when the 'cold war' began to overshadow our lives. I have hardly had a day in office that has not been dominated by this all-embracing struggle."

The election of Dwight Eisenhower helped to diminish the intensity of this dour mood without actually bringing a halt to the conflict. The new president pledged himself to liberate the world from communism by peaceful means rather than force. "Our aim is more subtle," he announced during his campaign, "more pervasive, more complete. We are trying to get the world, by peaceful means, to believe the truth. . . ." Increasing the budget of the CIA, Eisenhower took the cold war out of the public eye by relying to a far greater extent than Truman on psychological warfare and covert operations.

"The Eisenhower Movement," wrote journalist Walter Lippmann, was a "mission in American politics" to restore a sense of community among the American people. In a larger sense, many of the issues of the immediate post-World War II years seemed to have been settled, or put off for a distant future. The international boundaries of communism were frozen with the Chinese Revolution, the Berlin Crisis, and now the Korean War. Meanwhile, at home, cold war defense spending had become a permanent part of the national budget, an undeniable drain on tax revenues but an important element in the government contribution to economic prosperity. If the nuclear arms race remained a cause for anxiety, joined by more personal worries about the changing patterns of family life, a sense of relative security nevertheless spread. Prospects for world peace had dimmed, but the worst nightmares of the 1940s had eased as well.