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# Political developments in the Americas after the Second World War, 1945–79

This chapter focuses on political developments and the domestic concerns (social, cultural and economic) that dominated the domestic landscape of the Americas in the decades after the Second World War. The response to the domestic issues would vary considerably based on each nation's political structure, national culture and ideology. Despite the large sacrifices made during the Second World War, Canada and the United States emerged with burgeoning economies and stable democratic governments. This was not always true for the other 31 nations in the Americas.

Over the next four decades, domestic policy was overshadowed by the Cold War. Governments throughout the Americas struggled to develop economic policies that would stimulate the economy, reduce poverty and improve prosperity. The United States was the dominant superpower that did not diminish until the 1980s. In Latin America, many nations would struggle to meet basic needs and would fall further and further into debt. The result was often political instability that translated into civil war, military dictatorships and revolution often with foreign support and involvement. A special case was Cuba. Soon after the 1959 revolution, the country became a communist single-party state under the leadership of Fidel Castro.

Overall, the political boundaries of the Americas remained static but this belied the internal turmoil and tumult that took place, to some extent, in every nation. In the United States, the civil rights movement became a legitimate political force and would change the face of the nation. In Canada, the French-speaking province of Quebec would demand a special place in confederation and in Latin America, the search for political stability and social justice would take on many forms.

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- evaluate the domestic policies of the United States under presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy
- discuss President Johnson's "Great Society" and domestic reforms during the presidency of Richard Nixon
- review the domestic policies of Canadian prime ministers from Diefenbaker to Clark and Trudeau
- assess the causes and effects of the Quiet Revolution in Quebec
- explain the political, social and economic causes of the Cuban Revolution and its impact on the region
- assess the rule of Fidel Castro: his political, economic, social and cultural policies; treatment of minorities; successes and failures

- trace the rise to power of populist leaders in Latin America, and recognize the characteristics of populist regimes in terms of their social, economic and political policies; the treatment of opposition; and their successes and failures using the examples of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil and Juan Perón in Argentina
- recognize the characteristics of Latin-American military regimes: including their rationale for intervention; their challenges and policies; successes and failures.

## The United States

The post-war era was a time of incredible economic expansion for the United States, yet the nation faced serious economic and social problems. Rampant inflation, labor unrest, racial segregation, the consumer culture and emergence of suburbia changed the face of the United States. At the top of the government's list was reducing poverty, and the associated development of rural areas, education, healthcare and civil rights. But domestic problems and policies took a back seat to the Cold War. Financing the industrial-military complex would hamper the domestic efforts of all presidents during this period.

A major issue was civil rights. Millions of African Americans endured lives of abject poverty because of legalized discrimination. But for all the inequalities faced by minority groups, the nation prospered. A new managerial middle class of highly skilled and educated workers emerged and gave the United States its competitive edge. It was a time of great expectations and unbridled optimism; a long awaited transformation after the Great Depression's years of sorrow and the sacrifice of war.

## Canada

Canadians feared a repetition of the Depression and Prime Minister Mackenzie King's Liberal government responded with a groundbreaking social welfare programs that eventually included family allowances, old-age pensions, workmen's compensation and a national health program. Newfoundland, Britain's oldest colony, joined the confederation in 1949 as the 10th province. Regional alienation between have- and have-not provinces would spark strong debate over the direction of the national agenda. Quebec, a mainly French-speaking province, had by the 1960s undergone a "Quiet Revolution" which emancipated the province from English Canadian domination. Industrialization in central Canada made it the mainstay of the nation's robust economy. The auto industry, in particular, grew rapidly and symbolized the new affluence. The St. Lawrence Seaway was completed in 1959; a joint venture with the United States, it made navigation from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean a reality.

The postwar era was a time when Canadians trusted their government and expected it to provide solutions to long-standing economic problems and social inequalities. The population grew rapidly, a combination of wartime saving, the baby boom and immigration. The majority of Canadians lived in rapidly growing cities. Some minority groups, especially **First Nations** (aboriginal

The term **First Nations** (most often used in the plural) is used to describe the indigenous people of Canada, except for the Arctic-situated Inuit, and peoples of mixed European-First Nations ancestry called *métis*.

peoples) remained marginalized and the nation ignored its wartime internment of Japanese Canadians. Yet for most Canadians, this was a golden time.

## Latin America

Latin American countries experimented with new forms of government and new solutions to the long-standing economic problems of poverty and economic diversification. The results were inconsistent but the common experience was discontent with the status quo. Latin American nations faced unique challenges and yet several patterns emerged. The first was a movement in the 1950s towards greater political participation of disenfranchised groups, such as women. However, it was often difficult to change the deeply rooted political hierarchy supported by a small yet powerful élite. Fidel Castro's leftist revolution in Cuba did not engulf the region as predicted but instead spawned a new trend of right-wing military coups and dictatorships in response. The democratically elected socialist governments of several nations were forced out directly or indirectly by the United States, who feared the spread of communism in the region.

Reform and revolution, dictatorship and democracy, communism followed by corporatist military oligarchies were all represented in different countries in the Americas. Economically, some Latin-American nations struggled with crushing foreign debt, while others suffered from a lack of domestic and foreign investment and still others submitted to too much foreign control. Economies based mainly on one product or resource were vulnerable to the vagaries of world demand. In addition, the profits these commodities generated were seldom distributed equitably. However, due to economic neocolonialism, many nations had difficulties diversifying their economies. This can be seen in the case of Brazilian coffee and sugar, Chilean copper and Nicaraguan bananas, to name a few examples. Attempts to diversify production, through programs like Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) worked well at first for some countries, like Argentina and Brazil, but more often produced mixed results.

## Extended discussion point

### Domestic vs. foreign policy

*Domestic policy can only defeat us; foreign policy can kill us.*

John F. Kennedy

The purpose of a national government is to create laws and policies that promote and advance the national interest. There are two main categories of policies: "domestic" and "foreign". For example, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, many nations in the Americas developed relief programs like Roosevelt's New Deal to jump-start the economy. The United States became isolationist, focused on domestic affairs. But, with the onset of the Cold War, US foreign policy took the lead, military spending grew at the expense of schools and hospitals.

### Domestic policy

Attempts to rectify social problems and promote growth within the nation's borders. Domestic policy is concerned with economic growth, prosperity and development; poverty, health and education, law and order, taxation, social welfare and civil rights. Factors that determine the type and nature of domestic policy include political ideology, the system of government (democracy or dictatorship), economic prosperity, history, culture and religion.

### Foreign policy

General objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its relations with other nations. Foreign policy promotes the national interest. Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy. Over the centuries, nations have developed a formal method of recognizing the existence of each other and have developed a set of rules and protocols to promote peaceful and productive relations and resolve disputes. When diplomacy fails, as the German philosopher Carl von Clausewitz stated, nations resort to war—"diplomacy by other means." Factors that define the national interest and thus influence foreign policy include geography, demography, bordering nations, economy, military strength and ideology (e.g. Cold War).



"The Chicken or the egg?" Domestic policy or foreign policy—which is most important? How do foreign affairs impact on domestic issues?

## The domestic policies of US presidents: Truman to Nixon

The period 1945–63 has been called the Golden Era: a time when the economic strength and military might of the United States made the nation the undisputed world leader in the early days of the Cold War. As such, it is easy to overlook the domestic challenges that presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy faced. Initially, the nation feared a postwar depression but when this failed to materialize other important questions about the role of government in the market place, the inequitable distribution of wealth, the future of organized labor, the fear of communist infiltration and the growing momentum of the civil rights movement would dominate the domestic scene.

### The accidental president: Harry S. Truman, 1945–53

On April 12, 1945, on the sudden death of Franklin Roosevelt, who had suffered a cerebral haemorrhage, Truman became the 33rd president of the United States. After serving in the post of vice president for only 84 days, this was an unexpected position to be in. Truman had accepted the vice-presidential nomination knowing he was a compromise candidate for the, then, fractious Democratic Party. As a senator from Missouri he had hardly appeared earmarked for higher office. His record was solid but not spectacular. He lacked the charm and charisma of FDR. Relations between President Roosevelt and his new vice president had been distant. FDR did not easily disclose his views and feelings to Truman. What is clear is that Roosevelt considered Truman an outsider and would not give him access to sensitive information. This fact was apparent when, after taking the oath, the Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, advised Truman of a “project looking to the development of a new explosive of unbelievable destructive power.”

### Truman’s presidency, 1945–48

The New Deal’s reforms and the new promise of advancing civil rights, picked up where Roosevelt had left off. But within a year the momentum for reform had stopped, blocked by a hostile Republican-dominated Congress. Truman faced serious problems with the labor movement. Republicans saw him as soft on communism, and said that he was trying to transform the economy. His popularity waned and initially Truman considered not running for the presidency in the forthcoming election but then changed his mind.

The 1948 election is one of the most storied in presidential history. At the Democratic nominating convention the party was split in three. Henry J. Wallace from Iowa ran on the Progressive Party ticket, advocating an end to segregation, full voting rights for blacks and universal health care. The conservative wing of the party, the Dixiecrats, were southern senators who opposed all of Wallace’s platform. Truman, who won the nomination, seemed destined to lose the election. One Truman advisor said that only Truman thought he

### Discussion point



What other periods in US history might be called a “Golden Era?”

What assumptions does this term attest to? Do you agree, or disagree with the use of the term for the immediate postwar period in the United States? What issues does it mask?

could win. Against all odds, Truman led a brilliant electoral campaign and became president in his own right.

In 1949, Truman introduced the “Fair Deal”—a reprise of his first attempt at reform in 1945. Again, he met with limited success passing only the government housing initiative. More importantly, the anti-communist movement gained steam and led by Senator Joseph McCarthy attacked Truman, key members of his cabinet and large sections of the government with charges of communist membership, conspiracy and collaboration. The Cold War and foreign affairs dominated the president’s time and energy and domestic matters were given low priority.

### The State of the Union

Truman’s chief task following the war was to convert Roosevelt’s “Arsenal of democracy” from the production of tanks to automobiles, and from machine guns to washing machines. Millions of soldiers, back from the war, needed to be retrained. Truman needed to clarify the government’s role in the economy after the centralized role of the wartime administration and the New Deal. Republican hard-liners wanted to dismantle the New Deal and get government out of the marketplace entirely, but Truman and the Democrats had a different plan.

Politically, Truman understood that the Democratic Party was a disparate alliance. The party was not as cohesive as the Republicans and its key constituencies included east- and west-coast Liberals who supported the New Deal and civil rights; ultra-conservative southern Democrats who opposed strong central government, advocated states rights and supported segregation; African American voters in the northern states and the west who advocated civil rights legislation; new immigrants who required government support in settling; and organized labor who supported the New Deal and the Wagner Act

### Harry S. Truman (1884–1972)

Harry S. Truman, the son of a farmer, was born in Lamar, Missouri, and completed high school in Independence in 1901. After working in various clerical jobs, he took over the farm, following his father’s death in 1914. He served in the National Guard and in the First World War was captain of a field artillery unit that saw action at St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne, in France. Returning to the United States in 1919, Truman married Elizabeth Wallace (Bess Truman), whom he had known since childhood. After a failed business venture, running a haberdashery in the 1920s, Truman studied law in Kansas, and was appointed to the position of county judge in 1922. In this position he served two four-year terms, during which he acquired a reputation for honesty and skillful management. In 1934, he was put forward as a candidate in the Democratic primary for a seat in the US Senate. In January 1935, Truman was sworn in as Missouri’s junior senator. Truman’s friendliness, personal integrity, and attention to the duties of his office soon won him respect among his colleagues. He was responsible for two major pieces of legislation: the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, establishing government regulation of the aviation industry, and the Wheeler-Truman Transportation Act of 1940, providing government oversight of railroad reorganization. In 1940, he won a second term in the Senate, and it was during this term that he gained national recognition for leading an investigation into fraud and waste in the US military. Respected by his Senate colleagues and admired by the public, Truman was selected to run as Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s vice president on the 1944 Democratic ticket. Truman took the oath of office as vice president on January 20, 1945. His term lasted just 82 days, however, before Roosevelt’s sudden death placed him in office as the 33rd president of the United States.

More controversial for his foreign than his domestic policies, Truman set the stage for a strong anti-communist policy of containment in the era of the Cold War. His decision to authorize dropping the atomic bomb on Japan remains one of the most controversial decisions of a US president. Re-elected to office in 1948, against predictions of losing the election, he established a strong program of domestic reform. His commitment to continuing Roosevelt’s Fair Deal included proposals for expanded public housing, increased aid to education, a higher minimum wage, federal protection for civil rights, and national health insurance. Despite Democratic majorities in the House and Senate, most Fair Deal proposals either failed to gain legislative majorities or passed in much weakened form. Truman succeeded, however, in laying the groundwork for the domestic agenda for decades to come. His term in office concluded in 1953.



(1935). Truman understood the impossible task of satisfying all these interest groups. The potential for trouble within his own party was also second to the threat he was facing from a Republican-controlled Congress with a long tradition of opposing any president irrespective of party. Creating a national consensus in such an environment would be difficult.

### Postwar wage and price controls

In August 1945, the dropping of nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, forced Japan's unconditional surrender and ended the Pacific war more rapidly than if the US had used conventional warfare. The United States was not prepared for peacetime reconversion. Truman wanted this done quickly and went against the advice of his economic planners and advisors. The military was rapidly demobilized from a wartime peak of 14 million to about half a million by 1947. The fearful predictions that the economy would collapse when the boys came home, never materialized. War workers who had slaved long hours in factories had saved large sums buying war bonds and now demanded consumer goods. Automobiles, appliances and houses topped the list. The problem was that the conversion of factories could not match consumer demand and, as a result, inflation skyrocketed to 25% by the end of 1946. Truman reinstated some wage and price controls, against the wishes of the Republican-dominated Congress, but inflation remained intractable. In one famous incident, in mid-1946, the price of beef doubled in two weeks. Price controls were instituted which angered beef producers who in retaliation reduced the supply, thereby creating an artificial shortage. This was a public relations disaster for the Truman administration. The *New York Daily News* headline blared: "PRICES SOAR, BUYERS SORE, STEERS JUMP OVER THE MOON." Truman took the blame and took a beating at the polls with his approval rating plunging to 32%. Within the Democratic Party itself, many wondered if Truman was the person for the job.

During the 1946 mid-term elections the Republicans, smelling blood, attacked with a vengeance. Their election slogans captured the nation's displeasure: "Had Enough?"; or "To Err is Truman" rang true to many Americans. The Republicans now dominated Congress as never before and Truman was blocked from passing legislation at every turn. But Truman, the old poker player, had them right where he wanted. The opportunity to play his trump card came in 1948. He asked Congress to pass a food price bill to help curb prices and control inflation which had slowed considerably but was still on the rise. He gambled that the Republicans would reject these strong measures. They took the bait and passed a lukewarm bill that was labelled as "pitiful." Robert Taft, Republican Senate Leader, told Americans that they could reduce inflation if they "eat less." Republicans would pay dearly for Taft's arrogance. Truman signed the bill but made it clear that Republicans now owned the inflation problem.

Nevertheless, the US economy was expanding as never before. It was phenomenal, unprecedented and welcomed by the majority in the

United States. Despite inflation, real wages and disposable income grew and would continue to grow to the point it became an expectation, an entitlement. The unemployment rate fell dramatically, full employment seemed possible but Congress blocked any talk of government action to make this a reality. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would grow 250 times in the 20 years after the war. More people in the United States were living above the poverty line than ever before. Memories of the Depression dissipated and, for millions, the American Dream had become a reality: a house in the suburbs, a yard full of children, two cars in the garage, a tranquil neighbourhood with churches, schools and stores. It was a bountiful time for the majority of people living in the United States but not for minorities, namely African Americans and Native Americans. Many poor whites lived on farms without electricity or running water, or lived in cramped urban slums and ghettos. Poverty was both democratic and color-blind.

### **Labor unrest**

Compounding Truman's woes was labor unrest. The support of labor was critical to the Democrats. Strikes in major industries caused considerable problems and stifled consumer goods production. There were more than 5,000 strikes in 1946 alone. Truman had to do something and at the same time attempt not to alienate the labor movement. But this proved impossible. Strikes shut down the railroads. Truman threatened to use troops to run the trains. The strike ended. A coal strike threatened to shut down the steel industry. Truman took the United Mine Workers to court and won. The unions in all cases returned to work and the president made certain they did so with more money in their pockets. Yet Truman's hard line came at a price and damaged the Democratic Party's relationship with the labor movement—a key group in the Democratic Party coalition. In his defense, Truman had little choice but to take action. This was one of his strengths. He could set aside political considerations and do what was best for the nation despite the consequences for his presidency; a trait that won him the grudging respect of his most obstinate political opponents.

### **The Taft-Hartley Act, 1947**

The union support that Truman lost was regained thanks to the Republicans' anti-labor legislation, the Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947, more commonly known as the Taft-Hartley Act (supported by Republicans Senator Robert Taft and Congressman Fred Hartley). Labor saw the Act for what it was—an attack on collective bargaining rights gained in the Wagner Act of 1935. The Taft-Hartley Act limited the right to strike by giving the president authorization to obtain an 80-day court injunction against any strike that was deemed a threat to national health, welfare or security. As well, any union threatening strike action was to report the names of any of its members with affiliation to the Communist Party to the government. It was a commonly held belief among Republicans and conservative Democrats that the unions were unpatriotic organizations and a front for communist infiltration and subterfuge. Truman vetoed but the Republican Congress overrode the



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president. Truman never used the Act. This was yet another example of the Republican-controlled Congress helping Truman out of a tight spot.

### **The Fair Deal**

To many Democrats, Truman's stance on the New Deal was a worry and they feared that he would forfeit the New Deal's legacy. These fears proved unfounded. In September 1945, Truman presented Congress with an ambitious and wide-ranging 21-point program. Congress rejected the program outright but three years later, after his landmark presidential victory in 1948, Truman reintroduced the program as "The Fair Deal" for all Americans. The connection to the New Deal was obvious and included pro-labor reforms, economic controls, a minimum wage increase, expansion of Social Security programs, housing, national health insurance and education. It also contained important civil rights measures and programs. On the agricultural front, Truman produced the "Brannan Plan" to support family farm incomes. The ambitious plan, like the New Deal, floundered because of the intransigence of the conservative Republican Congress. A truncated bill was approved but it fell short of Truman's vision. He had clearly miscalculated the appetite for reform. Congress approved public housing but little else, and polls indicated that the public wanted the New Deal to continue but not expand. Unlike many nations in the Americas that implemented extensive social welfare programs, reforms and philosophies in the 1940s and 1950s, the United States was not ready to shift to the political left. In fact, the opposite was happening. Influenced by the Cold War, that exerted more and more influence over the nation's psyche, the nation would swing inexorably to the political right creating a frenzy of anti-communist paranoia and fear that threatened the very foundations of the US Constitution.

### **The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)**

The Cold War theater of operations in the United States was the Congressional Senate chambers in which the the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) met. HUAC was created in 1938 to investigate allegations against private citizens, public employees and organizations suspected of having communist ties. Postwar, HUAC gained momentum from McCarthy's attacks and accusations. Truman announced in November 1946 the need to ascertain the loyalty of federal government employees and root out any security risks. Not all his fears were unfounded. A top-secret counterintelligence operation code-named "Verona" had broken Soviet encryption codes and identified several hundred government employees supplying sensitive information to the Soviets. There were several spectacular spy cases: most famously, the trials of Alger Hiss and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Hiss, a former aide to President Roosevelt and a State Department official was accused of spying by the editor of *Time* magazine (and former communist), Whitaker Chambers, in 1948. HUAC investigated the charges and Hiss went to trial. He was given 14 years for perjury because the spying charges wouldn't stick.

The Rosenbergs were allegedly part of a ring passing information about the **Manhattan Project** on to the Soviets. These revelations were all the more shocking when the Soviets successfully tested a nuclear bomb in 1949, ending the A-bomb monopoly of the United States. The Rosenbergs were convicted and hung. A few years earlier, Igor Gozenko, a cipher clerk working in the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, the Canadian Capital, had turned himself into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with evidence exposing a Soviet spy ring operating in Canada, the UK and the United States. It is likely his disclosures assisted in the Rosenberg conviction.

In 1949, HUAC doubled its efforts to smoke out the communists. McCarthy (with some justification) claimed communists had infiltrated the highest levels of the US government and the military. On February 9, 1950, McCarthy announced that he had a list of several hundred known communists in the State Department (apparently no such list existed and McCarthy was grandstanding to get publicity—the tactic worked). The witch hunt had begun; his charges were largely unfounded, but that didn't matter. What occurred over the next four years was a steady stream of US citizens being subpoenaed to appear before HUAC. To be summoned was the same as being convicted. McCarthyism became the byword for anti-communist activities.

McCarthy took on the State Department, the army and the presidency with the encouragement of his party. Favorite targets were journalists, diplomats, authors, actors, trade unionists, scientists and scholars. In 1947, HUAC held nine days of hearings into accusations of communist influence and infiltration in Hollywood. The hearings resulted in publication of the "Hollywood Ten", prominent writers and directors, who would be blacklisted and boycotted by the studios. Eventually about 300 artists would be interrogated. HUAC had the power of subpoena and artists who invoked their Fifth Amendment protection were found in contempt. McCarthy learned that once you attacked someone's credibility it was virtually impossible for them to counter the charges. This, despite revelations of his own discredited war record. Nicknamed "Tail-Gunner Joe" he claimed to have flown 32 missions on a bomber but this was later revealed to be false. He was at a desk for most of the war. To add insult to injury, McCarthy won his Senate seat by criticizing his opponent for not enlisting despite the fact that he was too old to enlist. McCarthy won with a good majority. But once in Congress he was quickly isolated for his boorish behavior and limited ability.

Nevertheless, from 1950–53, he had a free hand. As Chair of the Committee on Government operations, he would interrogate hundreds of suspects. In the process, he destroyed many careers though accusation and innuendo. He attacked Truman's secretaries of state—the revered George Marshall and Dean Acheson. When the Democrats attacked McCarthy's own credibility, McCarthy countered and then Eisenhower refused to publically condemn McCarthy. Their silence remains a source of historical controversy. Recently, historians

The **Manhattan Project** was the codename for a project conducted during the Second World War to develop the first atomic bomb, before the Germans or the Japanese. The project was led by the United States, and included participation from the United Kingdom and Canada.

have suggested Truman's silence was possibly due to the Verona reports. The Senator's power peaked under Eisenhower. Finally, the Senate came to its senses and in December 1954 voted 67 to 22 to vote McCarthy out.

### Truman on civil rights

The civil rights movement was about to become a permanent fixture in US politics. Truman's approach was to steer to the middle of the road. He made history as the first president to address the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1946. Later that year, he established the Committee on Civil Rights and produced the report "To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights" in the fall of 1947. Truman's cabinet was split on asking Congress to support civil rights legislation but Truman proceeded and sent a 10-point message calling for a law to prohibit lynching, a federal fair-employment practices committee and protection of voting rights. None of these proposals were enacted but, to his credit, Truman had commenced the process. Truman's decision to desegregate the military and the civil service was controversial and groundbreaking, particularly for the Democrats in the south. These were important developments. Yet in the southern states, blacks remained disenfranchised by **Jim Crow laws**, lynching persisted and the Supreme Court legislation, supporting the segregation of blacks and whites (*Plessy vs. Ferguson*, 1898), remained uncontested. Truman's approach to civil rights was largely pragmatic. To keep the important urban black vote in the north and California he made bold public statements in support of civil rights yet his do-nothing legislative record suggests he wanted to maintain the support of southern Democratic senators.

Truman finally took a stand on civil rights at the 1948 Democratic Convention, when he stood for nomination. Southern senators stormed out of the convention and formed a splinter group, the "States Rights Democrats." Dubbed the Dixiecrats, and led by South Carolina's governor, Strom Thurmond, the "Dixiecrats" opposed any federal civil rights legislation, seeing it as an intrusion on the authority of the states. Following the election, Truman used executive orders to force compliance with non-discriminatory rules in government contracts, and by the end of the Korean War in 1953, the armed forces had been desegregated.

### The reluctant president: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-61

Dwight D. Eisenhower (known as "Ike") returned to the United States in 1946 as the conquering hero, having successfully led the Allied armies in the Second World War. By reaching consensus with British and US generals, Montgomery and Patton, Eisenhower's highly effective command went some way to drawing the war to a conclusion, and led him to stay on as military governor of the US Occupation Zone. Postwar, Eisenhower was held in such high esteem that first the Democrats and then the Republicans pursued

The **Jim Crow laws** were state and local laws in the United States, enacted between 1876 and 1965. They legalized racial segregation in all public facilities, with a supposedly "separate but equal" status for African Americans.

him to be their presidential candidate. At first he refused, but in 1951 he changed his mind. In 1952, he ended 20 years of Democratic dominance by soundly defeating Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson.

### **Eisenhower takes the middle road**

The new president's vision and approach to domestic policy was largely hands-off. At times he appeared uncomfortable with domestic matters preferring foreign policy, which clearly dominated his time in office. Nonetheless, he did attend to domestic matters and believed it was time to slow down what he and many in the Republican Party considered to be the bloated growth of the federal government and its unsolicited involvement in the daily lives of US citizens. He thought that 20 years of interventionist Democrat programs need to be slowed down. The New Deal had impinged on the sovereignty of the states and local government. True to his belief, he would be reluctant to extend the reach of the federal government into these areas. Eisenhower, however, firmly rejected Republicans who wanted to dismantle these programs altogether. Ike told them he was driving down the middle of the road and referred to this as "the New Republicanism." He warned Republicans: "Should any party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history."

Eisenhower believed that his government's role was to preserve individual freedom, promote the free market economy and, when necessary, assist the poor, the unemployed and the aged. This would be done selectively, strengthening useful programs incrementally. There would be no Eisenhower corollary of the New Deal.

He would lead the nation from the middle, charting a course between excessive wealth concentrated in the hands of a few and curbing the unbridled power of state intervention. He understood his political future relied on a coalition between business and the burgeoning middle class. Furthermore, he believed US institutions were capable of meeting any new challenges and that reform must be advanced in a thoughtful and gradual manner.

Eisenhower's major economic challenge was to create a climate of continued economic growth. He was fortunate to serve during the greatest expansion of the economy in the 20th century. This approach was aided by several mild recessions that slowed the pace of growth and, more importantly, curbed the inflation that had

### **Dwight David Eisenhower (1890–1969)**

Born in Texas, the third of seven sons, he grew up in Abilene Kansas. In 1911 he entered West Point Military Academy and graduated in 1915. In 1916 he married Mamie Doud of Denver and they had two sons David (1917– 1921) and John (1922). The peacetime army was small and promotion was slow. Eisenhower was a hardworking, diligent and affable officer, dedicated father and husband. His strength was as a staff officer. In 1936, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 21 years. Promotions came quicker as the nation prepared for war and in 1940 he became a Brigadier-General and early in 1942 became Major-General. His ability to forge cooperative links between British and US commanders became apparent in 1942 when he moved to England and took command of Allied Forces in North Africa. In December 1943, he was appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces earmarked to invade north-west Europe. In December of 1944, he was promoted to General of the Army (the highest rank possible). Following the war he became Chief of Staff in 1945, and resigned in 1950 to become president of Columbia University, New York City. In December 1950, he became the first supreme commander of the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In June 1952 he announced his candidacy for president of the United States. He served two terms as president and twice defeated Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson, in 1952 and 1956. A heavy smoker he suffered several heart attacks in office. In 1961, he retired to his farm in Gettysburg Pennsylvania where he played golf and wrote his memoirs. He died of a stroke in 1969.



dogged Truman's administration. The economy remained robust, unemployment rates were low and inflation ran at about 2% a year. During the decade, the average family income rose 45% and with cash in their pockets like never before US citizens bought cars, TVs, refrigerators, moved to the suburbs and went on family vacations. To their credit, they also saved significant amounts for investment and retirement. This combination of spending and savings drove the economy. Eisenhower believed the government's role was to balance the budget and create infrastructure to promote continued economic growth. Many Republicans wanted tax cuts but Eisenhower managed to avoid this by keeping the deficit under control.

Supporting the economy required new infrastructure, namely improved transportation networks. The Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed in 1956, became the largest public works project in US history. It became the largest highway system in the world and is named the Eisenhower Interstate System. The highways became, as Eisenhower predicted, the transportation arteries of the modern economy. Trucks crisscrossed the country in days not months and the system served the farthest corners of the continental United States. The second major project was a joint-venture with the Canadian Government—the St. Lawrence Seaway. A system of canals and locks, the Seaway would allow ships to navigate from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic.

Yet against this backdrop of growth and prosperity, one in five Americans (40 million people) still lived in poverty in 1960. Almost half lived in the south but poverty was increasing in northern cities, largely from an influx of African Americans seeking better jobs, notably in the automobile industry. Poverty rates were highest among children and the elderly. While the president's approval rating hovered around 70%, the poor were all but swept under the carpet during the heady days of affluence and wealth that earmarked the 1950s as the most prosperous decade.

If Eisenhower was successful in promoting the economy, which didn't need much help, he was less successful in dealing with Senator McCarthy and civil rights.

### **McCarthyism under Eisenhower**

The Wisconsin Senator's communist-ousting purges reached their climax during the first two years of Eisenhower's presidency. At the start of his second term, Senator McCarthy was given the chair of a relatively minor committee, the Committee on Government Operations, which it was hoped would curb his attacks. On the contrary, he brashly used one of the sub-committees, the Senate Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations, as a springboard to launch his next round of attacks. He appointed two lawyers, notably including J. F. Kennedy to act as the committee's legal counsel. McCarthy scandalized the majority of middle class US citizens with his unsubstantiated allegations, virulent attacks and blatant disregard for constitutional rights. The hearings were broadcast live on TV and the people of the United States were eventually repulsed by his nasty demeanour and abusive verbal attacks. Rarely did he back his

allegations with substantive evidence. Being subpoenaed was to be found guilty. With no due process, and no constitutional protections, the US populace grew critical of the proceedings.

Eisenhower initially supported McCarthy but was outraged by his methods, particularly when he began attacking the loyalty of the US Army. McCarthy's attacks went overboard when he demeaned a serving general and war hero, by saying that he had the intelligence of a five year old and was unfit to wear the uniform. McCarthy then began attacking Eisenhower himself, claiming he had not done enough to expunge known subversives from the federal government or pressure the Chinese to release US pilots captured during the Korean War. No one was safe.

President Eisenhower refused to challenge McCarthy publically, for which he was criticized. But behind the scenes he encouraged the Republican-controlled Senate to investigate the senator. In 1954, a Senate committee brought 46 charges against McCarthy and he was eventually censured on two accounts. McCarthy responded, in characteristic form, by accusing several committee members of deliberate deception and fraud, saying that the committee was simply a lynch mob. The Senate voted 67 to 22 in favour of censure. McCarthy was forced to retreat to the Senate backwaters, dying in 1957 from acute hepatitis most likely brought on by alcoholism. A dark period in US history was over. Eisenhower's administration emerged relatively unscathed. The president quipped that McCarthyism had become "McCarthywasism."

### **Eisenhower on civil rights**

Eisenhower's approach to civil rights was to proceed cautiously. Yet during his presidency the civil rights movement would gain purpose, focus and momentum. The defining moment of the civil rights movement was May 17, 1954, with the Supreme Court's landmark decision in "Brown vs. Board of Education". In this ruling, that supported the 14th Amendment and overturned Plessy vs. Ferguson (1899), Chief Justice Earl Warren declared "separate but unequal" unconstitutional in public schools. Eisenhower had appointed Warren as Chief Justice in 1953 believing him to be a conservative but Warren was, in fact, a liberal and judicial activist. The decision was based on Warren's belief in the Court's responsibility to protect individual rights against the power of the state and a commitment to social justice. If the president was reluctant to proceed with more advanced legislation on civil rights, the Supreme Court had made it clear that it would take the lead. Eisenhower said that appointing Warren was the biggest mistake he made. Nevertheless, the president was in a tight spot. He responded publically that "federal law imposed on the states in such a way as to bring about a conflict. ... would set back the cause of progress in race relations for a long time." He wanted gradual reform rather than imposing federal power on states reluctant to desegregate schools. In this he was wrong.

Unless forced to change, many states simply ignored the decision. As an example of this, in 1957, the president passed a voting rights protection bill, but it was toothless, requiring allegation of voting

rights breaches to be adjudicated by jury trial. It was conflict that would eventually accelerate change. That same year, in Little Rock Arkansas, nine black students went to register at Central High School and were stopped by an unruly mob. State officials refused to act and Eisenhower sent in the army. The students went to school and the troops remained the entire school year. In 1958, the graduating class included African Americans for the first time. Most importantly, Eisenhower used executive authority to continue Truman's initiative to desegregate the government and the military. He believed that gradual reform and change would in the long run serve the national interest better than open conflict and federal government fiat. As he put it, nothing good ever came from hitting a man over the head. Yet, at best, he was a half-hearted supporter of civil rights.

### Eisenhower's domestic policies: an assessment

Eisenhower's middle of the road approach was the right one for the majority of US citizens in the 1950s. It was a popular approach, as evidenced by Eisenhower's consistently high approval ratings. The hands-off approach to the economy and his motivation to expand and improve the nation's infrastructure were a winning combination.

### The new frontier: John F. Kennedy, 1961–63

November 22, 1963: Dallas, Texas. President Kennedy was touring the city in an open Cadillac. Seated beside him was the regal and elegant first lady, Jacqueline Kennedy. Texas governor John Connally sat in

#### John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917–1963)

John F. Kennedy was the second of nine children born to Joseph and Rose Kennedy. He was the first Irishman and the first Catholic to hold office as president of the United States. Named after his grandfather, John Francis Fitzgerald, mayor of Boston, he was nicknamed Jack. A sickly child, he contracted scarlet fever and other maladies, and was administered the last rites three times. His father, Joseph Kennedy, was driven to overcome the stigma of being an Irish Catholic. He became a millionaire and wanted his sons to enter public office. The oldest son, Joe Junior, handsome, athletic and personable, seemed like the most likely choice, in comparison to his sickly younger brother Jack who was bookish and withdrawn. Jack attended Choate Boarding School for boys and excelled in history and English, his favourite subjects, but was better known for his unruly behaviour and lack of ambition. His father reprimanded Jack: "I will not be disappointed if you don't turn out to be a real genius, but I think you can be a really worthwhile citizen with good judgment and understanding." Jack attended Princeton University but was forced to withdraw after contracting Addison's disease. He had recovered by 1936 when he joined Joe Junior at Harvard. In 1937 Joseph Kennedy became ambassador to England (an unusual choice considering he was an avowed Anglophobe.) Jack took an instant interest in European politics and when war broke wrote

a best seller *Why England Slept* (1940). Joe and Jack enlisted in the Navy. Joe became a pilot and went to Europe hunting U-boats; Jack to the Pacific as the skipper of the torpedo boat P.T. 109; sunk by the Japanese in 1943.

Seriously injuring his back he nevertheless managed to avoid capture, saved his crew and was decorated for bravery and leadership. Joe was killed in 1944 flying on a secret mission. Post-war Jack ran for Congress in 1946 and served three terms. In 1952 he was elected as Senator from Massachusetts. In 1953 he married Jacqueline Bouvier. They had two children, Caroline (1957) and John Jr (1960). In 1956 he was nearly selected as vice-presidential candidate. In 1957, recovering from back surgery, he wrote the Pulitzer Prize winning *Profiles in Courage* (although a co-author was confirmed in 2008) In July 1960 he was nominated as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency, and became President, defeating Richard Nixon. The election was notable for featuring the first nationally televised debate. President Kennedy (JFK as he was known) was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963. The events surrounding JFK's assassination remain a source of historical controversy, speculation and debate 50 years on.



the front seat. The visit had gone very well. Texans seemed to endorse the president's civil rights bill. As the cavalcade swung in front of the Texas library book depository building, shots rang out, Kennedy was killed almost instantly and Connally was seriously wounded.

In 1983, 20 years after that infamous day, polls found that 60% of US citizens considered Kennedy the most appealing of nine presidents since Herbert Hoover (1928–32). Second place was Franklin Delano Roosevelt at 49%. This is hardly surprising. Kennedy's suave demeanour, handsome features, his elegant and beautiful wife and their small children seemed the perfect US family. Pundits called it Camelot, after the Broadway play depicting King Arthur's court—a magical time of love, hope, elegance and opportunity. The same poll also found that people in the United States considered Kennedy to be ahead of FDR as "Best in domestic policy" and that he "Cared most about the elderly, the poor and those in the most economic trouble." Assessing the actual impact and success of the president's domestic policy is difficult because of his early assassination and the sense of unfulfilled promise that surrounds Kennedy's presidency.

Early in his presidency, Kennedy followed in the footsteps of his predecessors Truman and Eisenhower. He was reluctant to advance major reforms preferring to go slowly on important issues like poverty and civil rights. It was only in the third year, following the Cuban Missile Crisis, that he finally displayed the courage and ideological leadership that he had promised in his inaugural address in 1961. In his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination in 1960, Kennedy set the stage for his presidency:

We stand on the edge of a New Frontier—the frontier of unfulfilled hopes and dreams, a frontier of unknown opportunities and beliefs in peril. Beyond that frontier are uncharted areas of science and space, unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered problems of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus.

The "New Frontier" was Kennedy's catchphrase to chart a new course for the United States and determine the direction of economic and social programs and policies. It represented the New Deal and the Fair Deal and his determination to continue the legacy of Democratic presidents in generating renewal, reform and change. Specifically, Kennedy wanted to alleviate poverty, raise the minimum wage, guarantee equal pay, promote urban renewal, initiate the Peace Corps and provide medical care for the elderly. He reaffirmed the notion of service and duty to the nation and the world; and a belief in social justice. Kennedy's New Frontier promised much but delivered little. He was unwilling to put his popularity at risk over domestic matters.

Kennedy recruited the "brightest and best." Yet, for all their credentials, his administration stumbled on domestic policy. The Cold War, Berlin, Cuba and a host of other foreign entanglements monopolized Kennedy's time and effort. As one former aide said, every day was a new crisis. At the center of this was Kennedy, who unlike Eisenhower, seemed to revel in taking centre

*And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the Freedom of Man.*

John F. Kennedy,  
inaugural address, 1961



stage on every major issue. He was a self-proclaimed "idealist without illusion." Problem-solving, Kennedy style, was to find a technical solution to a problem: establish a program, set up a committee, investigate alternatives. These were his tactics and the tactics of those he recruited to cabinet and as aides. He considered himself a pragmatist and did not champion futile causes. The New Frontier's ideological centerpiece, the Peace Corps, was intended to help improve the image of the United States overseas. The Peace Corps recruited thousands of young people in the US for overseas service in disadvantaged regions of the world. It earned Kennedy the admiration of the first wave of baby boomers.

Kennedy's other measures included an increase in the minimum wage, a federal housing act, a development act for rural areas and a tax cut. His reform efforts, however, experienced limited advance in a conservative Congress. Congress eventually passed about half of the six hundred bills Kennedy proposed in his first two years but these did not represent the important half. Congress raised the minimum hourly wage from \$1 to \$1.25 and approved \$4.9 billion in urban renewal grants. Notably, however, Kennedy's big ticket items were defeated, including Medicare, mass transit and education. Many of Kennedy's programs would find new life in President Johnson's Great Society programs.

### **Kennedy's new economics**

In the Senate, Kennedy had consulted with academic economists and continued the practice as president, appointing several academics as advisors. He ended a period of tight fiscal management and balanced budgets to keep interest rates down and sponsor economic growth. At the time of his inauguration unemployment was at 7%, double the rate during the 1950s. The debate over the reasons for the increase in unemployment was important. Unlike Eisenhower's administration, which attributed spikes to changes in demographics and labor markets, Kennedy's advisors argued that spikes were part of the economy's cyclical nature and resulted from shortfalls in the demand for goods and services. The president's position on the debate determined the methods for recovery. In his first budget, he would side with those advocating a balanced budget and was encouraged by an upturn in the economy. Tax reform was next, and in 1962 he agreed to a tax cut to bolster the economy in an effort to stimulate private investments. The federal deficit was nearly \$12 billion, but the tax cut had the desired effect and stimulated the economy. GDP, which had faltered at the end of the Eisenhower years, now averaged 5.5% in 1961–63. As well, industry enjoyed healthy growth, inflation stayed under control and unemployment fell. Yet it remains a matter of debate whether Kennedy's deficit model of financing was beneficial in the long term. The resulting government deficits, carrying with it heavy interest payments and high rates of inflation, together stifled rather than stimulated the economy.

### **Kennedy on civil rights**

There is little doubt that Kennedy owed his electoral victory to his courtship of the African American community by orchestrating the release of Martin Luther King from jail on the eve of the 1960

election. However, at first the best that can be said is that Kennedy postponed taking action on civil rights because he understood that Congress would not support him. He did not want to alienate southern Democratic senators whose support he needed in other areas. Civil rights legislation in 1961 would have failed. His most significant measures had been the appointment of the African American jurist, Thurgood Marshall, to the Supreme Court. Marshall was the lawyer who had successfully argued the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling. Kennedy implemented measures to remove racial discrimination in the federal government and the issuance of federal contracts. The Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, JFK's younger brother, aggressively employed the power of the Justice Department to enforce voter registration legislation. The response in the south was bombings, violence and a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. While more interested in advancing the civil rights agenda than Truman or Eisenhower, Kennedy was not moving fast enough for the civil rights movement itself.

By the early 1960s, the civil rights movement had come of age and was gaining momentum. The leadership was experienced, intelligent and dedicated. Under the charismatic Martin Luther King, they were organized and had radicalized the discontent millions of southern African Americans into action. Espousing a philosophy of non-violent political disobedience, they used strikes, marches and sit-ins across the south to foment change. In May 1963, TV coverage of white policemen beating black marchers in Birmingham, Alabama, stunned millions of white Americans and forced Kennedy to take action.

The Alabama governor, George Wallace, was an ardent segregationist and refused to allow African American students to register at the University of Alabama, defying court-ordered desegregation. Kennedy tried to convince Wallace to change his mind and avoid violent confrontation. Wallace publically stated that he would personally stop the students entering the university. Two black students were about to try and register at Alabama. On June 11, 1963, with cameras rolling and the troops watching, Wallace stood by the door and the students entered. Wallace had kept his defiance symbolic, avoided violence and made it appear that he, not the president, was in charge. Hot on the heels of the incident, Kennedy spoke to the nation in a television address that would forever change race relations in the United States.

The heart of the question is whether all Americans are to be afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public, if he cannot send his children to the best public school available, if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him, if, in short, he cannot enjoy the full and free life which all of us want, then who among us would be content to have the color of his skin changed and stand in his place? Who among us would then be content with the counsels of patience and delay?

National legislation would be enacted to move civil rights from the street to the courthouse. Kennedy proposed a liberal answer—the obligation of the federal government to take action when it was beyond a reasonable doubt that local officials and state governments were unwilling and unable to protect the constitutional rights and freedoms for all citizens. In Kennedy's view, the Bill of Rights took precedence over the sovereignty of local government and he had sworn an oath as president to protect the Constitution. As he stated:

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is a land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes?

The civil rights movement had also forced his hand. Black leaders were no longer willing to accept White House calls for restraint and gradual change. No more waiting; they demanded action now. The defining moment of the civil rights movement had come. Kennedy knew his bold speech would have a political price. He had ignored his advisors pleas to soften the speech and by sticking to his guns had effectively lost the south in the next election. He feared that without strong action the civil rights movement would become more aggressive, leading to more violence and damage to property, something average citizens would not tolerate. He wanted to control events, not react to them. The proposed Civil Rights Act reinvigorated Kennedy's administration. In an interesting twist, Congress strengthened the Act giving Kennedy more than he asked. May 1963 was a turning point in Kennedy's presidency showing for the first time on the domestic front the vigorous, intelligent and determined leadership he'd displayed many times on the international stage. He also introduced an economic program to address poverty and other inequalities. He had made the connection

### Activity

#### TOK Link

What knowledge of history might be gained by focusing attention on each of the following?

- the historian
- historical documents and written history
- the readership, and the social, cultural and historical context.

November 22, 1963: It is said that anyone old enough to remember that day knows exactly where they were when they heard the news of President Kennedy's death. Kennedy's assassination is deeply ingrained in the national memory and mythology of the United States. Controversy over the details of his death continues today.

#### Exercise

Assess the impact of the following events on the memory and national mythology of the United States. Interview people that you know who remember the event, and who may have either witnessed it first hand, or through the media. What about your own experiences? Based on your research, what observations and conclusions can you make about the importance of history in shaping our lives?

- The bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 7, 1941
- Kennedy's assassination, Dallas, Texas, November 22, 1963
- The terrorist attack on the Twin Towers, New York City, September 11, 2001

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between political and economic equality and set out to balance both sides of the equation. His new program had three prongs: civil rights; an end to poverty; the promotion of peace at home and abroad. In the final days of his life, JFK had set America on a new course. The tragedy is that he did not live to see it take root.

### **“The Great Society”: Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1963–69**

November 22, 1963: Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson was sworn in as the 36th president of the United States aboard Air Force One, just hours after President Kennedy’s assassination. Next to him was the aggrieved widow of the former president. Five days later, President Johnson addressed Congress and the nation “I will do my best, that is all I can do!” Then, he set the stage for what was to come: “We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. ... It is now time to write it in the books of laws.” He was determined to show the nation that he was in charge and prepared to continue Kennedy’s work. JFK’s untimely death opened a window of opportunity that he was prepared to exploit. In private, he revealed his plan to “take the dead man’s program and turn it into a martyr’s cause.”

In May 1964, five months after taking office, Johnson introduced his program to give a hand-up, not a hand-out to disadvantaged groups. Speaking at the graduation ceremony at the University of Michigan, he used the occasion to declare his vision of the Great Society and present himself as the great reformer.

The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to rich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization. The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But this is just the beginning ...

He identified three issues central to the Great Society: the need to resurrect and reclaim urban life, and achieve a greater quality of life for all its citizens; to update, upgrade and preserve the rural heritage, ensuring future generations enjoyed clean water, clean air, and the natural environment; and to guarantee equal access to a high-quality education from kindergarten to college. President Johnson would build on the legacy of the New Deal and Fair Deal. He would enact Kennedy’s civil and voting rights bills that upheld the constitutional rights of all citizens. He would declare war on poverty through education and locally initiated, federally funded, economic improvement plans; head-start classes for pre-school children and tuition loans for high school graduates. He would provide decent housing, medical care for the elderly and take the first steps to cleaning up polluted cities and waterways. It was a bold vision.

### **Activity**

#### **The assassination of a US President**

Compare and contrast the assassinations of presidents Lincoln and Kennedy and its relative social, cultural and historical impact on the United States.



Lyndon B. Johnson being sworn-in aboard Air Force One by Federal Judge Sarah T. Hughes. Lady Bird Johnson is on his right and Jacqueline Kennedy on his left.

### Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908–1973)

Lyndon Baines Johnson was the first child of Sam and Rebek Johnson, and grew up on the family homestead in Texas, where he was raised in a comfortable setting but surrounded by rural poverty. He graduated from high school at 15 and became a teacher, working in poor neighbourhoods of mainly Mexican descent. In 1934 he married Claudia "Lady Bird" Taylor, and had two daughters Lynda Bird (1944) and Luci Baines (1947). He entered the House of Representatives in 1937 and the senate in 1948. Arguably the most successful US senator of all time, one colleague stated that he never saw Johnson win a debate on the floor of the senate but never saw him lose one behind closed doors. This became known as the "Johnson Treatment" or the "Johnson way". He was able to create consensus behind closed doors, by bullying, blackmailing and charming opponents as required. He could be ruthless one instant and beguiling the next. Tall and lanky, he towered over his target gesticulating with his big hands as a force to be reckoned with. He revelled in power politics and would use any means at his disposal to get his way. Johnson was Senate Minority Leader in 1953,



and Senate Majority Leader 1955–61. In 1960 he lost the Democratic Party presidential nomination to Kennedy but became vice-president. He became president of the United States on November 22, 1963 (JFK's assassination). Elected president in 1964, he defeated Republican nominee Barry Goldwater. As president he oversaw the escalation of America's war effort in Vietnam and on the domestic front focused on the implementation of his program for the "Great Society", through declaring a war on poverty. In effect, he lost both wars and did not seek reelection in 1968. Johnson (LBJ as he was also known) died of a heart attack on his Texas Ranch, January 22, 1973, age 64. Johnson's presidential legacy remains a source of great controversy. During one of the most turbulent periods in American history, he tried (and ultimately failed) to defeat communist aggression in South East Asia and defeat poverty and erase racism in America.

Fate had given Johnson the presidency, and he made use of it to pass a frenzy of legislation at a rate never witnessed before or since.

In 1964, Johnson had declared war on racism and poverty. He knew how to outflank the Republican Party's penchant for blocking social legislation that they believed expanded the power and reach of the federal government, diminished state sovereignty and expanded the influence of the Democratic Party. Johnson's vision was impressive, ambitious, wide-reaching and ultimately unattainable. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, foreign affairs would temporarily take a back seat to domestic policy. Unlike Roosevelt or Truman, whose initiatives foundered on the Senate floor, Johnson knew how to steer legislation through Congress. Buoyed by his election in November 1964, when he soundly defeated ultra-conservative Republican candidate Barry Goldwater, and with the Democrats in control of Congress Johnson, in 1964 and 1965, worked on over 200 pieces of "Great Society" legislation. The list is impressive for its courage and vision, and included:

- Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voters Rights Act (1965)
- Medicare and Medicaid
- Social Security benefits—increased payments
- Elementary and Secondary School Acts (build schools in underprivileged areas)
- Student Loans (assist High School graduates with college tuition)
- Head Start programs: prepare pre-school children for school
- Affirmative Action: saving a place for historically disadvantaged peoples and groups
- Immigration Act of 1965—opened the doors to non-European immigrants.
- Economic Opportunity Act (1965)

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- Tax cuts and deficit spending to ensure economic growth and employment
- Environmental protection and regulation; first clean air and water initiatives, created 37 new national parks and reclaimed polluted land
- Established the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and provided support for the arts.

The Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voters Rights Act (1965) were the centerpiece of Johnson's program for reform. Initiated by Kennedy, Johnson was able to improve both Acts by allowing them to foment in Congress. He needed 27 votes to end debate on the Civil Rights Act and used the "Johnson touch" to convince reluctant senators of both parties to join the civil rights movement and vote for the bills. It was a triumph that had eluded Truman and Kennedy.

The Civil Rights Act outlawed de jure (legalized) segregation and discrimination and legislated equal access in restaurants, hotels, bars, and buses. It had been a long time coming but finally the hopes and dreams of African Americans had been realized. Martin Luther King's "dream" had come true. The political cost was high. The Democratic Party, Johnson believed, had lost the south for a generation. The 1965 Voters Rights Act outlawed the pernicious voter registration tactics employed in the south to disenfranchise black voters (such as head taxes and literacy tests). Jim Crow laws were gone and millions of southern African Americans would vote for the first time. The backlash was violent and when a civil rights worker was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan, Johnson warned the "hooded society of bigots" that such acts would not be tolerated.

A century after the civil war, the promise of political and social equality and liberty for all citizens had finally become a reality. It should have guaranteed Johnson's legacy as the man who finished what Lincoln started. But the president's blindspot was that he passed the Great Society legislation often with little regard for the programs the laws would create. "Get it done now" was the administration's motto. Johnson knew the honeymoon with Congress had a short shelf life.

One example of the difficulties of implementing these new funding initiatives were the Title I Education Grants, targeting school improvement in poor districts. The grants were given to the local school boards who were to use the money for local improvements. But in many cases the monies did not reach the target audience, and was frittered away on minor programs. In Fresno, California, the money was used to purchase a classroom TV system for the entire district. And in Camden, New Jersey, the money was spent on physical education. According to Historian Alan Matusow, Johnson believed that "Title I was an anti-poverty program. The local school districts made sure it was not."

The most controversial program was the Office of Economic Opportunity created under the Economic Opportunity Act (1965). It oversaw a range of programs on poverty, notably Head Start programs, the Community Action Program (CAP), healthcare, housing and unemployment relief. In many ways CAP was a

conservative approach to eliminating poverty. It was to be a grass-roots initiative, empowering and encouraging local communities to confront their own economic malaise and work to change the ingrained defeatist attitudes of the urban poor. The programs were to be local, autonomous and self-managed, providing the training, skills, education and assistance for low-income groups to build a better life. This included better housing and schools. But the program ran into a turf war with local governments who resented the presence of the federal government in their communities. Conservatives claimed CAP was the federal government's foot in the door in local matters. Liberals thought Johnson was not doing enough and should simply end poverty. But Johnson wanted not just to ensure equality of opportunity for all citizens of the United States, but to ensure that the initiatives under CAP would guarantee equality of outcome as well. The entitlement age had begun.

### Activity

#### Assessing the Great Society

##### Success or failure?

Historians continue to debate the merits of LBJ's Great Society. In this activity you will examine the views of historians and contemporary commentators to develop your own assessment of the Great Society, and its impact on:

- poverty
- life expectancy
- public health
- education
- the arts
- voter's rights.

##### Making an assessment

To what extent do you consider the Great Society to have been a success or a failure? Refer to the areas of focus, the views of the historians quoted here, and undertake additional research on the specific programs.

##### Historian's views

##### Source A

Joseph A. Califano, a former Johnson aide and speech writer.

... he reminded the American people that God and history would judge us not just on how much the Gross Domestic product grew but on how we spent it. ... Throughout all the distractions of the most serious of times, Johnson never lost focus on the price and promise of the Great Society ...

No President ever cared more, tried harder or helped more needy americans.

**Source:** Joseph A. Califano quote from: *Taking sides: Clashing Views in United States History since 1945*. 3rd edition (Boston, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008) p. 249

##### Source B

George McGovern, Democratic Senator and 1968 presidential candidate, who lost to Nixon.

If it had been up to Lyndon Johnson we would not have gone to Vietnam in the first place. It would be a historic tragedy if his outstanding domestic record remained forever obscured by his involvement in a war he did not begin and did not know how to stop.

**Source:** George McGovern quote from Madaras, p. 249.

### Source C

John Kenneth Galbraith, former White House economic advisor and Harvard Professor of Economics.

Next only to Franklin D. Roosevelt as a force for a civilized and civilizing social policy essential for human well being and peaceful co-existence between the economically favoured (or financially fortunate) and the poor. ... Lyndon Johnson was the most effective advocate of human and social change in the United States in this [20th] century.

**Source:** John K. Galbraith quote from Madaras, p. 249

### Source D

Murray N. Rothbard, Dean of the Austrian School of Economics.

The cruellest myth fostered by the liberals is that the Great Society functions as a great boon and benefit to the poor; in reality, when we cut through the frothy appearances to the cold reality underneath, the poor are the major victims of the welfare state. The poor are the ones to be conscripted to fight and die at literally slave wages in the Great Society's imperial wars. The poor are the ones to lose their homes to the bulldozer of urban renewal, that bulldozer that operates for the benefit of real estate and construction interests to pulverize available low-cost housing. All this, of course, in the name of "clearing the slums" and helping the aesthetics of housing. The poor are the welfare clientele whose homes are unconstitutionally but regularly invaded by government agents to ferret out sin in the middle of the night. The poor (e.g., Negroes in the South) are the ones disemployed by rising minimum wage floors, put in for the benefit of employers and unions in higher-wage areas (e.g., the North) to prevent industry from moving to the low-wage areas. The poor are cruelly victimized by an income tax that left and right alike misconstrue as an egalitarian program to soak the rich; actually, various tricks and exemptions insure that it is the poor and the middle classes who are hit the hardest. The poor are victimized, too, by a welfare state of which the cardinal macro-economic tenet is perpetual if controlled inflation.

**Source:** Murray N. Rothbard quote from: Murray N. Rothbard, *The Great Society: A Libertarian Critique* @Len Rockwell.com (<http://lewrockwell.com/rothbard/rothbard40.html>).

### Source E

The historian Bruce J. Shulman.

... for it was Lyndon Johnson himself, more than his aides or opponents or successors, who neglected the Great Society and stunted its growth. ... LBJ made two political mistakes, two fateful errors that ultimately stifled his beloved "child" [Great Society]. ... he covered up the costs of the Asian struggle [Vietnam war], economized on every domestic program and delayed a tax increase as long as possible. This strategy failed. Eventually he had to scale back the Great Society to fight the war that took up more and more of his time and energy. Second he did not anticipate the insidious political current that would further undermine [the Great Society]. ... The Civil Rights Act of 1964 had already sacrificed the votes of white southerners, Now the heart of the New Deal coalition [labor and North East ethnic whites] complained about Johnson'sk poverty program and the intensifying demands of African-Americans (i.e Black Panthers).

**Source:** Bruce J. Shulman quote from: William H. Chafe et al.: *A History of Our Time: Readings on Post-War America*, 7th edition (Oxford University Press, New York, 2008) p. 112



## Source F

The historian William H. Chafke.

No one could gainsay Johnson's achievement. He wanted to be "the greatest of them all, the whole bunch of them," and in many ways he succeeded. ... Yet in the very course of attempting to realize his dreams, Johnson exhibited fatal flaws of personality and political philosophy that contributed to his undoing. ... He alone would make it all happen. ... through personal will, his own brand of dominance on the entire nation. ... The tragedy of Lyndon Johnson was that both his personality and his political assumptions proved inadequate to the dimensions of the foreign policy and domestic tensions that would emerge during his presidency.

In the end, despite Johnson's deep personal commitment, the Great Society became a casualty of the Vietnam War. As he put it: "That bitch of a war killed the lady I really loved—The Great Society." Johnson's believed he could fight two wars simultaneously: the war against poverty and the war in Vietnam. Unfortunately, he was wrong and Vietnam overwhelmed and ultimately undermined the effectiveness of Johnson's presidency.

## The New Federalism: Richard Nixon, 1969–74

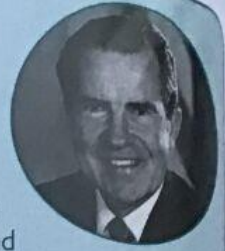
Richard Nixon effectively and shrewdly created a new conservative coalition built around patriotism, effective law enforcement, and support for middle-class values. He unquestionably had his thumb on the pulse of the nation in his perception that people were fatigued by student radicalism, the civil rights and anti-war movements, and an activist Supreme Court. His domestic policy, however, lacked the moral ascendancy of Johnson's Great Society. Nixon's approach was pragmatic. He was more interested in foreign policy and felt that this was his true calling. Nonetheless, he made advances on the home front that surprised both Republicans and Democrats. Without Watergate, it is likely that his achievements in domestic affairs would have been viewed more favorably by historians.

Nixon did not follow Eisenhower's lead and incrementally maintain or increase Democratic social welfare programs or try to manage them better. He was not interested in creating more government programs but wanted to administer existing programs differently with less federal involvement. His brand was "The New Federalism", a system that would divert money and power from the federal bureaucracy to the states and local governments. The notion was not new, Nixon had believed since arriving in Washington in 1946 that money spent at the local level would be more responsive to local needs and requirements than one-size-fits-all federal programs. His approach was **Jeffersonian**. For example, in 1972, he created the State and Local Assistance Act that initially redistributed four billion federal dollars to the states and local authorities. When the program was cancelled in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan, the total was 83 billion dollars. Not surprisingly, Nixon's plans were supported by the states and local governments and opposed by Washington bureaucrats who

**Jeffersonian democracy**, named after President Thomas Jefferson, is a political philosophy supporting a federal government with strictly controlled powers (as outlined in the US Constitution). It mandates a strong preference for the rights of state and local governments.

### Richard Milhous Nixon (1913–1994)

Richard Milhous Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, Orange County, California. From a poor background, he was a hard-working, ambitious and intelligent student. He was awarded a scholarship to Duke University, where he graduated in third place in his law class, subsequently practising law in California where he was called to the bar. During the Second World War, he was a navy lieutenant serving in a transport unit in the Pacific. After the war he ran for Congress as a Republican and was elected to the House in 1946. During the campaign he accused his Democratic opponent of taking money from a communist-dominated action committee. It became a strategy for Nixon to undermine his opponents by accusing them of communist affiliations. In this, he was an ardent cold warrior and supported McCarthy. He earned fame for his unrelenting questioning of Alger Hiss which led to Hiss's conviction for perjury and a 14-year jail term. In 1950, Nixon used smear tactics to discredit his opponents and win a Senate seat. In 1952, he became the youngest vice president in history. President Eisenhower's poor health often required Nixon to chair high-level meetings and make presidential rulings, most notably on the 1957 civil rights bill. In 1960, he won the Republican presidential nomination. During the first-ever televised presidential debate he was overshadowed by the more handsome, witty and charismatic John F. Kennedy. Despite this, he lost the election by a mere 113,000 votes out of 68 million.



He returned to law in California, wrote a best-seller, ran for governor of California in 1962 and lost. Then Nixon moved to New York City to take up a post as senior partner in a law firm. He remained a staunch Republican and gave many speeches around the country supporting Republican candidates and issues. In February 1968, he announced his bid for the presidency. During the campaign he said he had a secret plan to end the war in Vietnam; it is unclear if this plan existed or was an electoral fabrication to gain support. His campaign slogan "Nixon's the one" was very effective against opponents, Democrat Hubert H. Humphrey and independent candidate George Wallace from Alabama.

On November 5, 1968, Nixon was elected president of the United States. He took extreme measures bombing Hanoi, Cambodia and sending ground forces into Vietnam, but was unable to end the war quickly and US troops were not withdrawn until 1973. In 1972, Nixon won a second term defeating George McGovern making him the first vice president since Thomas Jefferson to win two terms as president. His second term came to an unfortunate end with the Watergate scandal. The Senate began impeachment proceedings but Nixon resigned on August 8, 1974. He died of a stroke at the age of 81 in 1994.

feared job losses and congressional politicians wanting to play Robin Hood and deliver federal monies to their constituencies.

Nixon moved quickly to shut-down "Great Society" programs that were unpopular with his party. First to go was the Office of Economic Opportunity (OED), the agency charged with leading the "war on poverty." The Community Action Program (CAP) was reorganized and other programs were shuffled to different departments, their funding reduced or cut entirely. Nixon's war on poverty took two directions. First, he proposed a family allowance program under the direction of the Urban Affairs Council. The plan would replace food stamps and Medicaid and provide a yearly subsidy of \$1,600 in direct aid to single-parent families or to a working-poor family of four. The plan was announced on August 8, 1969. It was Nixon's most radical initiative and seemed out of character for a conservative Republican President. Yet, from another vantage point, it aligned with his view that federal government funds should be distributed directly to those who would use the money and avoiding creating an intermediary layer of federal bureaucracy. Recipients would decide how to spend the money without being subject to spending rules imposed by federal case workers. Conservative opponents opposed the plan because it guaranteed an income. Organized labor opposed it because they feared it undermined the minimum wage; liberals argued that \$1,600 wasn't enough money to support a family of four and federal case

workers feared that they would lose their own jobs. Nixon was unable to get the plan approved, and as the 1972 election approached he dropped it from his agenda. In response, he increased federal support of the Food Stamp Act and Medicaid.

### **Nixon on civil rights**

Nixon wanted to slow down the civil rights movement and earn the trust and support of the south. School desegregation was first up. Nixon proposed federal funds to local districts to build new community schools. He said it was better if students walked to a nearby neighbourhood school rather than take a long bus ride to a strange part of town. For many parents this was an attractive argument, although it was a newer version of "separate but equal"—with an emphasis on equal. Federal courts disagreed and ordered desegregation to continue. Fifteen years after the Plessey ruling was overturned, nearly 70% of black children still attended segregated schools. Nixon complied with the court order and moved the agenda forward with commendable speed; by 1970, less than 10% of black school children attended all-black schools. Nixon was a capable politician. He could assuage the south that his hands were tied by activist courts, and he could show the liberal elements in the nation that he supported the civil rights movement.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was up for renewal in 1970 and the president wanted its provisions extended to all states to avoid "discriminating" against the south. Next, he wanted state courts empowered to adjudicate alleged voting-rights violations instead of federal courts. This initiative was scuttled by Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee, but was followed up by the revisions of a bipartisan committee that extended voting rights to 18-year-olds. Despite these apparent setbacks, Nixon's efforts convinced many southerners to support him.

Nixon also supported the women's movement and the Equal Rights Amendment, and despite considerable opposition increased the number of women holding high rank in the government. He created the Presidential Task Force on Women's Rights and ordered the Justice Department to prosecute sexual discrimination cases under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII prohibited employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. In addition, he ordered the Labor Department to add sexual discrimination guidelines to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance.

Finally, the Philadelphia Plan was a Labor Department initiative to provide training and employment opportunities for minorities. Federally funded, the government used racial classifications and quotas in these desegregation programs. Affirmative action, and a liberal program, had been initiated by a Republican president.

### **Nixon on the environment**

On Earth Day, April 22, 1970, millions of people in the United States took to the streets to raise environmental awareness and Nixon the environmental activist was born. Over the next four years, Nixon sent many groundbreaking pieces of environmental legislation to Congress. The centerpiece was the National Environment Policy Act (1969) which gave birth to the Clean Air Act (1970) that for the first

time addressed auto emissions and the Water Pollution Act (1972). The Environmental Protection Agency, established in 1970, remains an important agency today. Nixon also created the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the "Legacy of Parks" program (another New Federalist initiative) that transferred federal lands to the states to establish parks, beaches and recreational areas. It was impressive work for a man who previously had shown little or no interest in the environment. Again, it was Nixon the pragmatist. He responded to public opinion and ended up developing a program that was ahead of its time.

### Nixon on economics

During his first term in office Nixon had to confront rampant inflation. On several occasions Nixon would impose temporary wage and price controls to slow inflation. The measures were popular with voters tired of **price gouging** but not so with the business sector. The economy was floundering, beset by inflation, and the first trade deficit since the First World War. Unemployment was also on the increase. Economics was not Nixon's favourite area but he came to realize its importance and in 1971 declared his conversion to **Keynesian economics**. First, he took the unusual step of appointing former Texas Democratic governor, John Connally, as Secretary of the Treasury. On Sunday August 15, Nixon announced his "New Economic Policy" that contained wage and price controls, abandonment of the gold standard, depreciation of the dollar and deficit spending. It was a brilliant political move. Whether these measures were in the nation's best interests long term was not Nixon's primary concern. He was concerned about reelection and needed the economy to be running effectively. Specifically, he added a 10% surcharge on import duty—notably on oil imports, which would lead to shortages during his second term. Prices, wages and rents were frozen for 90 days to be followed by a more flexible and lasting system of price controls. The public approved of Nixon's economic measures, deflected the criticism of the Democratic Party, while also confounding Republicans who advocated market-driven solutions and control of the money supply, rather than direct intervention. As his advisors predicted, the effect on the market was immediate and on Monday August 16 the stock market made the biggest single day's gains in its history. The economy took off and Nixon was reelected in 1972. Social Security and Medicaid payments increased significantly during the first term from 6.3% of the **GNP** to 8.9%. This was due in large part to more people applying and qualifying for benefits. At the same time, defense spending dropped from 9.1% to 5.8% of the GNP. Overall, economic growth was sound but not spectacular, inflation remained problematic and unemployment rates remained low. But the improvement in the economy did not last long.

The economy became volatile due to the Yom Kippur War (October 1973) and the artificial oil shortage created by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The oil nations wanted more money per barrel and so created an artificial shortage that increased the price at the petrol pumps tenfold. Not surprisingly, the stock markets reacted negatively to the continuation of price controls, notably on petroleum. In the final days of his presidency, Nixon was working on a national health insurance program that would have required employers provide employees health insurance and a

**Price gouging** refers to the practice of raising prices to a level that is not considered reasonable or fair at times of peak or extraordinary demand. It is a crime in some states of the United States if applied to essential goods and services during civil emergencies.

**Keynesian economics** advocates a greater role for central banks and the government in monetary policy.

**GNP** is the value of all the goods and services produced by the citizens of a given country, both inside and outside the country.

federal healthcare plan similar to Medicaid. Although Nixon had a think tank of conservative economists, notably Milton Friedman, providing economic advice based on market solutions and monetary policy, many of the programs he implemented were interventionist and seemed more New Deal than the New Deal.

### The Watergate scandal

The Watergate scandal was a result of Nixon's desperation to achieve a second term in office. Surrounded by a band of ruthless and loyal operatives, they employed every dirty trick in the book to derail the Democratic campaign. Disguised as the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) millions of dollars were diverted from Republican coffers to finance their defamation campaign and dirty deeds. And they succeeded. Nixon won, destroying the Democratic candidate, George McGovern, by winning 49 states outright. But for a vigilant night watchman at the Watergate Hotel, they might have got away with it.

Members of CREEP planned a break-in of the Democratic campaign headquarters at the Watergate Hotel, an exclusive location in Georgetown. The plan was to install phone wiretaps and listening devices but they were caught and arrested. Two *Washington Post* reporters tracked a trail of hush money that led to the **Oval Office** aided by a secret White House informant code-named "Deep-throat". The drama reached its peak during the Senate Watergate Committee hearings. This bipartisan committee interrogated Nixon aides and gathered evidence that would lead to the indictment of 40 high-ranking members of Nixon's administration, including his closest and most prominent advisors—Haldeman and Erlichman. Nixon steadfastly claimed his innocence and distanced himself from the guilty. But, eventually, it became apparent that Nixon was privy to the break-in, if not before then shortly after. The infamous White House tapes also revealed a seedy side to Nixon's personality, notably his foul language and bigotry. **Impeachment** proceedings initiated in the House of Representatives forced Nixon's resignation in August 1974.

As a result of Watergate, the presidency was tarnished, some feared permanently. Yet, in another sense, it was a crowning moment for the United States. The constitution had worked as intended and the checks and balances designed to prevent the abuse of executive power eventually overwhelmed Nixon. In later life, he blamed a conspiracy of the left, particularly the media, for destroying his presidency.

The **Oval Office**, located in the West Wing of the White House, is the official office of the president of the United States.

**Impeachment** is the process of charging a public official over misconduct in office. There are strict terms of what constitutes an impeachable offense or misdemeanor in the US presidential office.

### Activity

#### The domestic policies of presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon: 1945–74

Based on your understanding of the domestic policies of the presidents noted above, address the following questions. Further research may be necessary.

	Truman (Fair Deal)	Eisenhower (Middle way)	Kennedy (New frontier)	Johnson (Great Society)	Nixon (New Federalism)
Main features of domestic program					
Successes					
Failures and criticism					
Civil rights record					

5 • Political developments in the Americas after the Second World War, 1945–79

**Questions**

Complete the chart before answering the following questions:

- 1 Compare and contrast the domestic policies of any two US presidents from 1945–74.
- 2 “McCarthyism, for all its faults and excesses, successfully rooted out the threat of communist infiltration in the US government.” To what extent do you agree with this view?
- 3 “The legacy of government intervention in the daily lives of US citizens is the real legacy of the domestic policies of Truman and Johnson.” Assess and evaluate the validity of this statement.
- 4 “In the 1940s and 1950s the majority of people living in the United States enjoyed an improvement in their standard of living that was unmatched in US economic history. However, this new prosperity did not include all citizens of the United States.” With reference to two presidents, analyze efforts to share the wealth across all sectors of US society.
- 5 Why were Truman and Eisenhower reluctant supporters of the civil rights movement?
- 6 “Kennedy only began to take domestic policy seriously as he prepared for the election of 1963.” What evidence is there to support and to oppose this statement?
- 7 Without Watergate, Nixon’s domestic record would be remembered as more important than Johnson’s Great Society.” Agree or disagree and explain why.
- 8 To what extent do you believe the domestic policies of these presidents has made the United States a better place? What else could or should they have done?

## Canada’s domestic policies: Diefenbaker to Clark

**Canadian prime ministers, 1945–84**

William Lyon Mackenzie King	Liberal Party	1935–1948
Louis Stephen Saint-Laurent	Liberal Party	1948–1957
John George Diefenbaker	Conservative Party	1957–1963
Lester Bowles Pearson	Liberal Party	1963–1968
Pierre Elliot Trudeau	Liberal Party	1968–1979; 1980–1984
Charles Joseph Clark	Conservative Party	1979–1980

Six men occupied 24 Sussex Drive, the official residence of the Canadian prime minister in the capital city of Ottawa, between 1945 and 1979. The Liberal Party dominated, holding power for 28 of the 34 years and was only out of office twice. Not surprisingly, they were considered to be “the Government Party” and had come to believe that what was good for the Liberal Party was good for Canada. One Liberal Party prime minister dominated the era, William Lyon Mackenzie King. First elected prime minister in 1922, King held office until 1948, with the exception of the period 1930–35.

King’s leadership during the Second World War was the most significant period of his command. In 1939, he led Canada into war, relatively unprepared, and with a small military and an economy still reeling from the Depression. By the end of the war, over one million Canadians had served in the armed forces out of a total population of 12 million. Per capita war production in both the industrial and agricultural sectors equalled the United Kingdom and was ahead of the United States. When the war ended, Canadians