

6

The Cold War and the Americas, 1945–1981

This chapter looks at the Americas between 1945–81, a period that, as stated in the IB Diploma Programme History Guide, “was dominated by the global conflict of the Cold War.” The Cold War is often studied as a contest of ideology, diplomatic movements, military activities, and political actions involving two protagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union, locked in a contest for dominance across the Eurasian land mass, focused on Central Europe and far eastern Asia. From its beginnings, the Cold War policies of the two superpowers, especially the United States, had significant and continuing effects on the countries of the Americas, from Argentina and Chile in the south, to the islands of the Caribbean, and to Canada in the north.

While the United States pursued policies designed to solidify the region as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and communism, some nations of the region chose to oppose the US, others to closely ally themselves with their large Northern neighbor, while several charted a neutral path. Regardless, Cold War pressures affected all countries in the Americas, significantly contributing to domestic agendas and the response to international events, from economic policies through to intervention in civil wars.

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

- assess the policies of President Truman, containment and its implications for the Americas; the rise of McCarthyism and its effects on domestic and foreign policies of the United States; the Cold War and its impact on society and culture
- discuss the involvement of the Americas in the Korean War: the reasons for participation; military developments; diplomatic and political outcomes of the conflict
- review the policies of President Eisenhower and US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles: the reasons for the New Look, its implementation and repercussions for the region
- understand the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War: the reasons for the conflict, nature of the involvement at different stages; domestic effects and the end of the war.
- evaluate US foreign policies from presidents Kennedy to Carter including, the characteristics of, and reasons for these policies and their implications for the region: Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress; Nixon’s covert operations and Chile; Carter’s quest for human rights and the Panama Canal Treaty
- understand the effects of the Cold War in Chile: the reasons for foreign and domestic policies, and their implementation.

This chapter is organized to cover the Cold War in the Americas across several main areas. A significant focus is placed on the policies and actions of United States’ presidents from Harry Truman to Jimmy

Carter. This section looks at specific foreign policies, their repercussions for the region, the actions of the affected countries (including Chile, Guatemala, Panama, and Cuba), and, importantly, the domestic effects of Cold War politics on the United States. A case study of Chile sheds detailed light on domestic and foreign policies of the nation, but will also serve as an example of the effects of the Cold War on Latin American countries. The chapter also examines the involvement of the United States and the Americas in two wars, Korea and Vietnam. It is important to study this chapter with an eye towards the Cold War as a world phenomenon, by seeking to understand the ebb and flow of global tension through its effects on one region as a whole. In addition, this chapter strongly supports and extends Standard Level topic 5 on the Cold War. It also complements topic 1 through its examination of the Korean and Vietnam wars, and other conflicts throughout the Americas, while contributing to a greater understanding of topics 2 and 3 in studying the conduct of both democratic and single-party states.

Containment under President Truman

Looking back 20 years after the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the effectiveness of President Truman's policy of containment as a means of combating the influence of Soviet-style communism appears to be confirmed. The policy of what became known as containment influenced relations between the United States and its hemispheric neighbors, dominating attitudes towards Latin America. The battle against communism was located in not only the official defense and foreign policy of the United States, but also in a multifaceted effort to rid the homeland of any influences of communism, an effort that began with the Red Scares following the First World War, and peaked with the McCarthyist tactics of the 1950s. The fight against communism influenced popular culture, making its way into films, plays, and even television cartoons. The Truman years set the stage for the Cold War abroad and at home.

Activity

Policies of US presidents Truman to Carter.

Create a chart similar to the one below. Expand cells as necessary.

President	Policy	Explanation	Effect in Americas
Truman	Containment		
Eisenhower	New Look		
Kennedy			
Johnson			
Nixon			
Ford			
Carter			

When the Second World War came to a close, the leaders and peoples of the nations of Latin America believed their contributions to the war effort, including subordinating and linking their economies to the needs of the United States, had earned the right to greater recognition and influence in the hemisphere. This was confirmed by the Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance and Solidarity (or Act of Chapultepec) agreement of March 1945. They looked forward to a return to, and enhancement of, Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy. The Act of Chapultepec guaranteed each nation's national sovereignty and diplomatic equality. At the same time, the leaders of the United States came to focus on Europe and Asia, treating their Latin American neighbors almost as an afterthought. As the Cold War developed, the Truman administration and the nations of Latin America met diplomatically several times, including at international conferences in Rio de Janeiro (1947) and Bogotá (1948). At these conferences the differences in the views of the United States and its southern neighbors, most significantly in terms of the relationship between economic aid and development and hemispheric defense concerns, became increasingly apparent.

While the countries of Latin America looked at postwar relations with the United States in a hemispheric and global context, for the most part the Truman administration saw them through the lens of the Cold War. Stability, not democracy, became a goal in the fight against communism. The United States would assist Latin America when the US felt threatened in the region. From 1946 to 1950, Latin America received only 2% of US overseas aid, and almost all was military in nature; this, despite the emphasis of the State Department on greater economic support for hemispheric neighbors. Just a year after signing the Act of Chapultepec, the United States violated several provisions by interfering in the internal affairs of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. The following year, 1947, the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (commonly known as the Rio Treaty) was signed. The Rio Treaty seemed to move towards hemispheric military cooperation with a shared vision that was anti-communist, at least from the point of view of the United States, as off-the-record fears of possible communist advances were communicated to US diplomats by Argentina and Brazil. That year Brazil, Chile, and Cuba banned communist organizations and cut off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Over the next year, several South American and Caribbean governments turned away from democratic systems to more autocratic and right-leaning regimes. The United States government interpreted the Rio Treaty as allowing a larger role for itself, essentially rolling back some of the provisions of the Act of Chapultepec. The Truman administration felt it was imperative that Latin America was becoming important as it needed to remain non-communist and friendly to the global goals of the United States. To many people in Latin America, the Rio Treaty was a potential disaster. As Narciso Bassols García, a Mexican jurist and political commentator put it, the worst thing about the treaty signed in Rio de Janeiro was that Latin American countries became "compulsory automatic allies of the United States." In the eyes of many Latin Americans, the nations of the region were falling into Truman's

containment plan without any choice, and without receiving any reciprocal benefits.

While Latin American nations were clamoring for economic assistance, the United States continued to press for a united approach to hemispheric defense and paid scant attention to social-economic issues. The Policy Planning Staff of the State Department understood the Latin American perspective, enunciated in a February 1948 anonymous memo that expressed the need for grants in aid, technical assistance, and an easing of the policies of the Export-Import Bank. But despite awareness of these issues, the Truman administration approached the spring 1948 Pan-American Conference in Bogotá, Colombia, with a sole focus on defense issues, leading to the formal formation of The Organization of American States (OAS) as a regional defense pact similar to NATO. In fact, US diplomats attending the conference were advised to avoid any financial commitments. The difference in perspectives was clear in the responses to the riots that occurred in Colombia during the conference. Sparked by the assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán on April 9, violent demonstrations took place across the country. While most Latin American leaders saw the demonstrations as confirmation of the desperate state of the economy, the United States representatives believed that communist instigators were behind the riots.

The overwhelming emphasis on hemispheric defense at the expense of socio-economic advancement and support for democracy within the region might have changed for the better following Truman's inaugural address on January 20, 1949. In what became known as "Point Four programs" (it was the fourth main point of the speech) Truman announced scientific technical assistance and monetary aid to developing nations. Unlike Africa and Asia, however, Latin America received little benefit from Point Four as the administration promoted private enterprise reminiscent of long-discarded and discredited pre-FDR Dollar Diplomacy. Truman's attention was focused on Europe and the victory of the Mao-led communists in China. The monolithic Latin American policy prompted a response from Louis Joseph Halle of the State Department's Policy Planning division, who wrote an anonymous article in the July 1950 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the same periodical that published George Kennan's Mr X piece. Halle, writing as Mr Y, took the administration to task for its lack of economic support for Latin America. But the article was to have little effect as events in Asia commanded Truman's attention.

On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, resulting in the marginalization of Latin America yet again in US foreign policy while also, paradoxically, intensifying anti-communist assistance to the region. As Truman focused on containing communism in Asia; but the administration feared increased Soviet attempts to penetrate Latin America, using an emergency meeting of the OAS in early 1951 to proclaim communism as a threat to the people of the Americas. A new law, the Mutual Security Act of 1951 provided \$38 million of military assistance specifically designated for Latin America. Surplus Second World War weaponry was made available, either as aid or for

Discussion point

- 1 Why was the Truman administration unresponsive to economic concerns of Latin American countries?
- 2 To what extent would a focus by the United States on economic assistance have served the purpose of combating communism?
- 3 Why was economic assistance to Western European countries considered vital by the United States, but not so for the countries of Latin America?

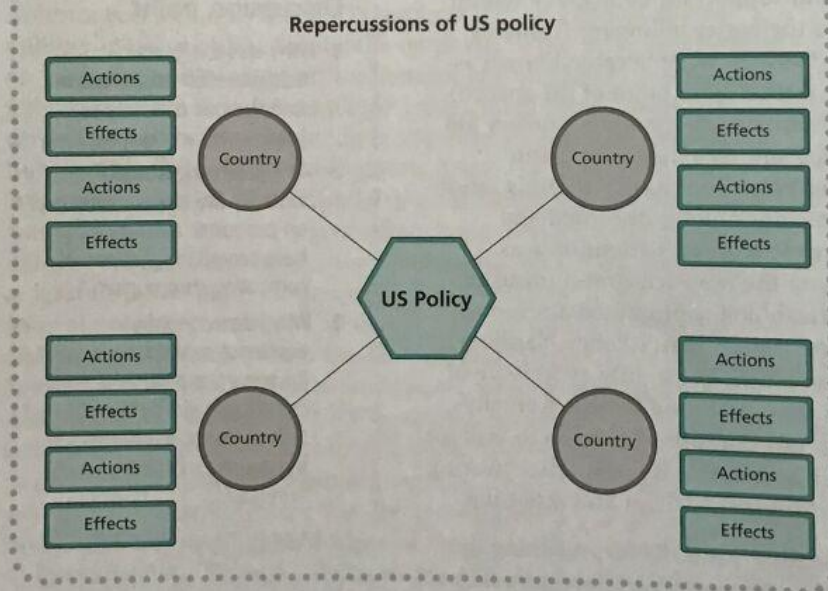
purchase. More emphasis was placed on government stability and internal security, even as public declarations of support for democracy and non-intervention were being issued by the State Department. In the eyes of Latin America, developments in 1951 showed that the United States was continuing to ignore calls for economic assistance and assumed hemispheric support for US Cold War policies.

The last year of the Truman administration saw little change in policy. Following a legitimate election in 1951 in Bolivia that was annulled by the ruling rightist government, and a subsequent revolution in April 1952 to remove the autocracy, the Truman administration withheld formal recognition of the left-leaning Bolivian government of Victor Paz Estenssoro, a government that brought universal suffrage as well as land reform. The threat of a left-leaning government caused concern in the White House. Later the same year, the National Security Council issued the secret document, NSC-141. In line with the earlier NSC-68, defense against communism was the focus, but this time in Latin America.

Activity

Charting US policy

Create a graphic organizer such as the one below to visually organize your understanding of each major United States policy initiative towards countries of the Americas.



The policy of the United States should “seek first and foremost orderly political and economic development which will make the Latin American nations resistant to the internal growth of communism and Soviet political warfare.” The call for stability confirmed Narciso Bassols García’s caution following Rio, as NSC-141 continued advising the administration to “seek hemispheric solidarity in support of our world policy.” By the end of Truman’s term the

attitude of the United States toward Latin America, framed within its policy of containment, resulted in weak and increasingly contentious hemispheric relations. In the view of Latin American nations the colossus to the north continued to ignore economic and social needs to the detriment of the region's peoples, while expecting those very same countries to solidly support the United States' mission of combating communism around the world.

McCarthyism and anti-communism

The Red Scare of the late 1940s and early 1950s was not an anomaly; serious historians of anti-communism in the United States must view it in the wider context of a pattern of anti-immigrant sentiments and fears of subversion that began even before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. However, developments in the US Congress that began in 1947 set the stage for Joseph McCarthy's public crusade against communism.

1947 marked the intensification of the actions of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), an organization that was created in 1938 to counteract potential subversives within the United States.

HUAC, with California Congressman Richard Nixon taking a prominent role, began investigating the film industry. Hollywood producers, directors, writers, and actors were accused of imbedding Soviet propaganda in popular films. Hollywood personalities were called to testify publicly before the committee and were asked, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" Among those compelled to testify were screenwriters Ring Lardner, Jr. and Dalton Trumbo of the famous Hollywood Ten declared criminally in contempt of Congress for their defiant responses to questions from members of the committee. Witnesses before HUAC often "took the 5th," meaning they chose to remain silent under rights enumerated in the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution. While legally permissible, and not supposed to imply any guilt, under repeated questions from committee members and attorneys the witnesses often seemed guilty. Many were tainted by the hearings, but not tried or convicted of subversion. Others chose to cooperate, some because they felt that communism was a real threat to the United States, naming Hollywood colleagues as communists. Well-known director **Elia Kazan**, a member of the American Communist Party in the 1930s, named several members of the Hollywood community as communists, engendering the long-term wrath of many fellow actors and directors, hard feelings that remained even when Kazan received the Oscar for lifetime achievement in 1999. The hearings did serve to intimidate many in the industry as hundreds of movie studio employees and contractors were "blacklisted," meaning studio owners fired and refused to hire anyone so designated.

HUAC did not limit its investigations to Hollywood. Perhaps the most famous case involved Alger Hiss, a mid-level staffer in the State Department. The controversial prosecution and conviction of Hiss



A woman posing with a box of anti-communist chewing gum.



Members of the movie industry not only appeared before HUAC, but prominent actors including Lauren Bacall (left) and Humphrey Bogart (right) demonstrated against HUAC in Washington, DC, in this 1947 protest march. Also seen in the photo is Paul Henreid, who starred as Victor Lazlo in *Casablanca* (1942).

Elia Kazan directed numerous important films, including *On the Waterfront* (1954), starring Marlon Brando and Eve Marie Saint, written by another cooperative witness, Budd Schulberg. Critics of Kazan and Schulberg's testimony saw the film as an attempt at justifying the perceived betrayal.

would be debated into the 21st century. In 1948, a self-identified former communist, Whitaker Chambers, accused Hiss of providing him with classified government documents during the 1930s, knowing that the destination was Moscow. It was not possible, due to the time between the alleged crime of espionage and the charges to prosecute Hiss, but eventually he was charged with perjury for his testimony. The case riveted the nation with testimony of microfilm hidden inside hollowed-out pumpkins in Chambers' garden and a typewriter of Hiss's tested and confirmed to be the origin of several documents. Republican Congressman Richard Nixon took a special interest in the case; his role in pursuing Hiss solidified his credibility as a fierce anti-communist, making him a national political figure, but also led many people, especially Democrats, to regard Nixon as, at best, unprincipled. The conviction of Hiss damaged the Democratic Party establishment, as many, including Illinois governor and future presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, made forceful public statements in Hiss's defense. In fear of being labeled soft on communism or dupes, Democrats learned to speak and act with caution.

Concurrent with this round of HUAC investigations was the Truman administration's persistent prosecution of leaders of the American Communist Party under the Smith Act, resulting in more than 200 jail terms, and the formation and actions of the Federal Loyalty Program, launched by President Truman in March 1947. The program established "loyalty boards" to investigate the influence and infiltration of communists and communist sympathizers in the executive branch. The program authorized the investigation of both applicants to and employees of the federal government to guarantee loyalty because, in the words of the March 21 Executive Order 9835, "it is of vital importance that persons employed in the Federal service be of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States; and ... the presence within the Government service of any disloyal or subversive person constitutes a threat to our democratic processes ..." Historian Alan Brinkley attributes Truman's desire to counter Republican attacks and to build support for his foreign policies as the reason for the Federal Loyalty Program, but it is also quite reasonable to take Truman at his stated purpose. The order followed the March 12 speech that established the Truman Doctrine and made the fight against communism, one form of subversion, an essential part of both domestic and foreign policy. Although the program did not specify what constituted disloyalty, within four years, 200 hundred employees were fired and an additional 2,000 resigned. Furthermore, the Federal Loyalty Program was an impetus for other investigations by the Justice Department and gave additional leeway for FBI director, Hoover, to undertake his own inquiries, and use the power of the agency to harm the reputations of many US citizens, including, but not limited to, those suspected of being subversives.

Activity

Seeing from both sides

You are an advisor to President Truman. Prepare two 300–400 word statements with evidentiary support to persuade the president to:

- 1 Expand the effectiveness of Loyalty Boards in finding and terminating federal employees who show any signs of allegiance or less than absolute opposition to communism.
- 2 Terminate the program as there is no threat from communists in the government and the process weakens the government by creating an atmosphere of fear preventing the free exchange of ideas.

Activity**Source analysis**

The following documents concern the perceived threat to the United States of communist activity.

Source A

BOGOTA, Colombia, April 12 (AP)—Secretary of State George C. Marshall today blamed international Communism for the unsuccessful Bogota revolution. In a statement to other delegates to the Pan-American Conference, which he repeated to the press, Marshall said: "This situation must not be judged on a local basis, however tragic the immediate result to the Colombia (sic) people. The occurrence goes far beyond Colombia. It is the same definite pattern as occurrences which provoked strikes in France and Italy, and that are endeavoring to prejudice the situation in Italy, where elections will take place on April 18.

Source: "Marshall Blames World Communism for Bogota Revolt." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1948. Full text at <http://www.icdc.com/~paulwolf/gaitan/inquirer13april1948.htm>.

Source B

I believe I speak for all of the people of the United States when I say that disloyal and subversive elements must be removed from the employ of the Government. We must not, however, permit employees of the Federal Government to be labeled as disloyal or potentially disloyal to their Government when no valid basis exists for arriving at such a conclusion. The overwhelming majority of Federal employees are local citizens who are giving conscientiously of their energy and skills to the United States. I do not want them to fear they are the objects of any "witch hunt." They are not being spied upon; they are not being restricted in their activities. They have nothing to fear from the loyalty program, since every effort has been made to guarantee full protection to those who are suspected of disloyalty. Rumor, gossip, or suspicion will not be sufficient to lead to the dismissal of an employee for disloyalty.

Source: Harry S. Truman. Statement by the president on the Government's Employee Loyalty Program. November 14, 1947. <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=853>.

Source C

"The great difference between our western Christian world and the atheistic Communist world is not political, gentlemen, it is moral ... Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down. Six years ago ... there was within the Soviet orbit, 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the antitotalitarian side there were in the world at that time, roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today, only six years later, there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia—an increase of over 400 percent. On our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000. In other words, in less than six years, the odds have changed from 9 to 1 in our favor to 8 to 5 against us ... This indicates the swiftness of the tempo of Communist victories and American defeats in the cold war. As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, "When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be from enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within." ...

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores ... but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest Nation on earth has had to offer ... the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give.

Source: Speech of Joseph McCarthy, Wheeling, West Virginia. February 9, 1950. *History Matters*. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6456>.

Source D



Actor Gary Cooper is shown on the witness stand at the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) hearings, Washington, DC, October 24, 1947.

Questions

- 1 What does source D reveal about the extent of media attention paid to the government efforts to combat the threat of communism?
- 2 Compare and contrast sources A and C regarding the activities of international communism.
- 3 With regard to its origin and purpose, how does source B assist historians' understanding of the US government's concerns about communist infiltration in the federal government?
- 4 Analyze the use of language in sources B and C to determine the appeal to emotion and reason. (TOK link).
- 5 Using the documents and your own knowledge assess the level, legitimacy, and approaches of the United States political leadership to the influence of communism during the Truman administration.

The active and public pursuit of disloyal citizens increased the fever of the Red Scare. In 1950, it led to the passage of the McCarran Internal Security Act, which became law over the veto of the president. The Act, among other provisions, required the registration of all communist groups with the federal government and determined that their internal documents were not private. The act furthered the intimidation of those who had been involved in legal, but unpopular, political activities. A top-secret program that deciphered Soviet communications, VENONA, provided information that revealed spies within the Manhattan Project. While the source of the information remained secret until 1995, British scientist Karl Fuchs was exposed as having given atomic secrets to the USSR. The uncovering of Fuchs began a trail that eventually led to Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who were accused of being spies by Ethel's brother, David Greenglass. Greenglass had been exposed as a spy by Harry Gold, who was revealed by Fuchs. Greenglass confessed, turning in his wife, Ruth, as well. In exchange for a sentence reduction and his wife's freedom, Greenlass provided testimony to investigators and prosecutors that played a major part in the conviction of the Rosenbergs.

The Rosenbergs insisted they were innocent of turning over nuclear secrets to the Soviets, but in 1953 became the only US citizens to be executed for espionage during the Cold War. Decades later, in 1996, David Greenglass revealed that he had lied about his sister, Ethel, in order to spare his wife, but continued to insist that Julius Rosenberg was a Soviet spy, a belief, while disputed, that was corroborated by intelligence records and other testimonies. The revelation that allies and US citizens had freely given atomic secrets to Stalin's Soviet Union served to further intensify fears of communist infiltration. Additionally, the victory of Mao Zedong's communists over Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists in China in 1949 seemed to project a rising and threatening communist tide. To the citizens of the United States, only a few years after an Allied victory that was, to them, a triumph of democracy and freedom over totalitarianism, the "loss of China" exacerbated fears of communism.

Senator Joseph McCarthy

By New Year's day, 1950, the federal government's pursuit of domestic communists was well under way. Liberal organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had purged or were actively expelling communists from their ranks. A month later, on February 9, in Wheeling, West Virginia, Wisconsin Senator Joe McCarthy announced "I have here in my hand a list of 205 ... a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who, nevertheless, are still working and shaping policy in the State Department ..." It was on that date that the hunt for subversives began to reach a level of alarm that seemed to consume much of the United States for the next four years.

During that time most politicians chose to support McCarthy or remain silent about his accusations, regardless of how believable they were, because it was to their political advantage or that McCarthy's accusations had merit. Even General Eisenhower demurred from defending General George C. Marshall when McCarthy accused him of betraying the United States. For the most part, Democrats, often the objects of McCarthy's attacks, stayed silent, fearing being identified with hated communists. Senators who stood up to McCarthy faced withering personal counterattacks and accusations. McCarthy struck fear in much of Washington.

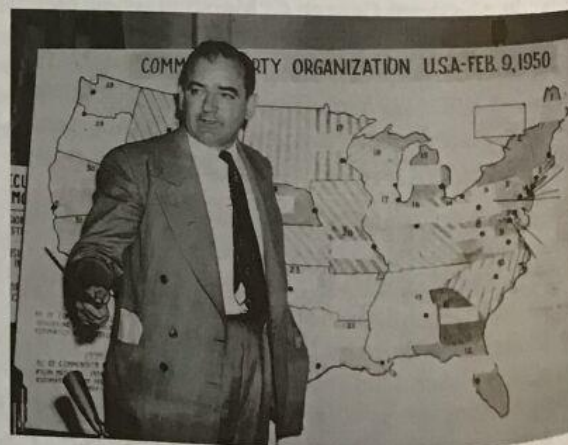
McCarthy's accusations were loud, but also inconsistent. Two days after the Wheeling address, he sent a letter to President Truman claiming to know the identity of 57 communists in the State Department, and demanding that the president hand over evidence to his Senate committee to investigate. Truman refused: the dossiers were often assembled records of uncorroborated testimony and hearsay. Over the next few years, McCarthy used Truman's refusal to turn over executive branch files as an excuse for not revealing the names of those he accused. McCarthy continued to change the alleged number of subversives in the State Department (the next time to 81), and also changed his charge to "loyalty risks." A few

weeks after his initial speech, McCarthy began using his committee to investigate many areas of the federal government. Assisted by David Schine and Roy Cohn, who even traveled to overseas offices to investigate, and with information provided by FBI director Herbert Hoover, McCarthy used the Senate Permanent Sub-committee on Investigations to publicly intimidate and often destroy the reputation of government officials. In committee hearings, McCarthy could not be pinned to any specific accusation; when asked to produce a list he claimed secrecy, when challenged on a specific charge he altered his language so that his accusations were moving targets. When challenged to produce one name, in March 1950, McCarthy named Owen Lattimore, a college professor of Asian Studies, who McCarthy stated was a “top Russian agent.” Lattimore was not a public figure, and the charges were not supported by solid evidence. Lattimore’s closest tie to communism seemed to be a lack of criticism of either the Soviet or Chinese leadership. Lattimore was to be the last person McCarthy accused by name. The failure of the example of Lattimore did not appear to affect McCarthy, who tied the names of Illinois governor Adlai Stevenson (Democrat nominee for president in 1952 and 1956), and Secretary of State Dean Acheson to communists, and further accused George C. Marshall of losing China. In Senator McCarthy’s words the entire Democratic Party was responsible for “20 years of treason,” and the Truman administration had through its own weaknesses encouraged communist subversion.

North Korea’s invasion of South Korea in June 1950 further justified McCarthy’s claims and added to the fear of communist encirclement. When the Communist Chinese army assisted North Korean forces that winter and overran US troops, the threat from Beijing and Moscow appeared even greater, coinciding as they did with relentless charges from McCarthy.

President Truman responded to McCarthy, stating that the accusations were untrue, and that McCarthy and his followers were the “greatest asset the Kremlin had.” Truman, however, was not running for reelection. In 1952, several incumbent Democratic Senators who had vigorously stood up to challenge McCarthy’s charges were defeated at the polls. Few newspapers openly opposed him and most reports accurately detailed his speeches, but few attempted further investigation; McCarthy wisely maintained good relationships with individual reporters. As Haynes Johnson wrote in *The Age of Anxiety: From McCarthyism to Terrorism*, a number of periodicals and several reporters including Mary McGrory, I. F. Stone, Drew Pearson, Edward R. Murrow and cartoonist Herblock repeatedly tried “admirably to hold him accountable for his falsehoods.” But that was a small minority of the press. To Johnson, the press’s failure to hold McCarthy accountable was a major contributor to the damage and longevity of McCarthyism.

In 1954, McCarthy’s downfall came as quickly as his rise. Provoked by accusations from the army,



Senator Joseph McCarthy testifies against the US army during the Army–McCarthy hearings, Washington, DC, June 9, 1954. McCarthy stands before a map which charts communist activity in the United States.

Activity**The most accurate history?**

The same event can take on different meanings when understood through different media. How do historians decide the "truth" of any specific historical moment? You decide. This activity involves understanding the Army–McCarthy Hearings and involves five steps:

- 1 Go to the link (American Rhetoric: McCarthy–Welch Exchange): <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/welch-mccarthy.html>.
- 2 Read the transcript and look at the photos. Write down your impressions.
- 3 Form a group of two or four students, then perform the dialogue out loud. For an extra interpretation, record the reading, then listen to it. Write down your impressions.
- 4 Watch the 12 minute video on the American Rhetoric website. Write down your impressions as you listen.
- 5 Compare and contrast the impressions created by the different records of the event. Decide which method provides the most accurate understanding.

that McCarthy's aide Roy Cohn attempted to obtain special treatment for fellow assistant David Schine, who was drafted into the army, McCarthy issued the countercharge that the accusations were in response to McCarthy's inquiries into the loyalty of certain members of the US army. This resulted in the Army–McCarthy hearings from April 22 to June 17, 1954. Although McCarthy was exonerated of assisting Schine (he was found to have no foreknowledge of the actions of Cohn), the nationally televised hearings, revealed an abusive, rude, and evasive Joseph McCarthy to the nation. It was the beginning of a quick end to Joseph McCarthy. Nearing the close of the hearings, Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri told the Wisconsin senator, "The American people have had a look at you for six weeks. You are not fooling anyone." In September, a Senate committee charged with investigating McCarthy's conduct concluded that he was not only "vulgar," but that his behavior as chairman of the Senate Permanent Sub-committee on Investigations was "reprehensible" and inexcusable. In December, the full Senate voted 67 to 22 to condemn him for abuse of power. McCarthyism lost its star protagonist. After the Senate action, McCarthy's drinking increased and health problems from heavy alcohol consumption eventually developed into acute hepatitis. McCarthy died on May 2, 1957. While the boorish, shrill, and shifting tactics of McCarthyism faded when its demagogue was exposed, the government's hunt for subversives continued into the 1960s.

McCarthyism and anti-communism: an assessment

There are many reasons why people in the United States supported the hunt for subversives and McCarthyism. First, postwar events illustrated the strength and aggression of the Soviet Union with salami tactics in Poland, the Berlin blockade, the exploding of atomic and later thermonuclear bombs, Communist victory in the Chinese civil war and support for North Korea's invasion of South Korea. Internal developments such as the theft of atomic secrets by Klaus Fuchs and the exposure of Julius Rosenberg also provided reason for fears of subversion. Additionally, the fact that President

Discussion point

What is the long-term legacy of McCarthyism and anti-communism on the politics and policies of the two main political parties in the United States?

Truman and Congressman Nixon both used the levers of government to attack communism at home, provided a bipartisan affirmation. Politically, McCarthyism proved valuable to Republicans attempting to become the majority party after two decades of Democrat control of the White House. Top Republican officials, including Senator Robert Taft and President Eisenhower, maintained public silence about Joseph McCarthy when he attacked Democrats. Democrats, for their part, were often timid in opposition. Lastly, fears of communism dated back to the second decade of the century and fears of subversion to the beginning of the nation, as demonstrated by Benedict Arnold's defection to the British during the War of Independence. Lastly, there was the demagogue McCarthy himself. None of these factors alone explain the frenetic nature of the McCarthy era. Even when taken as a whole, the relative effects of circumstances and personalities remain difficult to quantify.

Activity

Entertainers, McCarthyism and communism

Many people within the entertainment industry were targeted by HUAC as an industry infiltrated by communists. Below are statements from four prominent representatives, Pete Seeger, Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, and John Wayne. HUAC, along with many citizens of the United States, considered the possible infusion of artistic expression with communist ideas to be a significant threat to the "American way of life."

Source A

Following is the testimony of folk singer and song writer Pete Seeger.

Chairman WALTER: You have only been asked one question, so far.

Mr. SEEGER: I am not going to answer any questions as to my association, my philosophical or religious beliefs or my political beliefs, or how I voted in any election, or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this. I would be very glad to tell you my life if you want to hear of it ...

[Later testimony]

Mr. SEEGER: I have already given you my answer to that question, and all questions such as that. I feel that is improper: to ask about my associations and opinions. I have said that I would be voluntarily glad to tell you any song, or what I have done in my life.

[Later testimony]

Mr. SEEGER: I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I am proud that I never refuse to sing to an audience, no matter what religion or color of their skin, or situation in life. I have sung in hobo jungles, and I have sung for the Rockefellers, and I am proud that I have never refused to sing for anybody. That is the only answer I can give along that line.

Source: Testimony of Pete Seeger before the House Un-American Activities Committee, August 18, 1955. *History Matters*. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6457>.

Source B

Following is a letter from the writer Lillian Hellman to HUAC stating her reasons for not testifying.

But I am advised by counsel that if I answer the committee's questions about myself, I must also answer questions about other people and that if I refuse to do so, I can be cited for contempt. My counsel tells me that if I answer questions about myself, I will have waived my rights under the fifth amendment and could be forced legally to answer questions about others. This is very difficult for a layman to understand. But there is one principle that I do understand: I am not willing, now or in the future, to bring bad trouble to people who, in my past association with them, were completely innocent of any talk or any action that was disloyal or subversive. I do not like subversion or disloyalty in any form and if I had ever seen any I would have considered it my duty to have reported it to the proper authorities. But to hurt innocent people whom I knew many years ago in order to save myself is, to me, inhuman and indecent and dishonorable. I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions, even though I long ago came to the conclusion that I was not a political person and could have no comfortable place in any political group.

Source: Lillian Hellman, Letter to HUAC, May 19, 1952. *History Matters*. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6454>

Source C

Following is an extract from an article published by Arthur Miller in *The New Yorker*

The breathtaking circularity of the process had a kind of poetic tightness. Not everybody was accused, after all, so there must be *some reason why you were* ... The more I read into the Salem panic, the more it touched off corresponding images of common experiences in the fifties: the old friend of a blacklisted person crossing the street to avoid being seen talking to him; the overnight conversions of former leftists into born-again patriots; and so on. Apparently, certain processes are universal. When Gentiles in Hitler's Germany, for example, saw their Jewish neighbors being trucked off, or farmers in Soviet Ukraine saw the Kulaks vanishing before their eyes, the common reaction, even among those unsympathetic to Nazism or Communism, was quite naturally to turn away in fear of being identified with the condemned. As I learned from non-Jewish refugees, however, there was often a despairing pity mixed with "Well, they must have done *something*." Few of us can easily surrender our belief that society must somehow make sense. The thought that the state has lost its mind and is punishing so many innocent people is intolerable. And so the evidence has to be internally denied.

Source: Miller, Arthur. "Why I wrote 'The Crucible.'" *The New Yorker*. October 21, 1996.

Source D

Following is an extract from an interview with John Wayne published in *Playboy Magazine* in 1971.

Wayne: The articulate liberal group has caused certain things in our country ... George Putnam, the Los Angeles news analyst, put it quite succinctly when he said, "What kind of a nation is it that fails to understand that freedom of speech and assembly are one

thing, and anarchy and treason are quite another, that allows known Communists to serve as teachers to pervert the natural loyalties and ideals of our kids, filling them with fear and doubt and hate and down-grading patriotism and all our heroes of the past?"

Playboy: You blame all this on liberals?

Wayne: Well, the liberals seem to be quite willing to have Communists teach their kids in school. The Communists realized that they couldn't start a workers' revolution in the United States, since the workers were too affluent and too progressive. So the Commies decided on the next-best thing, and that's to start on the schools, start on the kids. And they've managed to do it. They're already in colleges; now they're getting into high schools. I wouldn't mind if they taught my children the basic philosophy of communism, in theory and how it works in actuality. But I don't want somebody like Angela Davis inculcating an enemy doctrine in my kids' minds.

Source: Warren Lewis, Richard. "Playboy Interview: John Wayne." *Playboy Magazine*. May 1, 1971. <http://www.playboy.co.uk/print/print-article/item64826/>.

Questions

- 1 For what reasons and in what ways are artists qualified to comment on political and social issues?
- 2 Compare and contrast the approaches taken by sources A and B to HUAC requests for testimony. Which message is more effective? Why?
- 3 Sources C and D express deep-felt concern over destructive elements to the United States. Referring to both their origin and purpose, what are the values and limitations of Miller and Wayne's statements for historians US public opinion on fears of communism and responses to it during the Cold War?
- 4 Actor John Wayne's interview (source D) took place in 1971. In what ways do the sentiments expressed in the interview reflect the policies of the Nixon administration toward communism?

Social and cultural effects of McCarthyism and the Cold War

The Cold War and anti-communist hysteria of the late 1940s and 1950s created a society in which, according to historian Howard Zinn, "The whole culture was permeated with anti-Communism." Still, much of the life in the postwar United States centered around suburbia, the quest for material goods, family, and entertainment of every kind. To assume that North Americans thought about the Cold War constantly is to exaggerate its influence, but to a significant extent it did steer many of the cultural elements of the period. Film, television, education, music, literature, theater, and the role of religion both influenced and reflected the anti-communist mood.

The film industry was affected significantly by the blacklisting of writers and actors. Fame and popularity did not deter the HUAC or the State Department: even film great Charlie Chaplin, a British citizen who had worked in the United States for four decades, was refused reentry into the United States for his alleged sexual immorality and sympathy toward the **Popular Front**, even though he had never been a member of any communist or associated organization. Many writers could no longer work, or had a **front**

Popular Front Groups around the world, usually formed at the instigation of Comintern during the 1930s, that combined communist with other left, but not communist organizations, to oppose fascism.

A **front** was a person who posed as a writer, passing the scripts of those on the Hollywood blacklist to producers. The front received screen credit for the script.

present scripts. Producers were careful not to present any theme that remotely endorsed communism or even a challenge to the existing social order. Films such as *The Grapes of Wrath* that challenged the principles and main components of capitalism were not made in the United States during the 1950s. Victor Navasky, author of *Naming Names* (1980), observes that social-themed films that were common in the 1930s and early 1940s almost completely disappeared in the initial Cold War period and were replaced by either pure entertainment or anti-communist themes. Evil communists were the antagonists of more than 40 Hollywood films, productions of all but one Hollywood studio, during the late 1940s to the fall of Joseph McCarthy in 1954. Titles included *I Married a Communist* (1949), *I was a Communist for the FBI* (1951), *Invasion, U.S.A.* (1952), and the films *My Son John* (1952), and *Big Jim McLain* (1952). *My Son John* featured a communist son and a mother who exposed him. *Big Jim McLain* starred John Wayne and James Arness, both well-known actors in Westerns. In the film, federal agent Jim McLain (John Wayne) hunts down murdering communists and finds romance in Hawaii. The opening scene shows disgust and anger by McLain and his hot-headed partner Mal Baxter as alleged communists refusing to testify are released without punishment. Revealingly, John Wayne expressed particular disdain for the western, *High Noon* (1952.) The film, scripted by soon-to-be-blacklisted Carl Foreman, features a reluctant sheriff, played by Gary Cooper, who is forced to stand alone against bandits because of the cowardice of the townspeople. Wayne, who in a *Playboy Magazine* interview decades later called the movie "the most un-American thing I've ever seen," interpreted *High Noon* as criticism of HUAC's methods and those who cooperated. Films defending the free speech of defenders of leftist political views were few. Instead, Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), a story about mob informers, allegorically defended Kazan's naming names in his HUAC testimony. Taking the opposite point of view, Arthur Miller wrote the play, *The Crucible* (1953) as a Broadway theater production (the Theater was not attacked by HUAC the way Hollywood was and remained mostly free of blacklisting). *The Crucible* addressed the mass hysteria of the Salem Witch Trials in the 1690s to examine and criticize the anti-communist witch hunts in which people were attacked and their lives ruined for being acquainted with a suspected communist, or refusing to name people. Films depicting the dangers of nuclear war were also popular, and included *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951).

Although movies attracted significant attention from government officials, by the end of the 1950s it was no longer the dominant entertainment medium. Movie-goers declined by 50% over the decade. Television was on the rise. The penetration of television grew from under 10% of households in 1950 to 90% of US households by 1960. According to Stephen J. Whitfield, author of *Culture of the Cold War* (1996), television also coincided with the decline of radio listenership and magazine readership. As a trustworthy news source, the public rated television equal to newspapers. Entering US homes at a faster pace than any previous technological device, its rate of adoption was only surpassed by the personal computer.

In the 1950s television programming was dominated by comedies, variety shows, theater and dramas, and, as the decade wore on, westerns and game shows. For the 1958–59 season, eight of the top ten most popular shows were westerns. That same year a cartoon, *Rocky and Friends*, featuring a heroic flying squirrel and his sidekick, a moose, battled villains named Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale. Game shows such as “The Price is Right” and “\$64,000 Question” entertained audiences while promoting consumerism, the pursuit of wealth, and, sometimes, displays of intellectual prowess to reinforce the advantages of both capitalism and a US education over the Soviet system. The Cold War’s influence was not absent from the small screen, but its day-to-day appearance was often subtle. Dissent was not tolerated in the new, popular medium. Edward R. Murrow, famed for his 1954 denunciation of McCarthy, commented that “Television in the main is being used to distract, delude, amuse and insulate us.” Whitfield argues that the primary motivation for avoiding controversial content was due to the desire of program sponsors to attract the largest audience possible. Television was at the same time used to promote anti-Soviet passions and support for US defense and foreign policy. There were live broadcasts of nuclear explosions. News coverage followed administration policy leaders, but rarely examined their statements for accuracy. Murrow’s own public affairs show *See It Now* owed its independence to its reliance on a single sponsor, Alcoa. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) did not support the program, alerting FBI director Hoover to its dangers before the famous exposé of Senator McCarthy. Inquisitive television journalists threatened the profits of broadcasting companies and sponsors, and were therefore not encouraged.

The famous quiz show cheating scandal of 1958 caused great consternation among the viewing public, further adding to the climate of retribution. Cheating on the show *Twenty-One* was revealed by a participant, Herb Stempel, whose loss to Charles Van Doren in December 1958 was scripted by the producers. The scandal resulted in Congressional hearings, a public statement of condemnation by President Eisenhower and the immediate loss of public trust in the television industry. Van Doren, who admitted on 2 November that he was a principal part of the fixing of the game show, lost all credibility, his job on national television and his professorship at Columbia University. Several other quiz shows were also found to have been rigged. The dishonesty of the shows revealed that some of the most trusted icons of American entertainment were untrustworthy, in this way pitting honest US citizens against the underhanded, deceitful communists depicted in films such as *Big Jim McLain*.

In the United States, public education has often been viewed as an important avenue for poorer members of society (usually, the most recent immigrants) to climb the social and economic ladder. The system has also served to teach all students the norms of citizenship, United States history, and the thought-to-be common values of the society. For example, school children around the country recited the Pledge of Allegiance daily. Until 1943, schools had the right to compel students to say the Pledge regardless of religion or citizenship. After the Supreme Court decision (*West*

Virginia Board of Education vs. Barnette), most public schools conducted a daily flag salute, with pressure to participate from fellow classmates and school staff commonplace.

With the threat of Soviet "godless Communism" came an increased effort by some religious groups to emphasize the importance of God in the lives of US citizens. In 1954, the Catholic organization, the Knights of Columbus, lobbied to modify the Pledge of Allegiance to include the words "under God." The US Congress passed a law, and with President Eisenhower's signature the Pledge included a government-mandated acknowledgement of a supreme being as protection against the menace of communism.

After the successful October 1957 launch and orbit of Sputnik, the faith of US citizens in their system's technological superiority over the Soviet Union was shattered. If the Soviets could launch a satellite, why not a missile directed at Washington, DC? One response was the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. In addition to loans for college education, the NDEA provided \$300 million over four years for science, mathematics and foreign language education in public schools from elementary to high school to enable the younger generation to defeat Soviet technological prowess. NDEA was the first comprehensive federal education law and presented a challenge to the tradition of state and local control of schools. The irony of one federal law decreeing a supreme being and a second federal law promoting advanced creative and independent thinking, both to defeat Communism, illustrates the importance to the majority of elected officials and opinion leaders of the battle against communism.

The federal government did not just concern itself with educating children, but also in educating the general public of the dangers of the Atomic Age. In 1951, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA) was created. Its mission was to assure Americans that steps could be taken to survive nuclear war. The agency contracted with private film makers to create a series of instructional movies. Many of these are featured and satirized in *Atomic Cafe*, a 1982 documentary collection of 1940s and 1950s Cold War government-produced or contracted instructional films. The most famous of the films was "Duck and Cover," featuring a turtle named Bert. Produced specifically for school children, the nine-minute film taught students across the United States to fall to their knees under their desks and to lower their heads while covering their necks, whenever the teacher shouted "drop." Part of the logic for the "drop drills" was to make students feel that in the event of nuclear war they were not helpless. Survivability was a significant theme for many other FCDA films for all age groups, designed to convert fear into a sense of calm.

Popular music of the Fifties seems to be mostly about romance, failed, flawed or all-consuming, but many pop artists recorded songs directly related to the Cold War or nuclear disaster. Bill Haley, one of the first Rock 'n Roll artists, famous for "Rock Around the Clock" and "See You Later Alligator," recorded "Thirteen Women (and only One

Man in Town)" as the "b" side of "Rock Around the Clock" in 1954. The lyrics begin:

Last night I was dreaming,
Dreamed about the H-Bomb.
Well the bomb it went off and I was caught
I was the only man on the ground.
There was thirteen women and only one man in town.

Haley proceeds to sing his multiple romances and the domestic benefits of being a man surrounded by women; all due to a nuclear war. The song was later recorded by Dinah Shore as "Thirteen Men." Sex symbol/actress Ann-Margret also recorded "Thirteen Men." In 1963, Bob Dylan released "Talkin' World War III Blues" which projected a contrasting view of nuclear war:

Some time ago a crazy dream came to me
I dreamt I was walkin' into World War Three
I went to the doctor the very next day
To see what kind a words he could say
He said it was a bad dream ...
Well, the whole thing started at 3 o'clock fast
It was all over by quarter past ...

Numerous other musicians recorded songs such as "When They Drop the Atomic Bomb," "I'm Gonna Dig Myself a Hole," "I'm No Communist," "Your Atom Bomb Heart," and "Guided Missiles," a love song by the doo-wop group the Cuff-Links. Music from Country to Blues to Jazz commented on, and reflected the influence of, the Cold War.

The Cold War impacted literature and other arts. Modern art was accused of being communist-influenced. The atomic bomb led to what Dr Alan Filreis of the University of Pennsylvania called "nuclear holocaust literature," beginning with John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946) first published in *The New Yorker*, and including British author Nevil Shute's *On the Beach* (1957). In the mystery genre, writer Mickey Spillane's hard-bitten detective, Mike Hammer, bragged in *One Lonely Night* (1951), "I killed more people tonight than I have fingers on my hands. I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. ... They were Commies." Novelist Allan Drury published *Advise and Consent* in 1959, a book of political intrigue over a nominee for Secretary of State, who is strongly supported by liberals and the intellectual élite. To some critics, the character appeared modeled after Alger Hiss, uniting fiction with McCarthyism.

Accelerating consumerism in the United States caught the attention of researchers. During the 1950s, many significant works of social commentary were published: *The Organization Man* by William H. Whyte addressed the conformity of corporate norms and the willingness of white collar workers to seek comfort within a community of people similar to them; *The Affluent Society* by John Kenneth Galbraith addressed income inequality and the influence of advertising in creating consumer demand; *The Power Elite* by C. Wright Mills claimed that the voice of the common man was overpowered by corporate, military, and political élites. Literature that was openly

critical of US society and culture was not subject to the same restraints as films or television, leaving avenues of dissent open, but in a time when increasing numbers of people were getting their information from television programs and sponsors' advertisements, social criticism in book form had limited audience reach.

The culture and society of the late 1940s and 1950s was greatly affected by the Cold War. Society reflected a desire for national unity and fear of communism and nuclear war. The arts, especially film and television, were constrained by the political mood and outright or manipulative governmental pressure of the period. Popular culture, with some exceptions, played to popular themes and did not challenge the prevailing conventional wisdom; challenges to the establishment were commonly viewed as un-American.

The Korean War, 1950–53

On June 25, 1950, 100,000 North Korean soldiers equipped with Soviet battle tanks, artillery and fighter planes crossed the 38th parallel and invaded South Korea, announcing a new phase in the Cold War: one that would be repeated in Vietnam, Afghanistan and a dozen other locations. The North Korean objective was to reunite Korea under the communist government of Kim Il-Sung. They planned for a two month war. The United Nations declared the invasion illegal and authorized the United States to take command of a UN force and restore the borders. Fifteen UN nations committed their military and the Korean War became the first real test of the United Nation's concept of collective security. Intended to be a "limited war," it would drag on for three years, ravaging the Korean peninsula: the Chinese intervened, the United States contemplated using nuclear weapons and millions of Korean civilians became casualties and refugees. The war would end where it started, with no changes to the borders and the lessons learned would dictate US foreign policy and that of other nations in the Americas until the Cold War ended in 1989.

Background to the Korean War

The Korean peninsula borders China to the north and is relatively close to Japan to the south-east. The Japanese had occupied Korea since 1910. At the end of the Second World War, after Japan had surrendered in August 1945, the Soviet Union and United States divided Korea at the 38th parallel with the Soviets occupying the North and the United States the southern half of the country. The respective populations numbered nine million and 21 million. The occupation was assumed to be temporary but by 1947, with no end in sight, the United States handed the administration of South Korea over to the United Nations. The Soviets suggested that both powers should withdraw and let the Koreans sort it out but the United States rejected this solution, concerned about the build-up of Soviet forces in the North, which the South could not match. On August 14, 1947,

Activity

Limited warfare

Research further definitions of "limited warfare." Which conflicts in the Cold War period conform to this definition? What kind of precedent was set by the Korean War?

A **limited war**, as it came to be known in the second half of the 20th century, is a conflict in which the weapons used, the nations or territories involved, or the objectives pursued are restricted in some way (avoiding, in particular, the use of nuclear weapons).