

5

How effectively did the USA contain the spread of Communism?

FOCUS POINTS

This key question will be explored through case studies of the following:

- the Korean War, 1950–53
- the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962
- US involvement in the Vietnam War

Although the USA was the world's most powerful nation, in 1950 it seemed to President Truman that events were not going America's way, particularly with regard to Communism.

- ◆ As you have seen in Chapter 4 most of eastern Europe had fallen under the influence of the Communist USSR 1945–48.
- ◆ China became Communist in 1949. The Americans had always regarded China as their strongest ally in the Far East. Between 1946 and 1949 they gave billions of dollars of aid to the Nationalist government in China, largely to prevent a Communist takeover. That had failed. Suddenly a massive new Communist state had appeared on the map.
- ◆ Also in 1949 the Soviet leader Stalin announced that the USSR had developed its own atomic bomb. The USA was no longer the world's only nuclear power.
- ◆ Furthermore American spies reported to President Truman that Stalin was using his network (Cominform) to help Communists win power in Malaya, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines and Korea. The USA had visions of the Communists overrunning all of Asia, with country after country being toppled like a row of dominoes.

There was already a strong anti-Communist feeling in the USA. These developments made it stronger. There was no doubt in the minds of American leaders (indeed most American people) that this spread should be resisted. If they could have done, they would have liked to turn back the Communist advances but that was unrealistic. So from 1947 onwards the USA followed the policy of Containment – holding back Communism so it did not spread any further. But as the 1950s dawned this looked like a serious challenge.

In this chapter you will investigate:

- ◆ the different methods the USA used to try to contain the spread of Communism
- ◆ how successful these methods were during the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War – using these case studies you will make up your own mind
- ◆ how successful the policy was in the years 1950–75: how effectively did the USA contain the spread of Communism?

◀ This is a cover of a comic book published in the United States in 1947.

- 1 What impression does this comic cover give you of:
 - a) the USA?
 - b) Communism?
- 2 What is the message of this picture?

Case study 1: The Korean War

Think!

The situation in Korea has sometimes been compared to the situation in Germany in 1945 (which you studied in Chapter 4). Explain:

- how these situations were similar
- how they were different.

SOURCE 1

The UN will render such assistance to the republic of Korea as may be necessary to restore international peace and security to the area.

Resolution 84 passed by the United Nations in 1950.

SOURCE 2

Korea is a symbol to the watching world. If we allow Korea to fall within the Soviet orbit, the world will feel we have lost another round in our match with the Soviet Union, and our prestige and the hopes of those who place their faith in us will suffer accordingly.

The US State Department, 1950.

SOURCE 3

If the UN is ever going to do anything, this is the time, and if the UN cannot bring the crisis in Korea to an end then we might as well just wash up the United Nations and forget it.

American Senator Tom Connally speaking in 1950. He was a Republican and strongly anti-Communist.

Background

Korea had been ruled by Japan until 1945. At the end of the Second World War the northern half was liberated by Soviet troops and the southern half by Americans. When the war ended:

- **The North** remained Communist-controlled, with a Communist leader who had been trained in the USSR, and with a Soviet-style one-party system.
- **The South** was anti-Communist. It was not very democratic, but the fact that it was anti-Communist was enough to win it the support of the USA.

There was bitter hostility between the North's Communist leader, Kim Il Sung, and Syngman Rhee, President of South Korea. Reunification did not seem likely. In 1950 this hostility spilled over into open warfare. North Korean troops overwhelmed the South's forces. By September 1950 all except a small corner of south-east Korea was under Communist control (see Source 5, map 1).

As you have already seen in Chapter 4, US President Truman was determined to contain Communism – to stop it spreading further. In his view Korea was a glaring example of how Communism would spread if the USA did nothing (see Source 2). Remember that for Truman and for many Americans, containment was not so much a policy they wanted as a policy they had to make do with. If they could have done they would have liked to turn back the spread of Communism but that would have risked an all-out war with the USSR. So from the US point of view, it was not so much that they believed in containment, it was that they believed that they could not accept anything less.

USA or United Nations?

President Truman immediately sent advisers, supplies and warships to the waters around Korea. But he was aware that if he was going to take action it would look better to the rest of the world if he had the support of other countries, especially if he had the support of the United Nations. In fact the ideal situation would be a UN intervention in Korea rather than an American one.

Truman put enormous pressure on the UN Security Council to condemn the actions of the North Koreans and to call on them to withdraw their troops. The USA was the single biggest contributor to the UN budget and was therefore in a powerful position to influence its decisions. However, this did not mean the USA always got its own way and it would probably have failed this time except for some unusual circumstances. In the Cold War atmosphere of 1950, each superpower always denounced and opposed the other. Normally in a dispute such as this, the Soviet Union would have used its right of veto to block the call for action by the UN. However, the USSR was boycotting the UN at this time over another issue (whether Communist China should be allowed to join the UN). So when the resolution was passed the USSR was not even at the meeting to use its veto. So Truman was able to claim that this was a UN-sponsored operation, even if Soviet newspapers and other media claimed that the decision was not valid.

Under the resolution (see Source 1) the UN committed itself to using its members' armies to drive North Korean troops out of South Korea. Eighteen states (including Britain) provided troops or support of some kind, mostly allies of the USA. However, the overwhelming part of the UN force that was sent to Korea was American. The commander, General MacArthur, was also an American.

September 1950 – the UN force advances

United Nations forces stormed ashore at Inchon in September 1950 (see Source 5, map 1). At the same time, other UN forces and South Korean troops advanced from Pusan. The North Koreans were driven back beyond their original border (the 38th parallel) within weeks.

Source Analysis ▶

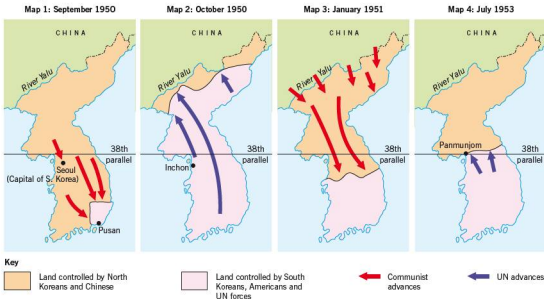
Source 4 makes a comparison with earlier events you may have studied in this book – see Chapter 2. Use that knowledge to write a 100-word explanation of the message of this cartoon for someone who does not know anything about the League of Nations.

SOURCE 4



A cartoon by David Low, 1950.

SOURCE 5



The 38th parallel was the border between North and South Korea from 1945 to June 1950.

The Korean War, 1950–53

SOURCE 6

Had they [the Chinese] intervened in the first or second months it would have been decisive, [but] we are no longer fearful of their intervention. Now that we have bases for our Air Force in Korea, there would be the greatest slaughter.

General MacArthur speaking in October 1950.

Profile

General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964)



- Born 1880. His father was a successful army leader.
- Trained at West Point, the top American military academy.
- Fought in the First World War. Became the youngest commander in the American army in France. Received 13 medals for bravery.
- During the Second World War he was the commander of the war against the Japanese. He devised the 'island-hopping' strategy that allowed the Americans to defeat the Japanese.
- In 1945 he personally accepted the Japanese surrender, and from 1945 to 1951 he virtually controlled Japan, helping the shattered country get back on its feet.
- He was aged 70 when he was given command of the UN forces in Korea.
- He tried unsuccessfully to run for US President in 1952.

Think!

Use the text to write some extra bullet points for the Profile describing:

- a) MacArthur's personality and beliefs
- b) his actions in Korea.

October 1950 – the UN force presses on

MacArthur had quickly achieved the original UN aim of removing North Korean troops from South Korea. But the Americans did not stop. Despite warnings from China's leader, Mao Tse-tung, that if they pressed on China would join the war, the UN approved a plan to advance into North Korea. By October, US forces had reached the Yalu River and the border with China (see Source 5, map 2). The nature of the war had now changed. It was clear that MacArthur and Truman were after a bigger prize, one which went beyond containment. As the UN forces advanced and secured their positions (see Source 6), Truman and MacArthur saw an opportunity to remove Communism from Korea entirely. Even Mao's warnings were not going to put them off.

November 1950 – the UN force retreats

MacArthur underestimated the power of the Chinese. Late in October 1950, 200,000 Chinese troops (calling themselves 'People's Volunteers') joined the North Koreans. They launched a blistering attack. They had soldiers who were strongly committed to Communism and had been taught by their leader to hate the Americans. They had modern tanks and planes supplied by the Soviet Union. The United Nations forces were pushed back into South Korea.

Conditions were some of the worst the American forces had known, with treacherous cold and blinding snowstorms in the winter of 1950–51. The Chinese forces were more familiar with fighting in the jagged mountains, forested ravines and treacherous swamps – as the landscape was similar to many areas of China.

SOURCE 7

Even the reports to the UN were censored by [American] state and defence departments. I had no connection with the United Nations whatsoever.

From General MacArthur's memoirs.

March 1951 – MacArthur is sacked

At this point, Truman and MacArthur fell out. MacArthur wanted to carry on the war. He was ready to invade China and even use nuclear weapons if necessary. Truman, on the other hand, felt that saving South Korea was good enough. His allies in the UN convinced Truman that the risks of attacking China and of starting a war that might bring in the USSR were too great, and so an attack on China was ruled out.

However, in March 1951 MacArthur blatantly ignored the UN instruction and openly threatened an attack on China. In April Truman removed MacArthur from his position as commander and brought him back home. He rejected MacArthur's aggressive policy towards Communism. Containment was underlined as the American policy. One of the American army leaders, General Omar Bradley said that MacArthur's approach would have 'involved America in the wrong war, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy'. Truman agreed with Bradley and was effectively returning to the policy of containment and accepting that he could not drive the Communists out of North Korea.

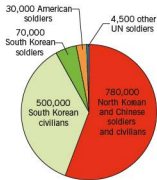
June 1951 – peace talks begin

The fighting finally reached stalemate around the 38th parallel (see Source 5, map 3) in the middle of 1951. Peace talks between North and South Korea began in June 1951, although bitter fighting continued for two more years. The casualties on all sides were immense – but particularly among civilians (see Sources 8 and 9).

July 1953 – armistice

In 1952 Truman was replaced by President Eisenhower, who wanted to end the war. Stalin's death in March 1953 made the Chinese and North Koreans less confident. An armistice was finally signed in July 1953. The border between North and South Korea was much the same as it had been before war started in 1950.

SOURCE 8



Total killed: 1.4 million

Civilian and military deaths in the Korean War. American military fatalities per year of conflict were actually higher than the Vietnam War.

SOURCE 9



Civilian casualty in the early stages of the Korean War as South Koreans fled from the advancing North Koreans.

A success for containment?

In one sense the Korean War was a success for the USA. The cost and the casualties were high but it showed that the USA had the will and the means to contain Communism. South Korea remained out of Communist hands.

On the other hand it showed the limits of the policy. The USA had to accept that North Korea remained Communist. It also highlighted tensions among American leaders. Hardline anti-Communist politicians and military leaders wanted to go beyond containment – to push back Communism. They thought that Truman had shown weakness in not going for outright victory. More moderate politicians and commanders argued that this would not be worth the risk.

These tensions would affect US policy over the coming decades.

Focus Task

Was the Korean War a success for containment?

Draw up your own copy of this table. You will use it to compare the three case studies. At this stage, just focus on the Korean War. You are going to revisit this task at the end of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War as well. We have started it off for you. Your completed chart will be a useful revision tool.

Case study	Why were the Americans worried?	What methods did the Americans use to contain Communism?	What problems did they face?	What was the outcome?	Success or failure (out of 10) with reasons supported by evidence
Korea	Communist North Korea invaded capitalist South Korea				

Methods of containment

There was no doubt at all in the minds of American leaders that Communism had to be resisted. The question was how to do it. The Korean War showed the Americans that they could not just send their soldiers to fight a war whenever they saw a problem. It was too expensive and it did not really work very well. Containment needed other methods.

Alliances

The USA created a network of anti-Communist alliances around the world: SEATO in South East Asia and CENTO in central Asia and the Middle East. The USA gave money, advice and arms to these allies. In return, the leaders of these countries suppressed Communist influence in their own countries.

The USSR saw these alliances as aggressive. They accused the USA of trying to encircle the Communist world. In 1955 the Soviet Union set up the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, better known as the Warsaw Pact. This included the USSR and all the Communist east European countries except Yugoslavia.

SOURCE 10

We shall never have a secure peace and a happy world so long as Soviet Communism dominates one-third of all the world's people and is in the process of trying to extend its rule to many others. Therefore we must have in mind the liberation of these captive peoples. Now liberation does not mean war. Liberation can be achieved by processes short of war. A policy which only aims at containing Russia is an unsound policy ... If our only policy is to stay where we are, we will be driven back.

JF Dulles, US Secretary of State, speaking on his appointment in 1952.

Think!

Read Source 10. What methods do you think Dulles had in mind to 'liberate captive peoples' without a war?

SOURCE 11



Membership of the organisations allied to the USA and USSR in 1955.

Arms race

At the same time both the USSR and the USA were engaged in an 'arms race'.

The Americans had developed their first atomic bomb in 1945. They did not share the secret of their bomb with the USSR, even while they were still allies. When the USA dropped the first bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, 70,000 people were killed instantly. The awesome power of the explosions and the incredible destruction caused by the bombs made Japan surrender within a week. It was clear to both the USA and the USSR that atomic bombs were the weapons of the future.

Over the next decade the USA and USSR developed ever bigger, more deadly and more flexible weapons. They spent vast amounts

of money on new weapons. They spied on one another to steal technological secrets. The USSR tended to use spies such as Rudolf Abel. He worked in New York until he was arrested in 1957. The USA favoured hi-tech spying such as the U2 plane – a spy plane which flew so high it could not be shot down but took incredibly detailed photos of the ground. It could read a newspaper from 14 miles up in the sky!

Each side perfected nuclear bombs that could be launched from submarines or planes. The USA placed short-range nuclear weapons in Turkey (one of their CENTO allies). Both sides developed ICBMs, which could travel from continent to continent in half an hour.

The impact of the arms race

The arms race was partly about **quality** – who had the most sophisticated weapons. The Soviets took the lead in technology in the 1950s, building on the achievements of their successful space programme. These technological advances by the USSR rocked public opinion in the USA. The Cold War was a propaganda war much more than a military war. You had to show that your system was superior; that your scientists were cleverer. To lose advantage to the Soviet Union was a blow to the USA.

However the arms race was also about **quantity**. The US public was alarmed to be told that the USSR had many more nuclear missiles than the USA. This so-called 'missile gap' was widely reported in the American media during the 1950s. We now know that the missile gap was a myth. The USA always had more missiles than the USSR. However:

- Khrushchev was not going to admit this because he would look foolish and it would aid his critics inside the USSR.
- At the same time, the American military commanders were happy to go along with the claims that there was a missile gap because it helped them to get funding from the government to pay for the development of new weapons systems.
- By the early 1960s Eisenhower also knew the missile gap was a myth because he had an important source in the Soviet military who had defected to the CIA. However, because this contact was still in the USSR, Eisenhower could not admit he knew how many missiles the Soviets actually had without revealing his source.

So, myth or not, the USA forged ahead with its own missile production programme to 'narrow the missile gap'.

Deterrence and MAD

The result was that by 1961, both of the superpowers had hundreds of missiles pointed at each other. The USA had more than the USSR, but the advantage did not really matter because both sides had enough to destroy each other many times over. On each side the theory was that such weapons made them more secure. The 'nuclear deterrent' meant the enemy would not dare attack first, because it knew that, if it did, the other would strike back before its bombs had even landed and it too would be destroyed. It would be suicidal. So having nuclear weapons deterred the other side from attacking first. This policy also became known as MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction). Surely no side would dare strike first when it knew the attack would destroy itself too.

Think!

Create a diagram that shows how the following factors were connected:

- ◆ alliances
- ◆ nuclear arms race
- ◆ propaganda
- ◆ spying.

The author recommends a Venn diagram but you might prefer a spider diagram or some other format. Or try different formats and see which works well for you.

Revision Tip

Make sure you can remember:

- ◆ one example of the USA creating an alliance to contain Communism
- ◆ one example of it using arms technology to contain Communism.

Fear

Leaders might see their nuclear weapons as a deterrent, but others worried that the world was moving into a very dangerous time. For example, an American B-47 bomber crashed in Norfolk, England in 1957. The resulting fire came within minutes of setting off two nuclear bombs that would have devastated all of East Anglia. In 1962, a US radar station mistook one of its own satellites for an incoming Soviet missile and was minutes away from triggering a full nuclear 'response' attack on the USSR. Of course, governments did not tell their people about these incidents – both Soviet and US leaders were very secretive. But they could not hide the big issue – that the nuclear arms race seemed to have raised the stakes so high that one suicidal leader, one poor decision or (most worryingly of all) one small and innocent mistake could trigger a catastrophe that could destroy Europe, the USA and the Soviet Union within minutes.

Fear 'of the bomb' was a common feature of life in 1950s' and 1960s' America. The arms race was a topic of everyday conversation. Children were taught at school what do if there was a nuclear attack. Some people protested against the arms race. Robert Oppenheimer, the man who led the team that developed the atom bomb, opposed the H-bomb. He felt it was wrong to develop a more powerful bomb in peacetime. Others protested at the vast amounts being spent on weapons. But the most common feelings were of helplessness and fear. People wondered whether this was the end. Were they the last generation to walk this planet? Would nuclear warfare signal the end of the world?

It was against the background of the nuclear arms race that Cuba became the next major flashpoint of the Cold War.

Case study 2: The Cuban Missile Crisis

SOURCE 12

We considered it part of the United States practically, just a wonderful little country over there that was of no danger to anybody, as a matter of fact it was a rather important economic asset to the United States.

American TV reporter Walter Cronkite

SOURCE 13

I believe there is no country in the world . . . whose economic colonisation, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, partly as a consequence of US policy during the Batista regime. I believe that, without being aware of it, we conceived and created the Castro movement, starting from scratch.

President Kennedy speaking in 1963.

Source Analysis

- How far do Sources 12 and 13 agree about Cuba's relationship with the USA before the revolution?
- Apart from the caption in Russian, how else can you tell that the cartoon in Source 14 is a Soviet cartoon?
- The aim of the cartoonist in Source 14 was simply to tell people that the USA was forbidding Cuba to make friends with the USSR, nothing more.' Do you agree with this statement?

Revision Tip

From these two pages you should make sure you remember:

- one reason why the USA disliked Castro's government
- how the USA initially tried to contain Communism on Cuba.

The Cuban Revolution?

Cuba is a large island just 160 km from Florida in the southern USA. It had long been an American ally: Americans owned most of the businesses on the island and they had a huge naval base there (see Source 18 on page 104). The Americans also provided the Cuban ruler, General Batista, with economic and military support. Batista was a dictator. His rule was corrupt and unpopular. The Americans supported Batista primarily because he was just as opposed to Communism as they were.

Enter Fidel Castro

There was plenty of opposition to Batista in Cuba itself. In 1959, after a three-year campaign, Fidel Castro overthrew Batista. Castro was charming, clever and also ruthless. He quickly killed, arrested or exiled many political opponents. Castro was also a clever propagandist. He was very charismatic, and he had a vision for a better Cuba which won over the majority of Cubans.

The USA responds

The USA was taken by surprise at first and decided to recognise Castro as the new leader of Cuba. However, within a short period of time relations between the two countries grew worse. There were two important reasons:

- There were thousands of Cuban exiles in the USA who had fled from Castro's rule. They formed powerful pressure groups demanding action against Castro.
- Castro took over some American-owned businesses in Cuba, particularly the agricultural businesses. He took their land and distributed it to his supporters among Cuba's peasant farmer population.

SOURCE 14



A 1960 Soviet cartoon. The notice held by the US Secretary of State says to Castro in Cuba: 'I forbid you to make friends with the Soviet Union.'

SOURCE 15

By October 1962 the historic friendship between Cuba and the USA was gone. Behind this change was the story of the betrayal of the Cuban people. It began with Fidel Castro triumphantly entering Havana in 1959. Castro promised democracy and freedom and for a time it appeared to most Cubans that they were liberated. But it soon became apparent that Castro had sold out to Premier Khrushchev of the Communists.

Commentary from an American TV programme made in 1962.

SOURCE 16

I think he [Khrushchev] did it [was so aggressive in the meeting] because of the Bay of Pigs. He thought that anyone who was so young and inexperienced as to get into that mess could be beaten; and anyone who got into it and didn't see it through had no guts. So he just beat the hell out of me.

If he thinks I'm inexperienced and have no guts, until we remove those ideas we won't get anywhere with him.

Kennedy speaking after a meeting with Khrushchev in 1961

Factfile

Bay of Pigs invasion

- ▶ Cuban exiles were funded and trained by CIA and supported by US air power.
- ▶ Plan originally devised by President Eisenhower's government but Kennedy approved it when he became President. Training began in April 1960.
- ▶ Cuban security services knew that the invasion was coming.
- ▶ Invasion took place on 17 April 1961. It was a complete failure. US intelligence which stated that Cuban people would rebel against Castro proved to be wrong.

Kennedy ordered extensive investigations into the disaster. Key failings included:

- ▶ lack of secrecy so that USA could not deny its involvement;
- ▶ poor links between various US departments;
- ▶ failure to organise resistance inside Cuba;
- ▶ insufficient Spanish-speaking staff.

As early as June 1960, US President Eisenhower authorised the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to investigate ways of overthrowing Castro. The CIA provided support and funds to Cuban exiles. They also investigated ways to disrupt the Cuban economy, such as damaging sugar plantations. American companies working in Cuba refused to co-operate with any Cuban businesses which used oil or other materials which had been imported from the USSR. The American media also broadcast a relentless stream of criticism of Castro and his regime (see Source 15 for example).

Castro responded to US hostility with a mixed approach. He assured Americans living in Cuba that they were safe and he allowed the USA to keep its naval base. He said he simply wanted to run Cuba without interference. However, by the summer of 1960 he had allied Cuba with the Soviet Union. Soviet leader Khrushchev signed a trade agreement giving Cuba \$100 million in economic aid. Castro also began receiving arms from the Soviet Union and American spies knew this.

To invade or not to invade, that is the question!

In January 1961 the USA's new President, John F Kennedy, broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba. Castro thought that the USA was preparing to invade his country. The Americans did not invade directly but Kennedy was no longer prepared to tolerate a Soviet satellite in the USA's 'sphere of influence'. The plans to overthrow Castro which were begun under Eisenhower began to take shape.

The Bay of Pigs

Rather than a direct invasion, President Kennedy supplied arms, equipment and transport for 1,400 anti-Castro exiles to invade Cuba and overthrow him. In April 1961 the exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs. They were met by 20,000 Cuban troops, armed with tanks and modern weapons. The invasion failed disastrously. Castro captured or killed them all within days.

The impact of the invasion

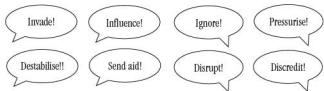
The half-hearted invasion suggested to Cuba and the Soviet Union that, despite its opposition to Communism in Cuba, the USA was unwilling to get directly involved in Cuba. The Soviet leader Khrushchev was scornful of Kennedy's pathetic attempt to oust Communism from Cuba.

Historians too argue that the Bay of Pigs fiasco further strengthened Castro's position in Cuba. It suggested to the USSR that Kennedy was weak. It also made Castro and Khrushchev very suspicious of US policy.

Focus Task

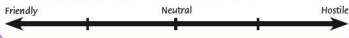
How did the USA respond to the Cuban revolution?

- 1 The President has asked his advisers how he should deal with Cuba. Here are some suggestions they might have made:



Record examples you can find of the USA doing any of these things. If you find examples of American actions that are not covered by these words record them too.

- 2 Place these actions on a 'containment continuum' like this:



SOURCE 17

[Estimates were that the] missiles had an atomic warhead [power] of about half the current missile capacity of the entire Soviet Union. The photographs indicated that missiles were directed at certain American cities. The estimate was that within a few minutes of their being fired 80 million Americans would be dead.

President Kennedy's brother, Robert Kennedy, describing events on Thursday 18 October in the book he wrote about the crisis, *13 Days*.

Khrushchev arms Castro

After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, Soviet arms flooded into Cuba. In May 1962 the Soviet Union announced publicly for the first time that it was supplying Cuba with arms. By July 1962 Cuba had the best-equipped army in Latin America. By September it had thousands of Soviet missiles, plus patrol boats, tanks, radar vans, missile erectors, jet bombers, jet fighters and 5,000 Soviet technicians to help to maintain the weapons.

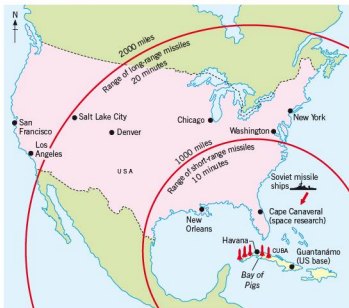
The Americans watched all this with great alarm. They seemed ready to tolerate conventional arms being supplied to Cuba, but the big question was whether the Soviet Union would dare to put **nuclear** missiles on Cuba. In September Kennedy's own Intelligence Department said that it did not believe the USSR would send nuclear weapons to Cuba. The USSR had not taken this step with any of its satellite states before and the US Intelligence Department believed that the USSR would consider it too risky to do it in Cuba. On 11 September, Kennedy warned the USSR that he would prevent 'by whatever means might be necessary' Cuba's becoming an offensive military base – by which, everyone knew, he meant a base for nuclear missiles. The same day the USSR assured the USA that it had no need to put nuclear missiles on Cuba and no intention of doing so.

The October crisis

On Sunday, 14 October 1962, an American spy plane flew over Cuba. It took amazingly detailed photographs of missile sites in Cuba. To the military experts two things were obvious – that these were nuclear missile sites, and that they were being built by the USSR.

More photo reconnaissance followed over the next two days. This confirmed that some sites were nearly finished but others were still being built. Some were already supplied with missiles, others were awaiting them. The experts said that the most developed of the sites could be ready to launch missiles in just seven days. American spy planes also reported that twenty Soviet ships were currently on the way to Cuba carrying missiles.

SOURCE 18



Map showing the location of Cuba and the range of the Cuban missiles.

Think!

How should President Kennedy deal with the Cuban crisis?

On Tuesday 16 October, President Kennedy was informed of the discovery. He formed a special team of advisers called Ex Comm.

They came up with several choices.

Work in groups. You are advisers to the President. You have to reduce Ex Comm's five options to just two for the President to choose between.

When you have made your decision explain why you have rejected the three you have.

Option 1 Do nothing?

For: The Americans still had a vastly greater nuclear power than the Soviet Union. The USA could still destroy the Soviet Union, so – the argument went – the USSR would never use these missiles. The biggest danger to world peace would be to overreact to this discovery.

Against: The USSR had lied about Cuban missiles. Kennedy had already issued his solemn warning to the USSR. To do nothing would be another sign of weakness.

Option 2 Surgical air attack?

An immediate selected air attack to destroy the nuclear bases themselves.

For: It would destroy the missiles before they were ready to use.

Against: 1 Destruction of all sites could not be guaranteed. Even one left undamaged could launch a counter-attack against the USA.
2 The attack would inevitably kill Soviet soldiers. The Soviet Union might retaliate at once.
3 To attack without advance warning was seen as immoral.



Option 3 Invasion?

All-out invasion of Cuba by air and sea.

For: An invasion would not only get rid of the missiles but Castro as well. The American forces were already trained and available to do it.

Against: It would almost certainly guarantee an equivalent Soviet response, either to protect Cuba, or within the Soviet sphere of influence – for example, a take-over of Berlin.



Option 4 Diplomatic pressures?

To get the United Nations or other body to intervene and negotiate.

For: It would avoid conflict.

Against: If the USA was forced to back down, it would be a sign of weakness.



Option 5 Blockade?

A ban on the Soviet Union bringing in any further military supplies to Cuba, enforced by the US navy who would stop and search Soviet ships. And a call for the Soviet Union to withdraw what was already there.

For: It would show that the USA was serious, but it would not be a direct act of war. It would put the burden on Khrushchev to decide what to do next. The USA had a strong navy and could still take the other options if this one did not work.

Against: It would not solve the main problem – the missiles were already on Cuba. They could be used within one week. The Soviet Union might retaliate by blockading Berlin as it had done in 1948.



Tue 16 October

Sat 20 October

Mon 22 October

What happened next?

President Kennedy was informed of the missile build-up. Ex Comm formed.

Kennedy decided on a blockade of Cuba.

Kennedy announced the blockade and called on the Soviet Union to withdraw its missiles. He addressed the American people:

SOURCE 19

Good Evening, My Fellow Citizens:

This government, as promised, has maintained the closest surveillance of the Soviet military build-up on the island of Cuba. Within the past week, unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island. The purpose of these bases can be none other than to provide a nuclear strike capability against the Western Hemisphere. . .

Acting, therefore, in the defence of our own security and of the entire Western Hemisphere, and under the authority entrusted to me by the Constitution as endorsed by the resolution of the Congress, I have directed that the following initial steps be taken immediately:

First: To halt this offensive build-up, a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba . . . Second: I have directed the continued and increased close surveillance of Cuba and its military build-up. . . I have directed the Armed Forces to prepare for any eventualities . . . Third: It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

Extract from President Kennedy's TV broadcast to the American people on 22 October 1962.

Tue 23 October

Kennedy received a letter from Khrushchev saying that Soviet ships would not observe the blockade. Khrushchev did not admit the presence of nuclear missiles on Cuba.

Wed 24 October

The blockade began. The first missile-carrying ships, accompanied by a Soviet submarine, approached the 500-mile (800-km) blockade zone. Then suddenly, at 10.32 a.m., the twenty Soviet ships which were closest to the zone stopped or turned around.

Source Analysis

- 1 What words and phrases in Source 19 reveal how serious Kennedy believed the situation was in October 1962?
- 2 Kennedy was renowned as a skilled communicator. How did he convince his audience that he was in the right?

Source Analysis

- 1 Source 20 is a British cartoon. Pretend you did not know this. Explain why it is unlikely to be an American or Soviet cartoon.
- 2 What is its attitude to the two sides in the crisis?

SOURCE 20



INTOLERABLE HAVING YOUR ROCKETS ON MY DOORSTEP!

A cartoon by Vicky (Victor Weisz) from the *London Evening Standard*, 24 October 1962.

Thu 25 October

Despite the Soviet ships turning around, intensive aerial photography revealed that work on the missile bases in Cuba was proceeding rapidly.

Fri 26 October

Kennedy received a long personal letter from Khrushchev. The letter claimed that the missiles on Cuba were purely defensive, but went on: 'If assurances were given that the USA would not participate in an attack on Cuba and the blockade was lifted, then the question of the removal or the destruction of the missile sites would be an entirely different question.' This was the first time Khrushchev had admitted the presence of the missiles.

Sat 27 October a.m.

Khrushchev sent a second letter – revising his proposals – saying that the condition for removing the missiles from Cuba was that the USA withdraw its missiles from Turkey.

An American U-2 plane was shot down over Cuba. The pilot was killed. The President was advised to launch an immediate reprisal attack on Cuba.

Sat 27 October p.m.

Kennedy decided to delay an attack. He also decided to ignore the second Khrushchev letter, but accepted the terms suggested by Khrushchev on 26 October. He said that if the Soviet Union did not withdraw, an attack would follow.

SOURCE 21

It was a beautiful autumn evening, the height of the crisis, and I went up to the open air to smell it, because I thought it was the last Saturday I would ever see.

Robert McNamara talking about the evening of 27 October 1962. McNamara was one of Kennedy's closest advisers during the Cuban Crisis.

Sun 28 October

Khrushchev replied to Kennedy: 'In order to eliminate as rapidly as possible the conflict which endangers the cause of peace . . . the Soviet Government has given a new order to dismantle the arms which you described as offensive and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union.'

SOURCE 22



A cartoon from the British newspaper, the *Daily Mail*.

Source Analysis ▶

Does Source 22 give the impression that either Khrushchev or Kennedy has the upper hand? Explain whether you think the events of the Crisis on these pages support that view.

Think!

Kennedy described Wednesday 24 October and Saturday 27 October as the darkest days of the crisis. Use the information on this page to explain why.

Why did the Soviet Union place nuclear missiles on Cuba?

It was an incredibly risky strategy. The USSR had supplied many of its allies with conventional weapons but this was the first time that any Soviet leader had placed nuclear weapons outside Soviet territory. Why did Khrushchev take such an unusual step? The USSR must have known that it would cause a crisis. What's more, the USSR made no attempt at all to camouflage the sites, and even allowed the missiles to travel on open deck. This has caused much debate as to what Khrushchev was really doing. Historians have suggested various possible explanations.



To bargain with the USA

If Khrushchev had missiles on Cuba, he could agree to remove them in return for some American concessions.



To close the missile gap

Khrushchev was so concerned about the missile gap between the USSR and the USA that he would seize any opportunity he could to close it. With missiles on Cuba it was less likely that the USA would ever launch a 'first strike' against the USSR.



To test the USA

In the strained atmosphere of Cold War politics the missiles were designed to see how strong the Americans really were – whether they would back off or face up.



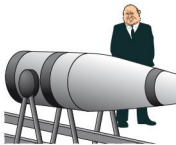
To defend Cuba

Cuba was the only Communist state in the Western hemisphere, and it had willingly become Communist rather than having become Communist as a result of invasion by the USSR. In addition, Cuba was in 'Uncle Sam's backyard'. As Castro himself put it: 'The imperialist cannot forgive that we have made a socialist revolution under the nose of the United States.' Just by existing, Castro's Cuba was excellent propaganda for the USSR.



To trap the USA

Khrushchev wanted the Americans to find them and be drawn into a nuclear war. He did not even try to hide them.



To strengthen his own position in the USSR

The superiority of the USA in nuclear missiles undermined Khrushchev's credibility inside the USSR. His critics pointed out that he was the one who had urged the USSR to rely on nuclear missiles. Now, could he show that the USSR really was a nuclear power?

Think!

- Which of the explanations above do Sources 23 and 24 support?
- Talking in private Khrushchev called the missiles 'a hedgehog in Uncle Sam's pants'. Which of the explanations does this statement support?
- Which explanation do you think Khrushchev's actions on 26 and 27 October support (see page 107)?
- Choose the explanation(s) that you think best fit what you have found out about the crisis. Explain your choice.

SOURCE 23

From the territory of the Soviet Union, the medium-range missiles couldn't possibly reach the territory of the USA, but deployed on Cuba they would become strategic nuclear weapons. That meant in practical terms we had a chance to narrow the differences between our forces.

General Anatoly Gribkov, commander, Soviet forces, Cuba.

SOURCE 24

In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call the 'balance of power'. The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you ...

Khrushchev writing in his memoirs in 1971.

The outcomes ...

For Kennedy and the USA

- Kennedy came out of the crisis with a greatly improved reputation in his own country and throughout the West. He had stood up to Khrushchev and had made him back down.
- Kennedy had also successfully stood up to the hardliners in his own government. Critics of containment had wanted the USA to invade Cuba – to turn back Communism. However, the Cuban Missile Crisis highlighted the weakness of their case. Such intervention was not worth the high risk.
- On the other hand, he did secretly agree to remove the missiles from Turkey. This was slightly awkward for him as technically the decision to remove them was a decision for NATO. His NATO allies were unhappy that Kennedy had traded them during the Cuban Missile Crisis but clearly this was much better than a nuclear war.
- Kennedy also had to accept that Castro's Cuba would remain a Communist state in America's backyard. The USA still has trade and other economic restrictions in place against Cuba today.

For Khrushchev and the USSR

- In public Khrushchev was able to highlight his role as a responsible peacemaker, willing to make the first move towards compromise.
- There was no question that keeping Cuba safe from American action was a major achievement for the Soviets. Cuba was a valuable ally and proved a useful base to support Communists in South America.
- Khrushchev did also get the USA to withdraw its nuclear missiles from Turkey. However, Khrushchev had to agree that this withdrawal was to be kept secret so he was unable to use it for propaganda purposes.
- The crisis also exposed the USA to criticism amongst some of its allies. Newspaper articles in Britain, for example, felt that the USA was unreasonable to have missiles in Turkey and then object to Soviet missiles in Cuba.
- On the other hand, there was no denying the fact that Khrushchev had been forced to back down and remove the missiles. The Soviet military was particularly upset at the terms of the withdrawal. They were forced to put the missiles on the decks of their ships so the Americans could count them. They felt this was a humiliation.
- Khrushchev's actions in Cuba made no impact on the underlying problem of the Missile Gap. The USSR went on to develop its stockpile of ICBMs at a huge financial cost, but it never caught up with the USA.
- In 1964 Khrushchev himself was forced from power by his enemies inside the USSR. Many commentators believe that the Cuban Missile Crisis contributed to this.

For the Cold War

- Historians agree that the Cuban Missile Crisis helped to thaw Cold War relations between the USA and the USSR.
- Both leaders had seen how their game of brinkmanship had nearly ended in nuclear war. Now they were more prepared to take steps to reduce the risk of nuclear war.
- A permanent 'hot line' phone link direct from the White House to the Kremlin was set up.
- The following year, in 1963, they signed a Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. It did not stop the development of weapons, but it limited tests and was an important step forward.
- Although it was clear the USSR could not match US nuclear technology or numbers of weapons, it was also clear that this was not necessary. The Soviet nuclear arsenal was enough of a threat to make the USA respect the USSR. It is noticeable that for the rest of the Cold War the Superpowers avoided direct confrontation and fought through their allies where possible.

For Castro's Cuba

- Castro was very upset by the deal which Khrushchev made with America but he had little choice. He needed the support of the USSR.
- Cuba stayed Communist and highly armed. The nuclear missiles were removed but Cuba remained an important base for Communist supporters in South America. Cuban forces also intervened to help the Communist side in a civil war in Angola (in South-West Africa) in the 1970s.
- Castro also kept control of the American companies and other economic resources he nationalised during his revolution. This remains a source of dispute between Cuba and the USA today but Castro has never backed down.

Think!

- 1 Use the information on this page to fill out a table of positive and negative outcomes for the USA and the USSR.
- 2 Who do you think gained the most from the Cuban Missile Crisis?

Focus Task

Was the Cuban Missile Crisis a success for containment?

Look back at your table from page 99. Complete a second row for the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Revision Tip

Make sure you can remember from this case study:

- ◆ one reason that this might be seen as a success for containment
- ◆ one reason it might be seen as a failure.

Case study 3: The Vietnam War

SOURCE 25

A poor feudal nation had beaten a great colonial power ... It meant a lot; not just to us but to people all over the world.

Viet Minh commander Vo Nguyen Giap commenting on the victory over France in 1954.

SOURCE 26

It was generally agreed that had an election been held, Ho Chi Minh would have been elected Premier ... at the time of the fighting, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader.

President Eisenhower writing after the Vietnam War.

SOURCE 27



Quang Duc, a 73-year-old Buddhist priest, burns himself to death in protest against the attacks on Buddhist shrines by the government of South Vietnam in 1963

Although Americans were relieved at the outcome of the Cuban Crisis it did not reduce their fear of Communism. Very soon they found themselves locked in a costly war in Vietnam, which put a massive question mark over the very policy of containment.

Origins of the Vietnam War

Vietnam had a long history of fighting outsiders.

Fighting the Japanese

Before the Second World War, Vietnam (or Indochina as it was called then) had been ruled by France. During the war the region was conquered by the Japanese. They treated the Vietnamese people savagely. As a result, a strong anti-Japanese resistance movement (the Viet Minh) emerged under the leadership of Communist Ho Chi Minh.

Ho was a remarkable individual. He had lived in the USA, Britain and France. In the 1920s he had studied Communism in the USSR. In 1930 he had founded the Indochinese Communist Party. He inspired the Vietnamese people to fight the Japanese.

When the Second World War ended, the Viet Minh entered the northern city of Hanoi in 1945 and declared Vietnam independent.

Fighting the French

The French had other ideas. In 1945 they came back wanting to rule Vietnam again, but Ho was not prepared to let this happen. Another nine years of war followed between the Viet Minh who controlled the north of the country and the French who controlled much of the south.

From 1949 Ho was supported by China, which had become a Communist state in 1949. You have already studied how the USA dealt with a similar situation in Korea (pages 96–99) so how would you expect the USA to react to this development? In this case rather than sending troops or getting a UN resolution the USA poured \$500 million a year into the French war effort. Despite this the French were unable to hold on to the country and pulled out of Vietnam in 1954.

A peace conference was held in Geneva and the country was divided into North and South Vietnam until elections could be held to decide its future (see Source 25).

Why did US involvement escalate?

Under the terms of the ceasefire, elections were to be held within two years to reunite the country. You will remember how the USA criticised Stalin for not holding free elections in Soviet-controlled eastern Europe after the war (see pages 82–85). In Vietnam in 1954 the USA applied a different rule. It prevented the elections from taking place because it feared that the Communists would win (see Source 26).

Why did the Americans do this? Their policy was a strange combination of determination and ignorance. President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State JF Dulles were convinced that China and the USSR were planning to spread Communism throughout Asia. The idea was often referred to as the domino theory: If Vietnam fell to Communism, then Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and possibly even India might also fall – just like a row of dominoes. The Americans were determined to resist the spread of Communism in Vietnam, which they saw as the first domino in the row. However, their methods and policies showed their ignorance of the Vietnamese people and the region.

Think!

- Many neutral observers in Vietnam were critical of US policy towards Diem's regime. Explain why.
- Explain how US politicians would have defended their policies.

Financial support for Diem's regime

In 1955 the Americans helped Ngo Dinh Diem to set up the Republic of South Vietnam. They supported him because he was bitterly anti-Communist and was prepared to imprison or exile Communists. However, Diem's regime was very unpopular with the Vietnamese people.

- He belonged to the landlord class, which treated the Vietnamese peasants with contempt.
- He was a Christian and showed little respect for the Buddhist religion of most Vietnamese peasants (see Source 27).
- Diem's regime was also extremely corrupt. He appointed members of his family or other supporters to positions of power and refused to hold elections, even for local councils.

The Americans were concerned and frustrated by his actions, but as Dulles said, 'We knew of no one better.' The USA supported Diem's regime with around \$1.6 billion in the 1950s. Diem was overthrown by his own army leaders in November 1963, but the governments that followed were equally corrupt. Even so, they also received massive US support.

The emergence of the Viet Cong

The actions of these anti-Communist governments increased support among the ordinary peasants for the Communist-led National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, which was set up in December 1960. This movement was usually called the Viet Cong. It included South Vietnamese opponents of the government, but also large numbers of Communist North Vietnamese taking their orders from Ho Chi Minh. Peasants who did not support the Viet Cong faced intimidation and violence from them.

The Viet Cong also started a guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government. Using the Ho Chi Minh trail (see Source 28), the Viet Cong sent reinforcements and ferried supplies to guerrilla fighters. These fighters attacked South Vietnamese government forces, officials and buildings. They gradually made the countryside unsafe for government forces. They also attacked American air force and supply bases.

In response the South Vietnamese government launched their 'strategic hamlet' programme, which involved moving peasant villages from Viet Cong-controlled areas to areas controlled by the South Vietnamese government. The Americans helped by supplying building materials, money, food and equipment for the villagers to build improved farms and houses. In practice this policy backfired as the peasants resented it – and corrupt officials pocketed money meant to buy supplies for the villagers.

From 'advisers' to combat troops

By 1962 President Kennedy was sending military personnel (he always called them 'advisers') to help the South Vietnamese army fight the Viet Cong (see Source 29). However, Kennedy said he was determined that the USA would not 'blunder into war, unclear about aims or how to get out again'. He was a keen historian himself and had studied the USA's past successes and failures. He was well aware from the Korean war ten years earlier what could and could not be achieved by military intervention.

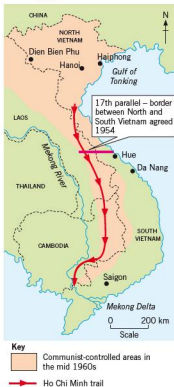
However President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, was more prepared than Kennedy to commit the USA to a full-scale conflict in Vietnam to prevent the spread of Communism.

In August 1964, North Vietnamese patrol boats opened fire on US ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. In a furious reaction, the US Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave the President power to 'take all necessary measures to prevent further aggression and achieve peace and security'. It effectively meant that Johnson could take the USA into a full-scale war if he felt it was necessary, and very soon he did.

- **In February 1965 the US started Operation Rolling Thunder** – a gigantic bombing campaign against North Vietnamese cities, factories, army bases and the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which continued for three years.
- **On 8 March 1965, 3,500 US marines, combat troops rather than advisers, came ashore at Da Nang.**

The USA was now officially at war in Vietnam.

SOURCE 28



Vietnam in the mid 1960s

SOURCE 29

First is the simple fact that South Vietnam, a member of the free world family, is striving to preserve its independence from Communist attack. Second, South East Asia has great significance in the forward defence of the USA. For Hanoi, the immediate object is limited: conquest of the south and national unification. For Peking, however, Hanoi's victory would only be a first step towards eventual Chinese dominance of the two Vietnams and South East Asia and towards exploitation of the new strategy in other parts of the world.

Robert McNamara, US Defence Secretary, explaining in 1964 why he supported the policy of sending US troops to Vietnam.

Source Analysis ▲

Compare Source 29 with Source 2 on page 96. How similar are the arguments used in 1964 about Vietnam to those used in 1950 about Korea?

Revision Tip

Make sure you can recall:

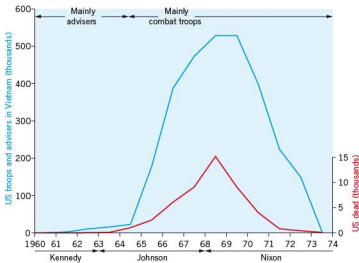
- ◆ two reasons why Communism was becoming stronger in Vietnam
- ◆ two measures taken by the USA to resist the spread of Communism.

Why did US send troops to Vietnam?

The answer to this question may seem obvious! It was because of the policy of containment and the 'domino theory'. That is certainly how the President and his advisers explained it (see Source 29 for example). However there is a more controversial view held by some historians that powerful groups within the USA wanted a war.

In 1961 President Eisenhower himself warned that America had developed a powerful 'military-industrial complex'. The government gave huge budgets to the military commanders. These budgets were spent on weapons part by some of America's biggest companies. Thus, both the armed forces and business actually gained from conflict. Eisenhower did not accuse business and military leaders of anything, but in his last speech as President he warned the American people not to let these groups become too influential. Some historians believe that this was a factor in American involvement in Vietnam, but it is hotly disputed by others.

SOURCE 30



US troops and deaths in Vietnam, 1960–74. US troops were not the only foreign soldiers in the war. About 46,000 Australian and New Zealand troops fought too.

Focus Task A

Why did the USA get increasingly involved in Vietnam?

- 1 Draw a timeline of the period 1945–65.
- 2 Mark on it increasing American involvement using the following headings:
 - ◆ No direct American involvement
 - ◆ Financial support
 - ◆ Political involvement
 - ◆ Military involvement
- 3 Write annotations to show the date on which each of these phases started and what events triggered the increasing involvement.
- 4 Choose two events that you think were critical in increasing the USA's involvement in the war in Vietnam. Explain your choice.

Tactics and technology in the Vietnam War

With hindsight it is easy to see that the American decision to get fully involved in the war was a huge gamble. But political leaders did not have the benefit of hindsight. They made their decision on the basis of what they knew and believed at the time. They knew their technology and firepower was superior to the Viet Cong and they believed that would allow them to win the war.

However they were soon proved wrong. As time wore on it became clear that the USA needed more than money and technology to win this kind of war. On the next four pages you will find out why by comparing Viet Cong and US tactics. Focus Task B will direct your reading.

Focus Task B

Why couldn't the Americans win?


Stage 1 – Understand the tactics

1 Work in pairs. Take either the Viet Cong or the Americans. Use page 114 or 115 to find out about the your side's tactics. Create a diagram by following these steps:

- ◆ In the inner circle record the tactics.
 - ◆ In the outer circle the reason for using those tactics.
 - ◆ Draw lines to show how the tactics and reasons are connected.
- Compare your diagram with your partner's.

Stage 2 – Thinking it through

2 Make your own table like this, then using your research from stage 1 record in columns 2 and 4 how far each side had these qualities. You can add further rows if you think of other important qualities.

Qualities	The US army		Viet Cong
Well-trained soldiers			
The right technology			
Reliable supplies and equipment			
Effective tactics			
Support from the Vietnamese population			
Motivated and committed soldiers			
Other			

3 Next, in each row of column 3, draw some scales to show which way the balance falls for this quality. Did the USA or the Viet Cong have the advantage?

4 Now think about the overall picture – how the strengths and weaknesses work together.

- a) Were the armies finely balanced? Or was the balance strongly weighted to one side or the other?
- b) Which quality was most important in determining who won the war? Was one so important that being ahead in that area meant that other advantages or disadvantages did not matter?

Stage 3 – Explaining your conclusions

5 Now write up your answer. You could use this structure:

- a) Describe how the failure of the US army was a combination of its own weaknesses and Viet Cong strengths.
- b) Give balanced examples of US successes and failures.
- c) Give balanced examples of Viet Cong successes and failures.
- d) Choose one American weakness and one Viet Cong strength that you think were absolutely vital in preventing the USA from beating the Viet Cong and explain the significance of the points you have chosen.

Revision Tip

Find five reasons why the USA could not defeat the Viet Cong. Make sure you can recall:

- ◆ two or three strengths of the Viet Cong (with examples)
- ◆ two or three weaknesses of the USA (with examples).

Viet Cong tactics

In early 1965 the Viet Cong had about 170,000 soldiers. They were heavily outnumbered and outgunned. They were no match for the US and South Vietnamese forces in open warfare. In November 1965 in the La Dreng Valley, US forces killed 2,000 Viet Cong for the loss of 300 troops. However, this did not daunt Ho Chi Minh.

Guerrilla warfare

Ho had been in China and seen Mao Tse-tung use guerrilla warfare to achieve a Communist victory. The principles of guerrilla warfare were simple: retreat when the enemy attacks; raid when the enemy camps; attack when the enemy tires; pursue when the enemy retreats. Ho had successfully used these guerrilla tactics himself to drive out the French.

Guerrilla warfare was a nightmare for the US army. Guerrillas did not wear uniform. They were hard to tell apart from the peasants in the villages. They had no known base camp or headquarters. They worked in small groups with limited weapons. They attacked then disappeared into the jungle, into the villages or into tunnels (see Source 32).

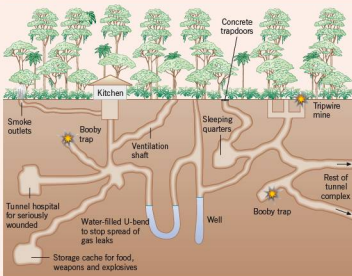
Guerrilla attacks aimed to wear down enemy soldiers and wreck their morale. US soldiers lived in constant fear of ambushes or booby traps such as pits filled with sharpened bamboo stakes. One of the least popular duties for US soldiers was going 'on point', which meant leading the patrol checking for booby traps – 11 per cent of US casualties were caused by booby traps. Another 51 per cent were from ambushes or hand-to-hand combat. The Viet Cong favoured close-quarter fighting because it knew that the Americans would not use their superior guns for fear of hitting their own troops. This was known as 'hanging on to the American belts'.

SOURCE 31

I remember sitting at this wretched little outpost one day with a couple of my sergeants. We'd been manning this thing for three weeks and running patrols off it. We were grungy and sore with jungle rot and we'd suffered about nine or ten casualties on a recent patrol. This one sergeant of mine said, 'You know, Lieutenant, I don't see how we're ever going to win this.' And I said, 'Well, Sarge, I'm not supposed to say this to you as your officer – but I don't either.' So there was this sense that we just couldn't see what could be done to defeat these people.

Philip Caputo, a lieutenant in the Marine Corps in Vietnam in 1965–66, speaking in 1997.

SOURCE 32



A Viet Cong tunnel complex. To avoid the worst effects of American air power, the Viet Cong built a vast network of underground tunnels, probably around 240 km of them.

Civilians

Ho knew how important it was to keep the population on his side. The Viet Cong fighters were expected to be courteous and respectful to the Vietnamese peasants. They helped the peasants in the fields during busy periods. However, the Viet Cong could be ruthless – they were quite prepared to kill peasants who opposed them or who co-operated with their enemies. They also conducted a campaign of terror against the police, tax collectors, teachers and any other employees of the South Vietnamese government. Between 1966 and 1971 the Viet Cong killed an estimated 27,000 civilians.

Supplies

The Viet Cong depended on supplies from North Vietnam that came along the Ho Chi Minh trail. US and South Vietnamese planes bombed this constantly, but 40,000 Vietnamese worked to keep it open whatever the cost.

Commitment

The total of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese dead in the war has been estimated at 1 million – far higher than US losses. However, this was a price that Ho Chi Minh was prepared to pay. Whatever the casualties, there were replacement troops available. The greatest strength of the Viet Cong fighters was that they simply refused to give in.

Think!

- 1 One Viet Cong leader said: 'The people are the water. Our armies are the fish.' What do you think he meant?
- 2 Find evidence on pages 114–115 to support the view that:
 - ♦ the Viet Cong had the support of the people
 - ♦ they did not.

US tactics

Bombing

The main US tactic was bombing. For seven years from 1965–72 the USA bombed military and industrial targets in North Vietnam; they bombed towns and cities in North and South Vietnam; they bombed the Ho Chi Minh trail; they bombed Vietnam's neighbours Laos and Cambodia (who were sympathetic to the Viet Cong).

To some extent bombing worked.

- It damaged North Vietnam's war effort and it disrupted supply routes.
- From 1970 to 1972, intense bombing of North Vietnam forced them to negotiate for peace.

However, air power could not defeat the Communists. It could only slow them down. Even after major air raids on North Vietnam in 1972, the Communists were still able to launch a major assault on the South. Even more important, civilian casualties helped turn the Vietnamese people against the Americans.

Search and destroy

To combat guerrilla warfare the US commander General Westmoreland developed a policy of search and destroy. He set up heavily defended US bases in South Vietnam near to the coasts. From here helicopters full of troops would descend on a village and search out and destroy any Viet Cong forces they found. Soldiers had to send back reports of body counts.

Search-and-destroy missions did kill Viet Cong soldiers, but there were problems.

- The raids were often based on inadequate information.
- Inexperienced US troops often walked into traps.
- Innocent villages were mistaken for Viet Cong strongholds. For every Viet Cong weapon captured by search and destroy, there was a body count of six. Many of these were innocent civilians.
- Search-and-destroy tactics made the US and South Vietnamese forces very unpopular with the peasants. It pushed them towards supporting the Viet Cong.

SOURCE 33

You would go out, you would secure a piece of terrain during the daylight hours, [but at night] you'd surrender that – and I mean literally surrender ... you'd give it up, because ... the helicopters would come in and pick you up at night and fly you back to the security of your base camp.

Lieutenant Colonel George Forrest, US Army.

Chemical weapons

The US also used chemical weapons to combat the Viet Cong.

- **Agent Orange** was a highly toxic 'weedkiller' sprayed from planes to destroy the jungle where the Viet Cong hid. The Americans used 82 million litres of Agent Orange to spray thousands of square kilometres of jungle.
- **Napalm** was another widely used chemical weapon. It destroyed jungles where guerrillas might hide. It also burned through skin to the bone.
- Many civilians and soldiers were also killed or harmed by these chemical weapons.

US troops

In the early stages of the war most US troops were professional soldiers. Morale was good and they performed well. However, as the war intensified the US needed more soldiers so they introduced the draft (conscription). As soon as young men left school or college they could be called up into the US army. So from 1967:

- Many soldiers were young men who had never been in the military before. The average age of US troops was only 19.
- In theory American troops came from all walks of life. In reality the majority of combat troops were from poor and immigrant backgrounds.
- The conscripts knew little about Vietnam – and some cared little about democracy or communism. They just wanted to get home alive. In contrast the Viet Cong were fighting for their own country, and a cause many of them believed in.
- Morale among the US conscripts was often very low. To tackle this problem the generals introduced a policy of giving troops just a one-year term of service. This backfired because as soon as the soldiers gained experience they were sent home.

SOURCE 34



A ten-year-old Vietnamese girl, Phan Thi Kim, runs naked after tearing her burning clothes from her body following a napalm attack in 1972. This photograph became one of the most enduring images of the war.

SOURCE 35

In the end anybody who was still in that country was the enemy. The same village you'd gone in to give them medical treatment ... you could go through that village later and get shot at by a sniper. Go back in and you would not find anybody. Nobody knew anything. We were trying to work with these people, they were basically doing a number on us. You didn't trust them anymore. You didn't trust anybody.

Fred Widmer, an American soldier, speaking in 1969.

The Tet Offensive

Despite these problems the official American view of the war from 1965 to 1967 was that it was going reasonably well. The US and South Vietnamese forces were killing large numbers of Viet Cong. Although they were struggling against guerrilla tactics they were confident that the enemy was being worn down. The press reports reflected this positive view.

This confidence was shattered early in 1968. During the New Year holiday Viet Cong fighters attacked over 100 cities and other military targets. One Viet Cong commando unit tried to capture the US embassy in Saigon. US forces had to fight to regain control room by room. Around 4,500 Viet Cong fighters tied down a much larger US and South Vietnamese force in Saigon for two days.

In many ways the Tet Offensive was a disaster for the Communists. They had hoped that the people of South Vietnam would rise up and join them. They didn't. The Viet Cong lost around 10,000 experienced fighters and were badly weakened by it.

However, the Tet Offensive proved to be a turning point in the war because it raised hard questions in the USA about the war.

- There were nearly 500,000 troops in Vietnam and the USA was spending \$20 billion a year on the war. So why had the Communists been able to launch a major offensive that took US forces completely by surprise?
- US and South Vietnamese forces quickly retook the towns captured in the offensive, but in the process they used enormous amounts of artillery and air power. Many civilians were killed. The ancient city of Hue was destroyed. Was this right?

SOURCE 36



CBS News journalist Walter Cronkite reporting in Vietnam in February 1968. He was regarded as the most trusted man in America.

The media

Until this point media coverage of the war was generally positive, although some journalists were beginning to ask difficult questions in 1967. During the Tet Offensive the gloves came off. CBS journalist Walter Cronkite (see Source 36) asked 'What the hell is going on? I thought we were winning this war'. Don Oberdorfer of *The Washington Post* later wrote (in 1971) that as a result of the Tet Offensive 'the American people and most of their leaders reached the conclusion that the Vietnam War would require greater effort over a far longer period of time than it was worth'.

SOURCE 37

The Tet Offensive was the decisive battle of the Vietnam War because of its profound impact on American attitudes about involvement in Southeast Asia. In the aftermath of Tet, many Americans became disillusioned ... To the American public and even to members of the administration, the offensive demonstrated that US intervention ... had produced a negligible effect on the will and capability of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese.

Extract from The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War by James Wirtz.

SOURCE 38

One does not use napalm on villages and hamlets sheltering civilians if one is attempting to persuade these people of the rightness of one's cause. One does not defoliate [destroy the vegetation of] the country and deform its people with chemicals if one is attempting to persuade them of the foe's evil nature.

An American comments on US policy failure in Vietnam.

Source Analysis

- 1 Who or what is the cartoonist criticising in Source 39?
- 2 Which do you think is more effective as a criticism of the Vietnam War – Source 38, 39 or 40? Give reasons based on the source and your knowledge of the USA at this time.

SOURCE 39

"There's Money Enough To Support Both Of You — Now, Doesn't That Make You Feel Better?"



—from *The Blackbook Gallery* (Klimer & Schacter, 1948)

An American cartoon from 1967.

The peace movement in the USA

For a war on such a scale the government had to have the support of the American people. With deaths and injuries to so many young Americans, public opinion had been turning against the war even before the Tet Offensive. After it the trickle of anti-war feeling became a flood.

- The war was draining money that could be used to better purposes at home (see Sources 39 and 40). Yet despite all that spending the USA did not seem to be any closer to winning the war.
- The draft exposed racial inequality in the USA: 30 per cent of African Americans were drafted compared to only 19 per cent of white Americans; 22 per cent of US casualties were black Americans, even though this group made up only 11 per cent of the total US force. World champion boxer Muhammad Ali refused to join the army on the grounds of his Muslim faith. He was stripped of his world title and his passport was removed. Ali was a follower of the radical Black Power group called Nation of Islam. They argued: How could they fight for a country which discriminated against them at home? As some of them pointed out, 'the Viet Cong never called us nigger'.
- Most damaging of all, an increasing number of Americans felt deeply uncomfortable about what was going on in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War was a media war. Thousands of television, radio and newspaper reporters, and a vast army of photographers sent back to the USA and Europe reports and pictures of the fighting. The newspapers showed crying children burned by American napalm bombs (see Source 34). Television showed prisoners being tortured or executed, or women and children watching with horror as their house was set on fire. To see such casual violence beamed into the living rooms of the USA was deeply shocking to the average American. Was this why 900,000 young Americans had been drafted? Instead of Vietnam being a symbol of a US crusade against Communism, Vietnam had become a symbol of defeat, confusion and moral corruption. The most powerful illustration of this was the My Lai massacre (see page 118).

The anti-war protests reached their height during 1968–70 led by students and civil rights campaigners.

- In the first half of 1968, there were over 100 demonstrations against the Vietnam War involving 40,000 students. Frequently the protest would involve burning the American flag – a criminal offence in the USA and a powerful symbol of the students' rejection of American values. Students taunted the American President Lyndon B Johnson with the chant 'Hey, Hey LBJ; how many kids did you kill today?'
- In November 1969, almost 700,000 anti-war protesters demonstrated in Washington DC. It was the largest political protest in American history.

SOURCE 40

This confused war has played havoc with our domestic destinies. The promises of the great society have been shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam. The pursuit of this wickeded war has narrowed the promised dimensions of the domestic welfare programs, making the poor – white and Negro – bear the heaviest burdens both at the front and at home.

The war has put us in the position of protecting a corrupt government that is stacked against the poor. We are spending \$500,000 to kill every Viet Cong soldier while we spend only \$53 for every person considered to be in poverty in the USA. It has put us in a position of appearing to the world as an arrogant nation. Here we are 10,000 miles away from home fighting for the so-called freedom of the Vietnamese people when we have so much to do in our own country.

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King speaking in the USA in April 1968.

SOURCE 41

Most of the soldiers had never been away from home before they went into service. And they end up in Vietnam going there many of them because they thought they were going to do something courageous on behalf of their country, something which they thought was in the American ideal.

But it didn't mean slaughtering whole villages of women and children. One of my friends, when he told me about it, said: 'You know it was a Nazi kind of thing.' We didn't go there to be Nazis. At least none of the people I knew went there to be Nazis.

Written by Ronald Ridenhour, a US soldier in Vietnam. He was not at My Lai, but interviewed many witnesses and started a campaign to pressure the US authorities to investigate properly.

SOURCE 42



A photograph taken at My Lai on 16 March 1968 by Ron Haerberle (see Source 43).

Think!

- 1 Why do you think it took twelve months for anyone to do anything about the massacre?
- 2 Why was the massacre so shocking to the American public?

Source Analysis ►

- 1 Source 43 was written by someone who worked for the US Army. Does that make it a trustworthy source?

The My Lai massacre

In March 1968, a unit of young American soldiers called Charlie Company started a search-and-destroy mission. They had been told that in the My Lai area there was a Viet Cong headquarters, and 200 Viet Cong guerrillas. They had been ordered to destroy all houses, dwellings and livestock. They had been told that all the villagers would have left for market because it was a Saturday. Most of them were under the impression that they had been ordered to kill everyone they found in the village.

Early in the morning of 16 March, Charlie Company arrived in My Lai. In the next four hours, between 300 and 400 civilians were killed. They were mostly women, children and old men. Some were killed while they worked in their fields. Many of them were mown down by machine-gun fire as they were herded into an irrigation ditch. Others were shot in their homes. No Viet Cong were found in the village. Only three weapons were recovered.

'Something dark and bloody'

At the time, the army treated the operation as a success. The commanding officer's report said that 20 non-combatants had been killed by accident in the attack, but the rest of the dead were recorded as being Viet Cong. The officers and men involved were praised.

However, twelve months later, a letter arrived in the offices of 50 leading politicians and government officials in Washington. It was written by Ronald Ridenhour, an American soldier who had served in Vietnam and who personally knew many of the soldiers who took part in the massacre. He had evidence, he said, of 'something rather dark and bloody' that had occurred in My Lai – or Pinkville as the American soldiers called it. He recounted in detail the stories he had been told about what had taken place and asked Congress to investigate.

Investigation

Soon after, *Life* magazine, one of the most influential magazines in the USA, published photographs of the massacre at My Lai (see Source 42) that had been taken by an official army photographer. This triggered an investigation that ended in the trial for mass murder of Lieutenant William Calley. He was an officer in Charlie Company. He had personally shot many of the people in the irrigation ditch at My Lai. In September 1969 he was formally charged with murdering 109 people. Ten other members of the company and the commanding officers were also charged.

Aftermath

The revelations were deeply shocking to the American people. The charges were also too much for the army. They placed responsibility on Calley. They denied that Calley was acting under orders. His senior officers were acquitted. After a long court case surrounded by massive media attention and publicity, Calley was found guilty of the murder of 22 civilians. In August 1971 he was sentenced to 20 years' hard labour. In November 1974 he was released.

SOURCE 43

I think I was in a kind of daze from seeing all these shootings and not seeing any returning fire. Yet the killing kept going on. The Americans were rounding up the people and shooting them, not taking any prisoners ... I was part of it, everyone who was there was part of it and that includes the General and the Colonel flying above in their helicopters ... Just as soon as I turned away I heard firing. I saw people drop. They started falling on top of each other, one on top of the other. I just kept on walking. I did not pay any attention to who did it. By that time I knew what the score was. It was an atrocity ... I notice this one small boy had been shot in the foot ... he was walking toward the group of bodies looking for his mother ... then suddenly I heard a crack and ... I saw this child flip on top of the pile of bodies. The GI just stood and walked away. No remorse. Nothing.

Ron Haerberle, the US Army official photographer. His black and white pictures for the Army and his colour photographs taken with his own private camera had a dramatic public impact.

Ending the war in Vietnam

After the Tet Offensive President Johnson concluded that the war could not be won militarily. He reduced the bombing campaign against North Vietnam and instructed his officials to begin negotiating for peace with the Communists.

Johnson also announced that he would not be seeking re-election as President. It was an admission of failure. In the election campaign both candidates campaigned to end US involvement in Vietnam. The anti-war feeling was so strong that if they had supported continuing the war they would have had no chance of being elected anyway. It was no longer a question of 'could the USA win the war?' but 'how can the USA get out of Vietnam without it looking like a defeat?'

A new President

In November 1968 Richard Nixon was elected President. From 1969 to 1973 he and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger worked to end US involvement in Vietnam. This was not easy because the bigger question of how to contain world Communism – the one that had got the USA into Vietnam in the first place – had not gone away. They did not want to appear simply to hand Vietnam to the Communists. They used a range of strategies.

Improved relations with USSR and China

In 1969 the USSR and China fell out. It seemed possible that there would even be a war between these two powerful Communist countries. As a result, both the USSR and China tried to improve relations with the USA.

Peace negotiations with North Vietnam

From early 1969, Kissinger had regular meetings with the chief Vietnamese peace negotiator, Le Duc Tho.

'Vietnamisation' of the war effort

In Vietnam Nixon began handing responsibility for the war to South Vietnamese forces and withdrawing US troops. Between April 1969 and the end of 1971 almost 400,000 US troops left Vietnam.

Increased bombing

At the same time Nixon increased bombing campaigns against North Vietnam to show he was not weak. US and South Vietnamese troops also invaded Viet Cong bases in Cambodia, causing outrage across the world, and even in the USA.

'Peace with honour'

In Paris in January 1973 all parties signed a peace agreement. Nixon described it as 'peace with honour'. Others disagreed (see Source 44), but the door was now open for Nixon to pull out all US troops. By 29 March 1973, the last American forces had left Vietnam.

It is not clear whether Nixon really believed he had secured a lasting peace settlement. But within two years, without the support of the USA, South Vietnam had fallen to the Communists. One of the bleakest symbols of American failure in Vietnam was the televised news images of desperate Vietnamese men, women and children trying to clamber aboard American helicopters taking off from the US embassy. All around them Communist forces swarmed through Saigon. After 30 years of constant conflict, the struggle for control of Vietnam had finally been settled and the Communists had won.

Source Analysis ▶

- 1 Describe the attitude of Source 44 to the agreement of January 1973.
- 2 Are you surprised by this source?

SOURCE 44

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

... the nation began at last to extricate itself from a quicksandy war that had plagued four Presidents and driven one from office, that had sundered the country more deeply than any event since the Civil War, that in the end came to be seen by a great majority of Americans as having been a tragic mistake.

... but its more grievous toll was paid at home – a wound to the spirit so sore that news of peace stirred only the relief that comes with an end to pain. A war that produced no famous victories, no national heroes and no strong patriotic songs, produced no memorable armistice day celebrations either. America was too exhausted by the war and too chary of peace to celebrate.

Reaction to the agreement of January 1973 in the influential American news magazine *Newsweek*, 5 February 1973.

Focus Task A

Why did US policy fail in Vietnam?

Despite all the money they spent and the effort they put in, the US failed to contain the spread of Communism to South Vietnam. You are now going to consider the reasons for this.

- 1 Make cards like these. On each card write an explanation or paste a source which shows the importance of the reason, i.e. how it damaged the policy of containment. Add other cards if you think there are reasons you should consider.
- 2 Lay your cards out on a large sheet of paper and add lines to show connections between the reasons. Write an explanation of the connection.

US military tactics in Vietnam

The unpopularity of the South Vietnamese regime

The experience of the Viet Cong and the inexperience of the American soldiers

Opposition in the USA

Other countries' support for the Viet Cong

Revision Tip

Use these cards for your revision. Take a photo of your completed layout showing and annotating the connections. This will be a good essay plan if you have to write on this topic for an assignment. Make sure you can remember one piece of evidence to go with each point.

How did the Vietnam War affect the policy of containment?

The American policy of containment was in tatters.

- It had failed **militarily**. The war had shown that even the USA's vast military strength could not stem the spread of Communism.
- It had also failed **strategically**. Not only did the USA fail to stop South Vietnam going Communist, but the heavy bombing of Vietnam's neighbours, Laos and Cambodia, actually helped the Communist forces in those countries to win support. By 1975 both Laos and Cambodia had Communist governments. Instead of slowing down the domino effect in the region, American policies actually speeded it up.
- It was also a **propaganda disaster**. The Americans had always presented their campaign against Communism as a moral crusade. But atrocities committed by American soldiers and the use of chemical weapons damaged the USA's reputation. In terms of a crusade for 'democracy' the Americans were seen to be propping up a government that did not have the support of its own people.

These failures greatly affected the USA's future policies towards Communist states. After the war, the Americans tried to improve their relations with China. They ended their block on China's membership of the UN. The President made visits to China. The USA also entered into a period of greater understanding with the Soviet Union. In fact, during the 1970s both the Soviet Union and China got on better with the USA than they did with each other.

The Americans also became very suspicious of involving their troops in any other conflict that they could not easily and overwhelmingly win. This was an attitude that continued to affect American foreign policy into the twenty-first century.

Focus Task B

How successful was the USA's policy of containment in Vietnam?

- 1 Look back at your chart from page 109. Complete it for the Vietnam War.
- 2 You have now looked at three very different case studies of the USA's attempts to contain Communism. Using the work you have done for the Focus Tasks on pages 99, 109 and this page, explain:
 - ◆ how far did the policy of containment succeed
 - ◆ what the main reasons for its success or failure were.

Revision Tip

All these case studies are important because they each show different aspects of containment in action. Make sure you are equally confident about each one and can explain in your own words whether it was a success or failure for containment.

Keywords

Make sure you know what these terms mean and be able to define them confidently.

- ◆ Agent Orange
- ◆ Armistice
- ◆ Arms race
- ◆ Atomic bomb/H bomb
- ◆ Bay of Pigs
- ◆ Blockade
- ◆ Capitalism
- ◆ CENTO
- ◆ Cold War
- ◆ Cominform
- ◆ Communism
- ◆ Containment
- ◆ Conventional weapons
- ◆ Democracy
- ◆ Dictator
- ◆ Diplomatic relations
- ◆ Domino theory
- ◆ Draft
- ◆ Guerrilla warfare
- ◆ Ho Chi Minh Trail
- ◆ ICBM
- ◆ Indochina
- ◆ Intelligence (as in CIA)
- ◆ Landlord/peasant
- ◆ MAD
- ◆ Missile gap
- ◆ Napalm
- ◆ Nuclear deterrent
- ◆ Operation Rolling Thunder
- ◆ Satellite state
- ◆ Search and destroy
- ◆ SEATO
- ◆ Surveillance
- ◆ Tet Offensive
- ◆ United Nations
- ◆ US sphere of influence
- ◆ Viet Cong
- ◆ Viet Minh
- ◆ Vietnamisation
- ◆ Warsaw Pact

Chapter Summary

Containment

- 1 The USA was anti-Communist and wanted to limit the spread of Communism around the world – this policy was called containment.

Korea

- 2 When a Communist government tried to take over in Korea in 1950 the USA sent troops to help prevent Korea falling to the Communists.
- 3 The result was a stalemate and in 1953 Korea was divided into a Communist north (friendly towards China) and a capitalist south (friendly towards the USA).

Cuba

- 4 Cuba turned Communist in 1959. Cuba is a large island very close to the USA.
- 5 In the 1960s there was a nuclear arms race between the USA and USSR with ever more dangerous nuclear weapons being developed and tested by both sides.
- 6 The Soviet leader Khrushchev sent nuclear weapons to Cuba. The USA and much of the world were worried that this might lead to the first nuclear war with dreadful consequences.
- 7 The US President Kennedy ordered a blockade of Cuba to prevent the weapons arriving and the crisis was averted. Better relations between the two leaders followed.

Vietnam

- 8 The next area of worry was South-east Asia where Communism was very strong. The USA believed in the domino theory – if one country turned Communist then the neighbouring countries would follow so they wanted to stop any country turning Communist.
- 9 In 1954 following a civil war Vietnam was divided into a Communist north and a capitalist south but the north, with the help of Communist China, tried to take over the south too.
- 10 The USA decided to help the south to resist the threat of the Communist north by first sending money and advisers then combat troops.
- 11 They got more and more involved, to the point where hundreds of thousands of US troops were fighting in Vietnam (the US introduced conscription to provide enough soldiers), and thousands were being killed each year.
- 12 Despite all this investment the US was not winning this war. The war lost support at home and the USA decided to withdraw from Vietnam and leave South Vietnam to its fate. It finally fell to the Communists in 1975.

Exam Practice

See pages 168–175 and pages 316–319 for advice on the different types of questions you might face.

- 1 (a) Describe the Domino Theory. [4]
 (b) Explain why the USA sent troops to Vietnam in the mid 1960s. [6]
 (c) 'The Americans failed in Vietnam because they used the wrong tactics.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10]
- 2 Study Source 15 on page 103. How reliable is this source? Use the source and your knowledge to explain your answer. [7]
- 3 Study Sources 19 and 20 on page 106. How similar are these two sources? Use the source and your knowledge to explain your answer. [8]

Before



After

