

## Harry S. Truman (1945-1953)

### Foreign policy:

Ended WWII by dropping atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

His policy of containment was the strategy of the US throughout the Cold War.

### Aid:

The **Truman Doctrine** committed the US to supporting countries fighting communism (both financially and militarily) – notably Greece and Turkey.

**Marshall Aid** (after Secretary of State) to help economies of war-torn Europe.

Authorised airlifts during Berlin Blockade.

### Second term:

He negotiated the formation of **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** to defend Western Europe against communism.

Failed to prevent victory of communists in China (he 'lost' China).

Committed the US to fighting in Korea. Later **fired General Douglas MacArthur** for publicly defying him.

### Domestic policy:

He proposed the **Fair Deal program**, which Congress refused to pass. It included:

Civil rights laws.

Expansion of social security.

Public housing for those in need.

His civil rights legislation was blocked by Southern senators, but he kept trying.

GI Bill of Rights was a major success.

Helped veterans buy homes at low rates of interest and get a higher education.

Red Scare began during his second term.

Under pressure not to seem weak, he established a **Federal Employee Loyalty Program**, which rooted out gov employees seen to be a risk.

He became unpopular due to Korean War. Now seen as one of the greatest US presidents.

## Dwight David Eisenhower (1953-1961)

Foreign policy:

Obtained a truce in Korea.

Worked to ease tensions of the Cold War.

Cut defense spending and warned against growth of a **military-industrial complex**.

This was how the army and armaments industry were influencing politics.

Domestic policy:

Promoted a stable economy successfully.

Launched the Interstate Highway Program – largest US public works program.

Brought in some civil rights reforms, among them...

Desegregation of army.

Enforced desegregation of schools by sending troops to **Little Rock, Arkansas**.

## John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1961-1963)

Foreign policy:

Successfully handled major crises with USSR over Berlin and Cuba.

Signed a Test Ban Treaty with USSR.

He was very committed to the war in Vietnam.

Domestic policy:

Supported tax cuts, civil rights legislation.

Committed US to landing a man on the moon by the end of a decade.

Youngest person ever elected as US president, beloved by many Americans. His assassination in 1963 was mourned by millions.

# Lyndon Baines Johnson (1963-1969)

Foreign policy:

Operating under the policy of containment, he greatly increased US involvement in Vietnam.

This was very unpopular domestically – lots of protests.

Domestic policy:

New Civil Rights Bill, tax cuts.

His Great Society plans were very popular, they got him elected a second time.

Huge social welfare increases: widescale fight against poverty, aid for education, the elderly.

Removed obstacles for black people voting.

Made great progress in Space Race.

His domestic reforms were overshadowed by the war in Vietnam. The expense of the war also stopped him from giving attention and funding to his Great Society.

He did not stand for re-election because of domestic criticism ("Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?")

# Richard Milhous Nixon (1969-1974)

Foreign policy:

Ended US military involvement in Vietnam, but it was a slow process.

Vietnamization – training the South Vietnamese to fight for themselves.

Visited both Moscow and Beijing – began détente and recognition of China.

Supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

This led to an oil embargo by Arab nations.

Domestic policy:

Created the Environmental Protection Agency.

Supported Equal Rights Amendment in 1972.

Economy:

Freeze on wages and prices, devaluation of dollar.

Oil embargo led to energy crisis and worsening economic problems.

Watergate scandal – Nixon organised a break-in into Democratic Party headquarters (he was Republican), he recorded private conversations.

This forced his resignation.

This led to a growing distrust of the government among Americans.

## **Gerald Ford (1974-1977)**

Foreign policy:

The fall of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to communism was a blow to his administration.

Continued policy of détente with USSR – Apollo-Soyuz mission of 1975. US and USSR spacecraft met up and worked together.

Helped to preserve peace between Israel and Egypt.

Domestic policy:

He failed to tackle recession (rising unemployment, inflation, high interest rates).

Whip Inflation Now policy failed (it tried to get support for cuts in spending).

## **Jimmy Carter (1977-1981)**

Foreign policy:

Helped to negotiate Camp David Agreement which brought peace between Egypt and Israel.

Established full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

Completed negotiations of SALT II with USSR.

This was suspended when USSR invaded Afghanistan.

Relations with USSR damaged by Carter's idealistic pleas on behalf of dissidents.

Iran Hostage Crisis overshadowed much of his presidency and made him very unpopular.

‘Brutal pro-US regime of the Shah of Iran was overthrown, and US embassy staff were held hostage for over a year.

Domestic policy:

Tried to combat inflation and unemployment – created 8 million new jobs, but still had high inflation and interest rates. This was worsened by the Second Oil Crisis.

Created Department of Education, improved Social Security system.

# Ronald Reagan (1981-1989)

Foreign policy:

Anti-communist crusader. Wanted to build America's strength after Vietnam.

Called détente 'a one-way street the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims', called USSR evil.

Put pressure on USSR about human rights abuses, didn't want to negotiate with them.

SALT II wasn't ratified, so he began rearmament – increased defence budget by 50%.

Reagan Doctrine promised increased assistance to countries fighting communism.

\$4 billion to El Salvador despite its terrible human rights record.

Contra guerillas were fighting the left-wing government in Nicaragua. Reagan's administration got the Israelis to sell US arms to the Iranians and use the profit to fund the Contras. This was illegal and caused huge controversy when it was exposed.

His Star Wars proposal:

Originally called the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).

He intended to spend billions to research ways to block Soviet missiles using satellites, space-based lasers, etc.

USSR saw it as an escalation of the arms race. Their leader, Yuri Andropov, condemned it.

However, SDI was unrealistic – the tech didn't exist, too expensive. Reagan kept it on as a pet project, but it is possible he knew it wouldn't work and did it to bankrupt the Soviets as they struggled to keep up.

Tensions worsened and the USSR believed an attack was imminent. This surprised Reagan, and he began talks with them. This was facilitated by the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who wanted modernisation, peace, and freedom.



They had two summits. At the first, they clashed over Star Wars. At the second, Reagan stunned everyone by offering to eliminate all nuclear weapons. However, they still clashed over Star Wars. They both ended without agreement.

They then signed the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, eliminating some nuclear weapons.

The Cold War ended, and the USSR allowed more freedom – allowed other countries to become democratic, allowed the Berlin Wall to be broken down.

Domestic policy:

Reaganomics:

Cutting welfare spending and reducing taxes – thought it would provide incentives to work harder.

Inflation fell and economy improved and was growing very quickly. Unemployment dropped, personal income rose.

This growth came as a result of deficit spending.

Huge amounts of debt. Bigger federal deficits than ever before.