Introduction

This chapter examines the continued impact of the Cold War on US foreign and domestic policy from 1961 to 1981. It focuses on the Cuban Missile Crisis – considered by many historians to be the most dangerous moment of the Cold War – and on US involvement in Vietnam and the influence this had both on US society and that of the Americas. The chapter also discusses US foreign policy from Kennedy to Carter, notably Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, Nixon's covert operations in Chile, Carter's ethical foreign policy and the Panama Canal settlement.

TIMELINE

1961 **Jan:** Kennedy becomes US president
Apr: Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba
Jun: Alliance for Progress launched
Aug: Berlin Wall built

1962 **Oct:** Cuban Missile Crisis

1963 **Nov:** Kennedy assassinated; Johnson becomes president

1964 **Aug:** Gulf of Tonkin incident

1965 **Mar:** US marines land at Da Nang; Operation Rolling Thunder begins

1968 **Jan:** Tet Offensive in South Vietnam
Nov: Nixon elected president

1969 **May:** Vietnam peace talks begin in Paris

1972 Nixon visits Beijing and Moscow

1973 **Jan:** Paris Peace Agreement

1974 **Aug:** Nixon resigns over Watergate scandal; succeeded by Ford

1975 **Mar–Apr:** South Vietnam surrenders to the North; Vietnam unified

1976 **Nov:** Carter wins presidential election

1979 **Jun:** SALT II signed in Vienna
Nov: Iran hostage crisis
Dec: Soviet troops enter Afghanistan

1981 **Jan:** Reagan becomes US president; Iran hostages released

KEY QUESTIONS

- How did Kennedy define US foreign policy from 1961 to 1963?
- Why did the Vietnam War have such a profound effect on the US and in the Americas?
- How did US foreign policy change under Nixon in the 1970s?
- Why was Jimmy Carter an 'outsider' in foreign policy between 1977 and 1981?
- What were the implications of US foreign policy for the Americas between 1961 and 1981?
- How did the Cold War further influence domestic policy in the US between 1961 and 1981?

Overview

- In the 1950s, the US experienced previously unknown prosperity, and many working-class families enjoyed middle-class lifestyles. However, groups such as the African-American community remained marginalised.
- In 1961, Kennedy brought energy and a reforming government to the White House. His Alliance for Progress organisation sought economic and political cooperation between the US and the rest of the Americas. Despite this, Kennedy faced major crises over events in Berlin and Cuba during his presidency.
- After Kennedy's death, Johnson and later Nixon presided over the Vietnam War – an event that polarised the US and led to domestic upheaval.
- The desire for better relations with China and the USSR resulted in a period of détente (a lessening of tension and greater cooperation during the Cold War) in the 1970s; however, this decade also saw presidential disgrace for Nixon after the Watergate scandal.
- Carter's presidency offered a fresh start, with a search for international peace and an emphasis on human rights.

- Carter negotiated peace between Egypt and Israel, and the SALT II agreement with the USSR. However, he was criticised within the US for returning the Canal Zone to Panama. Carter also faced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran hostage crisis.
- Carter's challenger for the presidency in 1980, Ronald Reagan, spoke of the USA's 'malaise' and the need to find 'morning' again in America. When Reagan became president in 1981, he addressed the USSR forcefully about the need to find a resolution to the two countries' Cold War differences.

4.1 How did Kennedy define US foreign policy from 1961 to 1963?

By 1960, the US was growing in wealth and consumer confidence. However, there were still many white people living in poverty, as well as a marginalised black community. These factors fostered a growing sense of unease among younger people, who believed that America was drifting towards a more polarised society. The McCarthy era had now passed, but the situation in Berlin remained particularly tense, as the USSR made advances in science and technology, not least by putting the first man into space – Yuri Gagarin – in 1961. The Korean War and the USSR's suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising caused the US government to focus on opposing communism anywhere in the world. The escalating war in Vietnam, anxieties over Cuba, and watchfulness towards events in China and the Americas characterised US foreign policy from 1961.

Background to the Berlin and Cuba crises

Stalin's death in March 1953, the 1955 Geneva Summit (see 2.4, The 'spirit of Geneva') and Khrushchev's heralded 1959 visit to the US (see 2.4, Peaceful coexistence under pressure, 1956–61) had contributed to a 'thaw' between the superpowers, with moves towards peaceful coexistence. However, relations only improved superficially.

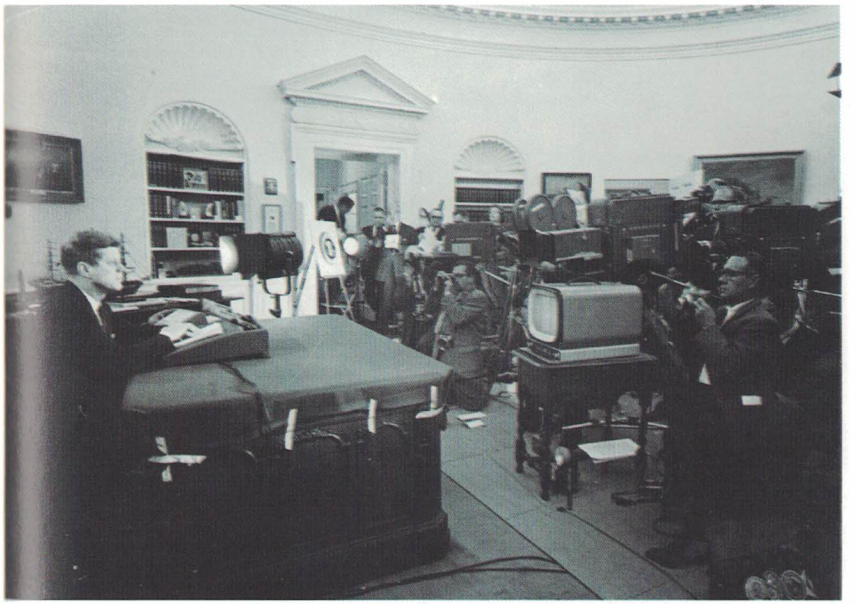

Figure 4.1: John F. Kennedy delivers a televised address to the nation about the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.

By 1957, the USSR had developed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), capable of travelling nearly 5000 km (3000 miles) in 30 minutes, leaving Earth's atmosphere and splitting into multiple nuclear warheads. China's nuclear capability was edging closer to completion, while Germany's future, the revolution in Cuba, and the U-2 spy-plane incident (see section 2.4) all heightened Cold War tensions. The situation was therefore already delicate when Kennedy became president in 1961.

Kennedy's inaugural address was both a rallying cry and a warning about the communist threat. 'Let every nation know,' he stated, 'whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.'

In preparation for this battle, Kennedy began to develop a strategy of 'flexible response' – increasing the country's stock of conventional weapons to enable it to fight limited wars wherever needed. This marked a shift from Eisenhower's policy of 'massive retaliation', which relied on a nuclear response. Kennedy continued with a moderate

expansion of the USA's nuclear arsenal, but he wanted to limit the nuclear arms race.

ACTIVITY

Using books, the internet and any other resources available to you, find out more about Kennedy's strategy of 'flexible response'. What does this term mean? What did this policy aim to achieve?

The Berlin Wall

During Eisenhower's presidency, Khrushchev demanded that the West recognise East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) and accept the whole of Berlin as a free city and an independent political entity. However, Eisenhower ignored him. When Kennedy came to power, Khrushchev hoped that the new president's inexperience would work in the USSR's favour.

When Kennedy and Khrushchev first met (in Vienna in June 1961), Khrushchev asked the Western powers to stop allowing West Berlin to be used as an escape route for East Germans, whose departure was causing a drain of skilled professionals – particularly doctors, engineers and teachers – in the GDR. Despite Khrushchev's hopes, Kennedy refused to make any concessions. As a result, in August 1961 the East German government erected a barbed-wire fence between the two parts of Berlin. When this failed to halt the flow of refugees to the West, work quickly began on a concrete wall.

DISCUSSION POINT

Kennedy said of the situation in Berlin: 'It's not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.' What do you think Kennedy's comment suggests about the success or failure of his policy of 'flexible response'?

Figure 4.2: East German workers building the Berlin Wall in November 1961.

The Bay of Pigs invasion

In January 1961, diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US were broken off. On 15 April that year, the CIA assisted around 1400 anti-Castro Cuban exiles in making air attacks to destroy Castro's air force in preparation for a land invasion. The landings themselves took place two days later at the Bay of Pigs, on Cuba's south coast.

The invasion proved humiliating for Kennedy. The US-armed exiles expected local support, but this failed to materialise. In addition, Kennedy refused to authorise support from the US air force, so the invasion force had little back-up. They were quickly halted by Castro's army. Ninety of the invaders were killed and the rest were captured.

SOURCE 4.1

The danger of Kennedy's preferred style of foreign policy exploded for all the world to see in the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba. Ironically, the Castro revolution against the Batista regime represented at its inception, the kind of democratic insurgency against totalitarian forces that Kennedy wished to identify with. But Castro had turned against the US, had allied with the Soviet Union and had become, as result, a primary target of American hostility.

Chafe, W. H. 2003. **The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II.** *New York. Oxford University Press. p. 194.*

Despite the humiliation of this defeat, in November 1961 Kennedy authorised Operation Mongoose 'to help Cuba overthrow the communist regime'. This plan allowed for the use of military force, but its main intention was to weaken Castro's regime and encourage internal rebellion in Cuba. However, Kennedy knew that despite his hopes, a rebellion was unlikely, so he also developed plans for another land-based invasion. In March 1962, a series of large military manoeuvres were carried out in the Caribbean (Operation Quick Kick). This show of US power persuaded Khrushchev that Cuba would be quickly defeated in the event of a US attack. As a result, the Soviet leader decided to place both long- and short-range nuclear missiles on the island.

SOURCE 4.2

The fate of Cuba and the maintenance of Soviet prestige in that part of the world preoccupied me... We had to establish a tangible and effective deterrent to American interference in the Caribbean... We knew that American missiles were aimed against us in Turkey and Italy, to say nothing of West Germany.

Khrushchev, N. 1970. **Khrushchev Remembers.** *Quoted in Rayner, E. G. 1992.* **The Cold War.** *London, UK. Hodder Murray.*

The Cuban Missile Crisis

On 14 October 1962, a U-2 spy plane photographed the construction of one of the nuclear missile bases on Cuba. The US government was warned that the missiles would be operational within ten days and that, if activated, they could reach US cities. Kennedy immediately called a meeting of his National Security Council and, on 22 October, he made a televised announcement that he was imposing a 'quarantine' on Cuba. Kennedy chose his language carefully – using the word 'blockade' would have suggested an act of war. In fact, several historians, including John Aldred and Mike Sewell, have questioned whether Kennedy's order to stop and search all ships bound for Cuba was technically an act of war anyway.

Kennedy's quarantine forced Khrushchev to respond. If the Soviet leader submitted to the quarantine and allowed all Soviet ships heading to Cuba to be searched, his own position would be weakened. However, refusing to honour Kennedy's demands might force the US into a military response – a situation Khrushchev wanted to avoid. This became the most extreme example of Cold War brinkmanship.

Figure 4.3: The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 1962.

The 'Thirteen Days'

Khrushchev argued that the missile sites being built on Cuba were 'solely to defend the island against the attack of an aggressor', and accused Kennedy of piracy by imposing the quarantine. Around 20 Soviet ships were heading for Cuba at the time, and Khrushchev warned that the USSR would not respect the blockade and would give 'a fitting reply to the aggressor'. The first Russian ship reached the quarantine zone on 24 October but, as an oil ship, it was allowed through. To international relief, the other Soviet ships stopped or turned around when they reached the zone later the same day.

On 26 October, Kennedy announced that he would invade Cuba if the missiles were not removed. Khrushchev sent a telegram to Kennedy, agreeing to dismantle the missiles if the US lifted the quarantine and promised not to attempt another invasion of Cuba. However, before Kennedy had a chance to respond, Khrushchev sent another, more aggressive, telegram. This demanded that the US dismantle its Jupiter missiles in Turkey, which were very close to Soviet cities. Shortly afterwards, an American U-2 plane was shot down over Cuba.

Kennedy ignored both the U-2 incident and Khrushchev's second communication. Instead, after consulting his brother (the US attorney-general, Robert Kennedy), he sent a reply to the first telegram, agreeing to lift the blockade and stating that he would not invade Cuba as long as the missile bases there were taken down. In secret, Robert Kennedy met with the Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, and offered to remove the missiles in Turkey. On 28 October, Khrushchev gave the order to remove the missiles from Cuba. Kennedy lifted the blockade and the crisis ended after 13 tense days.

Consequences of the crisis

The Cuban crisis in October 1962 caused the major powers to realise that some control over the nuclear arms race was essential. One significant consequence of the crisis was the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of August 1963. This was signed by the US, Britain and the USSR. It banned atmospheric and outer-space tests. The treaty did not cover underground testing, but it was an early step towards détente – a word used to describe a period of reduced tension and increased cooperation during the Cold War.

The crisis improved Kennedy's popularity – he became known as the man who successfully challenged the USSR. In contrast, Khrushchev lost prestige: many people believed that he simply responded to events rather than being in control of them.

Historical perspectives on the Cuban Missile Crisis

Historian Mike Sewell considers the Cuban Missile Crisis to be the 'moment when the Cold War changed from being a confrontation focused on the perimeters of the USSR and China to a global one'. Undoubtedly, the crisis widened the scope for conflict. As the struggle for ideological influence reached the Caribbean, states in South America and Africa watched anxiously.

While the resolution of the crisis was the starting point for improved superpower relations, Paul Levine and Harry Papasotiriou have noted that 'Soviet archives show that the primary Soviet objective was to deter an American invasion of Cuba rather than to change the strategic balance'. However, John Lewis Gaddis believes that the USSR intended 'to spread revolution through Latin America'. It has also been suggested that the crisis may have been part of a necessary response by the USSR to challenge China's growing influence in international communism.

Khrushchev may have begun placing missiles on Cuba in a deliberate attempt to show the US that despite the widening gap between US and Soviet missile capability, the USSR was still a power to be reckoned with. The missile bases on Cuba could be easily seen by US spy planes, yet the Soviets barely concealed them. Revisionist historians have suggested that the episode was part of a wider plan by Khrushchev to force the US to discuss missile reduction. This would enable Khrushchev to divert defence spending into stagnating Soviet agriculture and industry.

Some historians believe that Khrushchev triumphed: Cuba was secure, the US promised not to invade, and Washington now had a pro-Soviet neighbour. For the same reasons, many Americans felt that containment of communism had failed. During the crisis the US had hinted at a greater military power than it really had, to pressure Khrushchev into withdrawing the missiles. In reality, the Cuban Missile Crisis made future nuclear war less likely, as both sides realised how close they had come to outright war, and became aware of the need to exercise control over the nuclear arms race. Historian Richard Crockett later commented that 'détente itself showed the impress of the missile crisis'.

In Cuba, Castro consolidated his power and – feeling betrayed by Khrushchev's handling of the crisis – was determined to proceed with his revolution in his own way. According to J. M. Roberts, Castro was now viewed as 'a revolutionary magnet in Latin America' in consequence of 'a crisis which had by far transcended the history of the hemisphere'.

QUESTIONS

When debating the Cuban Missile Crisis, historians examine the actions of the US and Cuba, as well as evaluating Khrushchev's motives for intervention. Look at Sources 4.1 and 4.2 and the text in this section. Consider the following questions:

- What were the immediate causes of the Cuban Missile Crisis?
- Why did Khrushchev act as he did?
- Was the outcome of the crisis a victory for the USA or the USSR?
- What was the immediate impact of the crisis on the Cold War?
- What message might the events of October 1962 have sent to the states of Central and South America?

4.2 Why did the Vietnam War have such a profound effect on the US and in the Americas?

Kennedy's inheritance

Before the Second World War, Vietnam was part of the French Empire. In 1930, the Vietnamese nationalist Ho Chi Minh became the leader of the Communist Party of Indochina; in 1941, the Communist Party joined a wide variety of other political groups to form the Viet Minh. Led by Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Minh's aim was to gain independence

from France – by armed force if necessary. During the Second World War, French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) was taken over by the Japanese, and from 1943 the Viet Minh carried out a military campaign against this occupation. Ho assumed that the US would support his fight for independence; however, the US was afraid that communism might spread beyond Indochina, and so it decided to help France regain dominance in the region.

France fought against the Viet Minh for several years, during which time the US provided the French with $2.6 billion in aid. However, defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 marked the end of French ambitions in Indochina. At a peace conference in Geneva, Vietnam was temporarily divided into a pro-US South and a communist North.

DISCUSSION POINT

If a country such as the USA or the USSR gives support and weapons to another state simply because that state opposes a common rival, a mutual enemy or a conflicting ideology, is that support morally devalued if the recipient state is repressive or dictatorial?

In 1956, the South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem refused to honour one of the terms of the Geneva peace agreement and hold unification elections, afraid that Ho would win. By 1958, the Viet Cong (South Vietnamese communists) were fighting a guerrilla war against the South Vietnamese government. Ho Chi Minh announced his intention to reunite Vietnam, and encouraged the Viet Cong to form the National Liberation Front (NLF) in union with other anti-Diem forces. The US sent 2000 military advisors to organise and train the South Vietnamese in their fight against this communist alliance. By 1963, US advisors in the region had exceeded 16 000.

The events unfolding in Indochina caused serious concern in the West, where many believed in the 'domino theory' – the idea that if one country fell to communism, others would quickly follow like a row of dominoes. Kennedy believed that Vietnam was 'the cornerstone of the free world in Southeast Asia', and stated that other countries – Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and India – would be threatened if 'the red tide of communism overflowed into Vietnam'. Increasingly, Kennedy

viewed the conflict in Vietnam as crucial to wider US power and influence in the Cold War.

The steps to war

Kennedy initially received conflicting advice. France warned him that committing to war in Vietnam would trap the US in a 'bottomless military and political swamp'. However, other politicians – among them many Republicans – and senior military advisors assured Kennedy that the US was better equipped than France and could win the fight. Eventually, the president financed an increase in South Vietnam's army from 150 000 to 170 000 troops.

In 1962, Kennedy introduced the policy of Strategic Hamlets to Vietnam. Vietnamese peasants were moved into almost 3 000 fortified villages to protect them from attack by the Viet Cong. This policy failed badly: nearly half of these villages were destroyed and thousands lost their homes. Many people felt that Strategic Hamlets destroyed centuries of village life by moving peasants from their land and family burial sites. This caused thousands of South Vietnamese peasants to support the Viet Cong, and during the period that this policy was in operation, NLF membership increased by 300%.

At the same time, it was clear that Diem's regime was becoming increasingly corrupt. Applying a suitably 'flexible response', Kennedy and his top CIA and Pentagon officials did nothing when generals of the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) overthrew and then murdered Diem on 1 November 1963.

DISCUSSION POINT

Why did Kennedy place such importance on Vietnam? It has been suggested that Kennedy's opinion about Vietnam was influenced by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Why might there be a connection between these two events? How did Kennedy's administration apply a 'flexible response' to the corruption in Diem's regime?

Perspectives on Kennedy and Vietnam

Clearly Kennedy had to consider the impact his decisions about Vietnam would have on his 1964 re-election. Derrick Murphy suggests that Kennedy bought time to install a South Vietnamese government that would eventually allow the US to withdraw. However, James N. Giglio argues that Kennedy was unlikely to have pulled out of Vietnam without first obtaining an honourable settlement.

It is likely that neither Kennedy nor, later on, Johnson had a contingency plan to deal with the consequences of increased military involvement in a far-away country with mountainous jungle terrain. However, Kennedy's sense of idealism may have triumphed over the practical problems of carrying out such a military campaign. Some have argued that Kennedy believed the communists posed a real challenge to the US's status in the wider world in the early 1960s. Certainly China and the USSR dominated Southeast Asia, and the US could not afford to surrender influence to the communist powers. Levine and Papasotiriou pursue this idea, suggesting that abandoning South Vietnam would destroy US credibility in the eyes of the world.

Whatever the motives, Kennedy tied the US to South Vietnam's fate. Coming to power in November 1963 following Kennedy's assassination, the new US president Lyndon Johnson proceeded to wait until March 1965 before landing marines in the region. He partly wanted to ensure that he would win the 1964 presidential election for the Democrats, that should have been fought by Kennedy. He also wanted to appraise the situation fully. Johnson duly got his landslide victory, which strengthened his position; but also in truth he saw little alternative to committing ground troops. He knew that in the long-term, the only way to save South Vietnam was by escalating the fight.

Johnson's escalation, 1964–68

By the time **Lyndon B. Johnson** took over the presidency in November 1963, 35% of South Vietnam was controlled by the Viet Cong. More US troops were required to continue containment, and Johnson needed both congressional approval and public support to be able to send them.

Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–73):

Johnson was elected to the House of Representatives in 1937 and became a senator in 1948. Losing the 1960 Democratic nomination to Kennedy, he became vice-president and took over on Kennedy's death. Johnson began a 'war on poverty' as part of his Great Society program, but his achievements were overshadowed by the costly and increasingly unpopular Vietnam War. He remained president until 1969.

The Tonkin Resolution and Rolling Thunder

An opportunity to win public support arose with the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In August 1964, the US destroyer ship *Maddox* was fired on by North Vietnamese patrol boats during an intelligence-gathering operation. As a result, Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave Johnson the authority to 'take all necessary steps including the use of armed force' to protect South Vietnam. Effectively, Johnson could continue the fight without making any formal declaration of war.

ACTIVITY

Some historians regard the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution as the trigger for the Vietnam War. Do you agree? Re-read the previous section. Can you suggest an alternative starting point?

In 1965, Johnson launched Operation Rolling Thunder, which involved strategic air strikes on North Vietnam. In March 1965, the first ground forces – two battalions of US marines – landed at Da Nang. By 1968, US forces in the region numbered 540 000 and had largely taken over the South Vietnamese army's fight against the Viet Cong. The communists were aided by equipment from North Vietnam, which in turn received supplies from the USSR.

During the bombing raids, the North Vietnamese moved production out of the capital, Hanoi. In fact, US bombers hit few real targets in the cities, but the use of chemical weapons such as napalm to destroy the Viet Cong's jungle cover had a devastating effect on Vietnamese civilians. Over 3 million acres of vegetation were destroyed, ruining communities and livelihoods, and causing health problems. It is estimated that between 1965 and 1968, more bombs were dropped on North Vietnam alone than upon Germany, Italy and Japan combined during the Second World War. Such devastation unsurprisingly aroused a great deal of anti-US sentiment among the Vietnamese people.

The Ho Chi Minh Trail also allowed the continued movement of supplies to communist supporters in the South. This complex system of jungle tracks, footpaths, truck routes and river navigations meant that it was difficult for US troops to intercept supplies. Unfamiliar jungle terrain and climate proved hazardous to US soldiers facing Viet Cong experienced in guerrilla warfare. Booby-traps and ambushes frequently halted disheartened US troops.

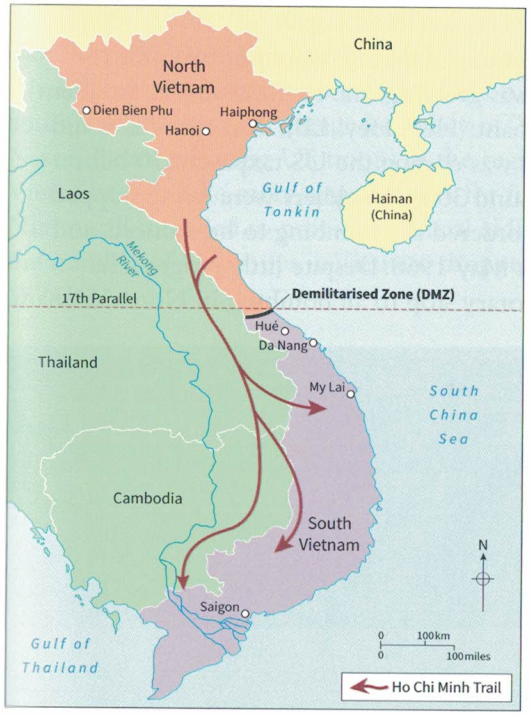

Figure 4.4: Indochina, showing the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a major supply route from North to South Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive

In January 1968, during the religious festival of Tet, the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong launched an offensive. They attacked towns and US bases across the South, including the US embassy in

the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon. By April, the US had regained nearly all land and bases lost, and around 50 000 communist troops had been killed. However, the Tet Offensive seriously challenged the USA's status as a superpower, and the American public began to question their country's involvement in Indochina.

CBS news anchorman Walter Cronkite went to Vietnam to cover the war. On his return in February 1968, he commented that the US was caught in a stalemate in the region. Cronkite noted that 'the only rational way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honourable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could'.

Johnson steps down

In March 1968, Johnson announced that he would not run for re-election. His unpopularity was growing, and his final year as president echoed with the anti-war chant: 'Hey! Hey! LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?' The conflict was costing the US taxpayer $30 billion a year, and the bodies of around 300 US soldiers were being shipped home every week. Johnson ordered the bombing to be reduced, and peace talks began in Paris in May 1968. Despite little progress, in October he ordered a temporary stop to all bombing in North Vietnam.

Figure 4.5: US soldiers carry a wounded comrade through the jungle in Vietnam.

ACTIVITY

Who was more responsible for initial US involvement in Vietnam – Kennedy or Johnson? Make a list of reasons for each president, then come to a definite conclusion. Discuss your ideas in class.

Nixon's peace, 1969–73

Many people in the US believed that by supporting the Republican **Richard Nixon** in the 1968 presidential election, they were voting to end the war, as he had promised 'peace with honour'. As a result, Nixon narrowly defeated Johnson's vice-president, Hubert Humphrey, at the polls. At first, he suggested that the US and North Vietnam should withdraw troops from South Vietnam simultaneously. However, when the North Vietnamese refused, Nixon ordered bombing to re-commence He also encouraged a policy of 'Vietnamisation'. By this, Nixon meant reducing US troops in the region to force the South Vietnamese to take more responsibility for fighting the war (although Nixon still intended to provide financial aid). Between 1969 and 1971, the number of US troops in Vietnam dropped from 539 000 to around 157 000.

Richard Nixon (1913–94):

A Republican, Nixon was elected to Congress as a California representative in 1946, and became a senator in 1950. He was Eisenhower's vice-president and assumed the presidency himself in 1968. Nixon was a strong supporter of HUAC's anti-communist activities during the period of the Red Scare (see 2.6, The Red Scare), but he later became the first president to visit Communist China. He negotiated the US's withdrawal from Vietnam, and pursued a policy of détente with the USSR. Re-elected in 1972, Nixon resigned in disgrace over the Watergate scandal in 1974.

SOURCE 4.3

Nixon had no secret plan for ending the war in Vietnam, but he knew what he did not like. The war had wrecked Johnson's ability to act freely in foreign affairs and the new president wanted to restore the authority of the White House.

Schulzinger, R. D. 2002. US Diplomacy Since 1900 (5th Edition). *Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press. p. 289.*

QUESTION

What does Source 4.3 tell us about the difference between the promises of Nixon's 1968 election campaign and the reality of his presidency? How useful is it in revealing some of his other aspirations as US president?

Vietnamisation may have been welcomed by US citizens, but it turned South Vietnam into one of the most militarised nations on Earth. By 1972, there were more than 1 million troops in the country, as the South Vietnamese government attempted to take on the communists alone (although US supplies of military vehicles such as tanks and helicopters continued). The civilian People's Self-Defence Front had a membership of over 3 million by 1972.

Despite this response to its call to arms, the South Vietnamese leadership was little more than an unstable military dictatorship about to fall. What started as a civil war escalated into a major Cold War conflict that South Vietnam was not equipped to pursue.

DISCUSSION POINT

Why do you think Nixon introduced Vietnamisation? Did this policy contribute to the USA's failure to save South Vietnam, or was it already beyond saving in the long-term?

Anti-war protests

Nixon sent troops to destroy communist supply bases in neighbouring Cambodia in April 1970, attempting to stop the flow of North Vietnamese soldiers and supplies into South Vietnam. However, such violation of Cambodian neutrality provoked strong anti-war protests on university campuses across America. On 4 May 1970, during a demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio, National Guardsmen killed four protesters (see 4.6, Nixon's inheritance). This led to a huge anti-war demonstration in Washington.

ACTIVITY

US army morale and discipline declined dramatically between 1969 and 1971. Desertions increased by 400% in this period, and drug use among US soldiers was widespread. But the reputation of the army was truly shattered when information about the My Lai Massacre of May 1968 reached the American public. Research the events in My Lai. What happened? Who was involved? How were the perpetrators dealt with by the US government? Why was it such a significant event?

Moves towards peace

As peace negotiations dragged on, Nixon proposed trade agreements with the USSR on the condition that it pressured North Vietnam into a settlement. However, in June 1972 the communists launched another offensive, targeting towns in South Vietnam. In response, Nixon ordered further bombing of the North. The US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, and his North Vietnamese counterpart, foreign minister Le Duc Tho, finally agreed a ceasefire in January 1973. By the terms of the ceasefire, the armies of North and South Vietnam would retain the areas under their control when fighting stopped. This favoured North Vietnam, which held large parts of the South, but at least the agreement meant that the North accepted the existence of South Vietnam as a separate political entity, rather than pushing for a unified Vietnam.

US forces were withdrawn and prisoners of war were released, but the ceasefire did not last long. In April 1975, the North captured Saigon. South Vietnam surrendered and Vietnam was reunited.

The impact of the Vietnam War on the Americas

For many states in the Americas, there was a fine line between displaying nationalism and being viewed as anti-American by Washington; yet in spite of US meddling in the affairs of many countries, anti-Americanism was only moderate in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Hitting the US badly, the Great Depression of the 1930s had for a while made America seem less omnipotent, and as vulnerable as many other states in that hemisphere. Then, the struggle against Nazi Germany and Japan had reminded the hemisphere about the evils of totalitarian rule, and highlighted common interests. But counter to this was the increased feeling that the US had taken advantage of Latin America's raw materials, and continued to do so during the Cold War. Any apparent experimentation with political ideas on the Left were soon met with opposition as President Árbenz of Guatemala discovered when he was toppled by the CIA. As Alan McPherson comments, 'the Cuban Revolution blasted the political stakes of anti-Americanism into the stratosphere…' Noting that just as the Spanish-speaking world gradually became the focus of growing anti-Americanism, US involvement in Vietnam grew.

As anti-war protests spread in the US – especially after 1967 – so they developed in Central and Latin America, where they morphed in some countries into a wider protest against US imperialism, and against right-wing governments such as in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. US involvement in Vietnam acted as a clarion call, not least in Chile, where one of the most distinctive anti-American movements developed in opposition to the Vietnam war. Many young Chileans became empathetic towards the victims of US aggression and organised largely peaceful, but very focused protests, which peaked in 1968. The most famous high-profile event was the 200 km peace march from Valparaiso to Santiago in June 1967. One thousand marchers walked for five days, whereupon a rally was held in Santiago, giving the protestors a national and international platform for condemning the war. In March 1968, a less peaceful incident was the powerful bombing of the US-Chile cultural centres in both Rancagua and Santiago, destroying almost the entire building in Rancagua.

In Brazil, protests against the US appeared for the first time among a coalition of university students and lecturers, union leaders, intellectuals

and pacifists. By the time the Vietnam war had ended in the mid-1970s, a survey revealed that a majority of Brazilians were disillusioned with US actions in Vietnam, and while they did not want to break the close economic ties with Washington, neither did they wish to be automatically aligned to the US, preferring instead a 'special relationship'. Ideally this would be where Brazil could enjoy the benefits of trade, tourism and cultural activities, together with periodic military cooperation, and eased diplomatic access in Washington. But it did not commit the Brazilian government to a formal military alliance or specific bi-lateral obligations, other than those already in operation between the US and other countries in the hemisphere.

At this time, from within the Catholic Church in Latin America, came dramatic calls from clergy and theologians who were preaching 'Liberation Theology'. This provided an interpretation of Christian faith based on of the experience of the poor and oppressed, and aimed to get Christians to read the Bible and interpret other Christian doctrines from this standpoint. It also called upon both politicians and church leaders to achieve greater social justice throughout the Americas, and to address the suffering and oppression of the poorest. Liberation Theology also spoke about the overthrow of tyranny and the triumph of good versus evil; of the small person over the giant. So although it arose initially as a moral reaction to the injustice and poverty in the Americas, the parallels between the people of less-developed North Vietnam resisting the superpower might of the US, were inescapable.

Its detractors called it 'Communist Christianity' but it undoubtedly became a focus for many resisting US intervention or influence. Liberation Theology ideals would subsequently conflict head-on with Washington in 1980s Nicaragua and El Salvador.

KEY CONCEPTS QUESTION

Perspectives: How far do the media, or politicians or the Church, try to push us into making subjective choices? How might the mindset of people in the Americas be influenced by either Liberation Theology, or by listening to or reading about interpretations of the Vietnam War to make them either oppose or support US intervention there?

The consequences of the Vietnam War

Any attempt by the new president, Gerald Ford, to use US forces to guarantee the survival of the dying Saigon regime would have been illegal due to the War Powers Resolution of 1973. This new law required any US president to obtain congressional approval for military action within 60 days of committing troops to any conflict.

In the course of the Vietnam War, 2 million Vietnamese died. The conflict cost the lives of 55 000 US soldiers, and caused many Americans to turn away from concerns about foreign policy and look inwardly to domestic and environmental issues. They were less supportive of containment and began to oppose interference in global affairs. Future debates about possible intervention in other countries – such as in the cases of Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya – have invariably invoked references to Vietnam.

DISCUSSION POINT

What was the significance of the 1973 War Powers Resolution?

4.3 How did US foreign policy change under Nixon in the 1970s?

Richard Nixon wanted to play a major personal role on the international stage, and to do so he planned to exploit the growing rift between the two main communist powers, the USSR and China. Nixon's career had been founded on his opposition to communism, yet he sought to improve US relations with these communist nations. Politically, Nixon wanted credit for easing tensions, which he hoped would win him re-election in 1972. However, his foreign policy was linked increasingly to economic problems caused by the Vietnam War.

Nixon knew that the cost of the arms race and the recession of 1971to 1974 had weakened US economic dominance. Withdrawal from

Vietnam might improve the economy, and lay the groundwork for improved relations with China and the USSR. Throughout the 1970s, Nixon was assisted in his plans by his national security advisor, **Henry Kissinger**.

Henry Kissinger (b. 1923):

Kissinger was born in Germany to Jewish parents, who emigrated to the US in 1938. He became a professor at Harvard University and later a government advisor. He was assistant to the president for national security affairs from 1969 to 1975, as well as secretary of state from 1973 to 1977, working with Nixon's successor, Gerald Ford. Kissinger shared the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize for his part in negotiating the ceasefire in Vietnam.

Détente with China and the USSR, 1970–79

In 1969, relations between the two main communist powers – the Soviet Union and China – erupted into open conflict in the form of border clashes. To take advantage of this communist in-fighting, Nixon opened lines of communication with China, and its communist leader Mao Zedong invited a US table-tennis team to the country for exhibition matches in April 1971. At the same time, Nixon sent Kissinger to hold secret meetings with Chinese officials and begin diplomatic discussions. In February 1972, Nixon himself made a historic visit to Beijing. As a result of these political manoeuvrings, the USSR also began to seek further agreements with the US.

The SALT talks

In May 1972, Nixon became the first US president to visit Moscow since the Cold War had begun. He negotiated agreements on science, the space race and trade. Two important treaties dealing with nuclear weapons were also signed – the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. These paved the way for future accords, aiming to limit long-range nuclear weapons.

SALT I was particularly significant. By signing the treaty, the US accepted equal status with the USSR in nuclear capacity. SALT I also made future negotiations on the subject possible. SALT II talks began in

Washington in June 1974. In Vladivostok, in November the same year, Gerald Ford and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev agreed a draft treaty to further slow down the arms race. Brezhnev believed that détente with the West was crucial to prevent the spread of capitalism and US imperialism into the Soviet sphere of influence.

SOURCE 4.4

Brezhnev saw détente as a means of overcoming the Cold War and the route by which normal, equal relations could be restored between states... Détente would be resolved... through peaceful means via negotiation. The legitimate interests of each side would be recognised and respected by the other.

Aldred, John. 2010. **Aspects of International Relations 1945–2004.** *Cheltenham, UK. Nelson Thornes. p. 71.*

SOURCE 4.5

First, a nuclear war was utterly unacceptable, as the Cuban crisis had clearly demonstrated. Second, there was an enormous burden of military expenditures... Third, the process of improving relations between the Soviet Union and Western Europe, especially with the Federal Republic of Germany... would become extremely complicated if the United States were trying to impede it. Fourth, there was a sharp aggravation in Soviet-Chinese relations.

Alexander Dobrynin, **In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents.** *Quoted in Sewell, M. 2002.* **The Cold War.** *Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. pp. 97–98.*

SALT talks continued under **Jimmy Carter**, and concluded with the signing of SALT II in Vienna in June 1979. Carter called it 'the most detailed, far-reaching, comprehensive treaty in the history of arms control'. Both sides agreed to a maximum number of missile launchers and heavy bombers. However, tensions grew again after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and Carter refused to ratify the treaty.

Jimmy Carter (b. 1924):

Carter served in the US navy before running his family's peanut-farming business. He was Democratic governor of Georgia from 1971 to 1975, and defeated Gerald Ford in the 1976 presidential election. Carter's presidency (1977–81) marked a period of economic recession and energy crises. His greatest achievements were the SALT II nuclear arms reduction treaty, the signing of the Camp David Accords (see 4.4), and the return of the Panama Canal (see 4.5, The Panama Canal Treaty). However, after the Iran hostage crisis and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Carter was heavily defeated by Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980.

The Helsinki Accords

One of the most significant moments during the period of détente came at the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation. Here, the US, Britain, Canada, the USSR and most of Europe, permanently accepted the boundaries for Germany and Eastern Europe as created at the end of the Second World War. The Helsinki Accords also endorsed human rights for all. This led to the formation of the independent trade union Solidarity in Poland, and to the establishment of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. Charter 77 was an informal document signed by writers, artists, architects and intellectuals, calling for greater human rights and artistic freedom. Solidarity and Charter 77 later played a key role in the fall of communism in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

ACTIVITY

How did Soviet and US perceptions of détente differ? Make a list and compare your answer with another student. Are there any similarities between the two sides? Look at Source 4.5. How reliable is this source for explaining the reasons for détente? What disadvantages or limitations on its value might there be?

4.4 Why was Jimmy Carter an 'outsider' in foreign policy between 1977 and 1981?

Before his election in 1976, Jimmy Carter had been a one-term governor of Georgia with little national and no international political experience. After becoming president, he found himself something of an outsider – distrusted as too liberal by southern Democrats and too conservative by the northern Democrats who controlled Congress. Carter had his own foreign policy goals, believing in the rule of law in international affairs and in the principle of self-determination for all people. He demanded that 'we replace the balance of power politics with world order politics', adding that 'an inordinate fear of communism has led us to embrace any dictator who joined in our fear'.

In line with this belief in world order politics and interdependence, Carter sought a solution with Panama over control of the Panama Canal. He also had a major success in the Middle East, creating a framework for peace between Israel and Egypt at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland. The Camp David Accords triggered a series of events that eventually led to a formal peace treaty in March 1979. This was Carter's greatest success, and his supporters hoped it would revive his declining popularity. However, although Israeli premier Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat were awarded the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize for this agreement, Carter received no significant reward or political gain for his efforts. Later, however, in 2002, Carter was finally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for what was termed 'his decades of initiating efforts to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts'.

Carter also wanted the US to promote universal human rights. He had strong opinions about repressive regimes in the Americas, as well as those in countries such as South Korea and the Philippines. He felt that US power should be used sparingly and military intervention avoided if possible. He wanted to improve relations with the USSR. Despite these noble aims, however, Carter's foreign policy faced many setbacks.

DISCUSSION POINT

Carter was seen as an outsider when he assumed the US presidency in 1977. What do you think the word 'outsider' means in this context? What advantages and disadvantages might an outsider face when attempting to carry out a particular foreign policy?

Mixed messages from the White House

US foreign policy during the late 1970s gave out mixed messages. Carter appointed Zbigniew Brzezinski as his national security advisor and recruited a former defence department official, Cyrus Vance, as his secretary of state. Brzezinski and Vance were both experienced in foreign policy, but had different world views. The clash of ideals and strategies between these two men caused problems for Carter.

Brzezinski was an anti-communist Polish immigrant, with a deep suspicion of Soviet motives and actions and little faith in détente. He believed that strengthening the power of NATO was more important than pursuing the SALT II agreement. As a result of these beliefs, Brzezinski steered Carter into several confrontations with the USSR. For example, he encouraged the president to launch a five-year defence programme that the USSR found provocative.

Vance adopted a more patient, intellectual diplomacy. He supported détente and saw SALT II as the key diplomatic issue of the age, buying time until a new generation of Soviet leaders emerged.
He was instrumental in Carter's decision to return the Canal Zone to Panama, and in the creation of the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt.

The contradictions that arose from the different approaches of Vance and Brzezinski fed the public perception of indecisiveness, and ultimately ended Carter's presidency.

SOURCE 4.6

Only a president with deep experience in foreign affairs and a grasp of the issues equal or superior to that of such contending advisors could have prevented crippling contradictions. Carter lacked such experience and grasp.

Smith, G. 1986. **Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years**. *New York, USA. Hill and Wang.*

SOURCE 4.7

The advice [Carter] received on foreign affairs was often contradictory as Vance and Brzezinski were like horses pulling in different directions. They both agreed on one thing – that the Soviet Union was the key country – but they differed fundamentally on how to modify Russian behaviour.

McCauley, Martin. 2004. **Russia, America and the Cold War.** *Edinburgh, UK. Pearson Longman. p. 70.*

DISCUSSION POINT

What do Sources 4.6 and 4.7 suggest about Carter's difficulties with foreign policy? Do they help us to pass judgement on his qualities as a president? How useful or limiting are these sources when evaluating Carter's presidency in relation to the Cold War?

ACTIVITY

Use the internet to find out more about the careers of Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinksi. Who was most influential in policy-making? On what issues might they have clashed most? Where might they have agreed?

Human rights as a focal point of foreign policy

During his 1976 election campaign, Carter promised to make human rights a key part of US foreign policy. He explained that US support for human rights involved promoting 'human freedom' worldwide and protecting 'the individual from the arbitrary power of the state'. This belief came from the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was issued in 1948.

Theory of Knowledge

History and ethics

To what extent should the driving force of foreign policy be respect for human rights at all times? Is the aim of a truly humanitarian and ethical foreign policy realistic? What obstacles might prevent such a policy being successful?

Carter held both allies and enemies accountable for human-rights failings – an approach that risked straining relations with friends and widening rifts with foes. However, Carter's actions were not always consistent. He denounced violations by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies, implying his support for organisations such as Charter 77 and Solidarity (see 4.3, The Helsinki Accords). He suspended military and economic aid in protest about the human-rights practices in Chile, El Salvador and Nicaragua. He also criticised US allies such as Argentina and South Africa. However, when Brezhnev threatened to end arms-control talks, Carter toned down his criticism of the USSR. Conservative Republicans argued that in pushing for a foreign policy where human rights played a central role, Carter was attacking his allies, damaging both the president's image and that of the US.

The 'Arc of Crisis', 1978–79

In 1978, Brzezinski spoke of an 'Arc of Crisis' running from Indochina to southern Africa. By this, he meant the regional powers that did not have direct connections to the main Cold War rivalries, but whose political, terrorist or religious groups could gain influence and cause conflict beyond their national boundaries. In particular, Brzezinski was concerned about the nations that lay along the southern borders of the

Soviet Union. In the centre of this arc were Iran – the world's fourth-largest oil producer – and Afghanistan, a nation struggling with fragile social and political structures. Brzezinski believed that global dominance depended upon control of this area, and was afraid that Islamic fundamentalism might destabilise the USSR.

DISCUSSION POINT

Why were the countries that lay within the 'Arc of Crisis' of such concern to the US in the late 1970s?

The Iran hostage crisis

The importance of Iran to the US was based on Iran's role as a major oil producer and on its proximity to the USSR. Mohamed Reza Pahlavi became shah of Iran in 1953, with support from the CIA. Pahlavi was a harsh leader, who repressed rival political parties and established a much-feared secret police force which violated human rights.

In 1978, the Shiite Muslims (an Islamic group to which most Iranians belonged) began campaigning for a more Islamic government. Their religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, had been in exile for 15 years. By January 1979, the Shiite movement was so strong that the shah was forced to flee Iran. Khomeini returned as Iran's unchallenged spiritual and moral leader; he immediately imposed strict Islamic rule and denounced the US. Iran had now become an Islamic fundamentalist state.

In November 1979, after Carter allowed the shah to receive treatment for cancer in the US, students loyal to Khomeini took over the US embassy in Iran's capital, Tehran, and seized 66 hostages. The protesters demanded that the shah be deported to Iran to stand trial. They also wanted the money that he had accumulated outside Iran, and an apology from the US. In response, Carter froze billions of dollars of Iranian assets and began secret negotiations to free the hostages. Unfortunately, these negotiations failed.

Images of frightened and blindfolded hostages appeared on Iranian television alongside footage of a burning US flag. When these scenes reached the US, there was a public outcry.

In April 1980, Carter ordered a secret rescue mission to free the captives, but the helicopters carrying the assault force developed problems and eight soldiers were killed in the unsuccessful operation. The Iranians then dispersed the hostages throughout the country, making another rescue mission impossible. For 444 days there was a stalemate that seriously damaged Carter's administration. Cyrus Vance, who had opposed the mission, resigned.

Figure 4.6: Anti-US demonstrators burn the US flag in the Iranian capital Tehran in November 1979.

DISCUSSION POINT

How might some countries in Central and South America view the predicament now facing the US over the Iran Hostages? What sort of message might it send out about either US strength or vulnerability? Explain your answer carefully.

This situation contributed to the rise of an organisation that had been slowly gaining popularity in the US – the New Right. A group of aggressive right-wing conservatives, they were strongly in favour of a hard-line anti-Soviet policy, and later became known as New Conservatives or Neo-Cons.

The New Right forcefully condemned Carter's failure to resolve the Iranian hostage situation. Eventually, the president reached an agreement to release Iranian funds and promised not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs. Khomeini would finally release the hostages on the day Carter left the office of president.

QUESTION

Why do you think Ayatollah Khomeini waited until the day Carter left office to release the hostages?

Events in Afghanistan

The USSR had grown concerned about the emergence of fundamentalism in Afghanistan's neighbour, Iran. Several Soviet Central Asian republics bordered Afghanistan, and these had large Muslim populations. Moscow therefore needed to have a pro-Soviet government in power in Afghanistan.

In April 1978, the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power. However, there was serious opposition to the PDPA's policies (such as equal education opportunities for girls), which many traditionalists believed were a betrayal of Islamic ideals. Within the PDPA, radical elements began to emerge under the leadership of Hafizullah Amin, who sought even greater reform. Due to the common borders of the Soviet republics with Afghanistan, the US accepted that the country fell within the USSR's sphere of influence. Consequently, the West took no immediate action against this coup.

Later, however, in an apparent reversal of Carter's ethical foreign policy, US intelligence services began to provide financial aid to the rebels in Afghanistan. On 3 July 1979, Carter authorised the CIA to conduct secret propaganda operations against the communist regime.

Figure 4.7: Afghanistan, showing its proximity to Iran and its borders with three of the USSR's Central Asian republics: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Amin took control of the government in September 1979, and began establishing a series of reform programmes. These included equal rights for women and secular (non-religious) education for both sexes. However, such changes were resented by an Afghan population immersed in Islamic tradition. Amin tolerated no opposition, and thousands were executed.

Civil war spread, and fundamentalist Muslims set up a group called the Mujahideen ('holy warriors'), which declared a holy war – *jihad* – against Amin. The KGB (the USSR's national security agency, including its secret police) warned that Amin's leadership might lead to active Islamic opposition within certain republics of the USSR. Brezhnev grew increasingly concerned about Amin's anti-Soviet statements, and by his relationship with the US government and CIA agents. The Soviet leader therefore decided to remove Amin, and ordered an invasion of Afghanistan. This began on 24 December 1979.

In response to this Soviet intervention, Carter cut off grain sales and other exports to the USSR, angering US farmers and businessmen. He also ordered a US boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games, which were being held in Moscow. Many felt that this punished US athletes rather than Soviet leaders, and Carter's decision reinforced his poor image. After the catastrophe of the Vietnam War, Carter was not prepared to risk another conflict. The establishment of Marxist governments in Grenada and Nicaragua in 1979 only added to the sense of the US being beaten by its opponents.

All these events contributed to Carter's defeat in the 1980 presidential election. He was heavily beaten by Ronald Reagan – who built his campaign around ridding the US of its 'malaise' and restoring its status as a world leader.

Throughout most of the 1980s, Reagan secretly sent billions of dollars of military aid to Afghanistan, supporting Amin's former enemies the Mujahideen against the Soviet Union (in fact, the US began helping to arm and train the Mujahideen before the Soviet intervention). This US support eventually succeeded in driving out the Soviets. However, out of radical Mujahideen elements, groups such as the oppressive Taliban and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda later emerged – the effects of which rebounded tragically on the US and the West on 11 September 2001, with the attacks in New York and Washington on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon.

DISCUSSION POINT

Do you think Carter was a weak president? Or was he a strong president trying to bring a new dimension to foreign policy? Was he a politician outside the mainstream and unable or unwilling to govern like some of his predecessors? Or was he the victim of wider international circumstances?

4.5 What were the implications of US foreign policy for the Americas between 1961 and 1981?

Washington's relationship with the Americas

The US regarded the Caribbean and Central and South America as their 'backyard' – a belief emphasised by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In this, President James Monroe declared that the US was the dominant regional power and would not tolerate interference in the Americas by European nations. By 1945, several governments in the region were greatly dependent on Washington for their economic stability. These nations included Cuba (before Castro's revolution), the Dominican Republic, Panama and Guatemala. Many governments in the Americas defined their foreign policies by opposition to or agreement with the will of the US.

The Rio Treaty of 1947 (see section 2.2) bound the Americas to accept that an attack on any American country was an attack on them all. The creation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in March 1948 took this relationship further. Although member states had different ideas about the ideals and purpose of the OAS, its charter stated that 'OAS member states committed themselves to continental solidarity [which the US wanted] and total non-intervention [which the Latin Americans wanted], along with the principles of democracy, economic cooperation, social justice and human rights'. The charter also declared that communism was incompatible with freedom. The OAS therefore represented a key part of Washington's main objectives in the Americas: fighting communism and promoting free enterprise.

DISCUSSION POINT

What might have prompted states in the Americas to join the OAS? What were the alternatives?

Kennedy's Alliance for Progress

In August 1961, at a conference in Montevideo, Uruguay, President John F. Kennedy endorsed the Alliance for Progress (*Alianza para el Progreso*). It was intended to be a 'club of the Americas', to fight communism in Latin America by promoting economic cooperation with the US.

Washington would provide $20 billion in aid (over ten years) to other countries in the region to support the terms of the Alliance's charter. These included increases in per capita income, democratic governments, improvements in adult literacy, price stability, more equal income distribution and land reform, as well as greater economic and social planning. In providing this support, Kennedy hoped to draw American nations away from communism.

Between 1962 and 1967, the US supplied $1.4 billion a year to Latin America. However, several economists criticised the programme for fulfilling US aspirations rather than promoting genuine improvement.

For example, five times more money left Brazil in the form of earnings and dividends paid to US companies than entered the country as direct investments. In addition, economic aid dropped sharply when the cost of the Vietnam War rose.

QUESTION

What were the aims of the Alliance for Progress? Were there any weaknesses in these intentions?

The Alliance had a military and diplomatic branch in the newly formed US Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was made up of idealistic young people, who volunteered to work in Africa and in Latin American countries. They taught in schools or worked in factories, in agriculture, or for non-profit organisations, charities and the environment. At the same time, the Pentagon and the CIA secretly trained police and paramilitary groups from several Latin American states to deal with guerrilla wars; in addition, 500 policemen from Central America also met in the Panama Canal Zone to learn about espionage (spying) and counter-insurgency (suppressing rebellions).

The Latin American military increasingly saw itself as the dominant force in stopping the 'communist cancer', and during the 1960s, 13

constitutional governments were replaced by military dictatorships. Kennedy's concerns about Castro led to a focus on security and counter-insurgency measures in Latin America. These encouraged the military to promote repression rather than freedom and democracy. As autocratic men in military uniforms took control, left-wing rebels and paramilitary groups resisted. Thus, instead of promoting and consolidating civilian rule, the old system and its inequalities were continued as a result of the Alliance for Progress.

DISCUSSION POINT

Was Kennedy's Alliance for Progress an economic policy or a political plan?

The frequency of US intervention

In reaction to the unrest that began to spread in nations under military control, Kennedy occasionally suspended relations with these dictatorships. However, the suspensions were only temporary. The crisis in Cuba forced the US to rethink its policies and, by 1964, discrimination against dictatorial regimes had ceased.

US interventions still occurred though, to remind Latin America that the US still had power over them. There are several examples of how a Cold War mentality and a fear of revolution led the US to mistake nationalism for communism in Latin America.

Brazil, 1964

When President João Goulart took office in Brazil in 1961, he called for social reconciliation and economic freedom for the working classes. He restored diplomatic relations with the USSR, which led to worsening relations with Washington. In March 1964, the CIA assisted a coup to overthrow Goulart and replace him with the right-wing military leader Humberto Castelo Branco.

Ecuador, 1964

The CIA infiltrated the Ecuadorian government, setting up news agencies and radio stations, bombing right-wing agencies and churches, and placing the blame for these actions on left-wing groups. Eventually these events forced the democratically elected Velasco Ibarra from office.

When his replacement, Carlos Arosemara, refused to break off relations with Cuba, the CIA-funded military took over Ecuador and cancelled the 1964 elections.

The Dominican Republic, 1965

In 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson sent 33 000 troops to the Dominican Republic to stop a possible left-wing coup. Johnson's show of force prompted the comment that this was 'a democratic revolution smashed by the leading democracy of the world'.

Bolivia, 1964–78

The US became the major backer of right-wing Bolivian regimes. The CIA and US special forces suppressed a leftist peasant uprising, which included the capture and execution of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, a key leader in the movement. When General Hugo Bánzer seized power, he was supported by the US, yet during Banzer's rule (1971–78) 2000 opponents were arrested and tortured, hundreds killed and many others simply 'disappeared'.

ACTIVITY

Brazil and other Latin American states were all affected by the US during the period 1961 to 1981. Make a list of the ways in which each state was affected, using this book and your own research. Are there common features that link these states? Did US tactics differ greatly between the countries, or were there common tendencies?

The Panama Canal Treaty

One controversial aspect of Jimmy Carter's policy in the Americas was the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty in 1978. This treaty transferred control of the US-built Panama Canal to the republic of Panama. A 1904 treaty had permitted the US to occupy the Canal Zone – a strip of land next to the Panama Canal – which had opened in 1914.

In 1964, anti-US riots broke out in Panama City, as students demanded the return of the Canal Zone to Panama. The US believed that the rioters were communist-trained extremists, yet it agreed to negotiate on the future of the Canal Zone and to transfer operation of the canal

to Panama by 1999. Many Americans resented this, arguing that as the US had funded the construction of the canal, it should retain rights over this important waterway. There was also the question of security – what would happen if a Soviet ally eventually seized control of the canal? The agreement was only approved by the US Senate after amendments had been made that allowed the US to take action in the region if problems arose. The Panamanian leader, Omar Torrijos, reluctantly agreed.

The Panama Canal Treaty might have been a great success for Carter. Despite Republican opposition, there were also many people who felt that as the canal was in Panama it should fall under Panamanian administration. Carter showed courage in fulfilling the agreement, when opinion showed that 75% of Americans opposed it. However, he was accused of weakness in 'giving away' the canal, and this added to his other perceived failures, playing into the hands of Ronald Reagan and other Republican presidential contenders, who planned to unseat him in the 1980 election.

SOURCE 4.8

Although these agreements protected US security interests, conservatives attacked them as proof of America's post-Vietnam loss of nerve, and recalled Teddy Roosevelt's boldness in bringing the canal into existence.

But in a rare success for Carter, the Senate ratified the treaties.

Boyer, P., Clark, C. et al. 2008. **The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People Vol. II.** *Boston, USA. Houghton Mifflin. p. 931.*

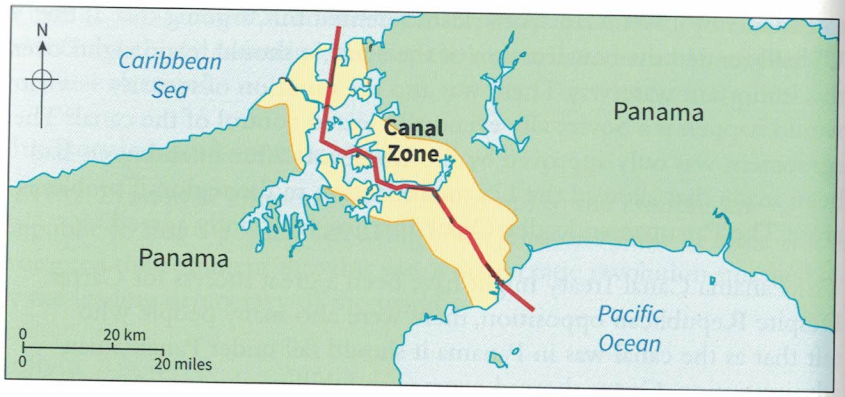

Figure 4.8: Panama, showing the Canal Zone, established in 1914.

QUESTION

What does Source 4.8 tell us about the impact of the Panama Canal Treaty in the US? How did an apparent diplomatic success by Carter turn into a failure? Explain your answer carefully.

Theory of Knowledge

History and bias

The US government faced accusations of supporting repressive regimes in the Americas because they were anti-communist, and thus indirectly caused problems for millions of people living in these countries. Are historians who choose to write about such topics bound to present biased accounts? For example, will the influence of current values and preoccupations result in them asking – or failing to ask – certain questions? Will such problems result in the writing or presentation of distorted explanations of policies and actions?

4.6 How did the Cold War further influence domestic policy in the US between 1961 and 1981?

As we have seen, heightened fears about communism and Soviet espionage had alarmed the US throughout the 1950s. As America entered the 1960s, schools, colleges and universities were still monitored for signs of communist propaganda and other subversive activities, and key social reforms in the late 1950s and 1960s were either blocked by Congress or limited by government. Many felt that welfare programmes requiring state-directed insurance contributions were too socialist. The reintroduction of a national health insurance act in 1958 failed, partly because it was considered 'too pink' (that is, having communist leanings). Cold War fears thus affected home affairs.

From 1961 to 1981, domestic policy in the US was perpetually influenced by the Cold War, thus rendering it impossible for Washington to commit to another major conflict for 30 years. Throughout the 1960s, traditions of subservience were broken, culture was redefined, and racism in US society was challenged. Domestic and foreign policy became interconnected. All these developments are discussed in the following sections.

DISCUSSION POINT

Which areas of US domestic policy were most widely criticised in the Cold War climate?

The 'New Frontier'

When John F. Kennedy came to power in 1961, there was a growing belief within the US that issues such as healthcare, the environment and race relations should be key features of domestic policy. As a result, the new president launched a domestic strategy known as the 'New Frontier'. However, implementing domestic reforms proved difficult, as

Congress rejected many of Kennedy's policies. Increased federal aid for education was refused, as was medical care for the elderly. The minimum wage was increased, but no defining legislation on poverty was passed. Nor were significant acts passed that addressed the issue of civil rights – Kennedy was too afraid of losing the support of Democrats in the South. Nevertheless, the New Frontier did enjoy some successes, most notably an increase in defence spending and investment in the space programme.

The 'Great Society'

The 'Great Society' was the name given to the domestic policies introduced by President Johnson. He aimed to eliminate poverty and racial injustice by introducing spending programmes that dealt with education, medical care, urban problems and rural development. After his election victory in November 1964, Johnson enacted more than 60 pieces of groundbreaking legislation.

Healthcare

Millions of elderly people were helped by the Medicare Act, which provided free healthcare, paid for by social-security taxes. Johnson later passed the Medicaid Act, providing free healthcare for the unemployed, the disabled, and certain low-income groups who were under the age of 65 and therefore did not qualify for Medicare. Nearly $7 billion was spent on providing healthcare access to those previously denied it. Johnson's opponents on the Right called such legislation the 'advent of Soviet socialism in America', but the acts were widely popular.

Employment

Johnson reduced taxes and increased consumer spending – policies aided by international economic growth and, in the US itself, by Johnson's work programmes. The war in Vietnam created jobs in munitions, boosted employment and enlarged the army. Johnson also built 250 000 new homes, stimulating the construction industry and providing employment. The Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 continued support to depressed rural areas. With an expanding economy, unemployment dropped by 5%, and more African Americans and women entered the workforce.

Education

Johnson brought education under federal control for the first time. The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) allocated large amounts of federal money – over $1 billion – to state schools. Head Start, a preschool programme for young children, was established. The Higher Education Act of 1965 funded lower-income students, offering assistance in the form of grants, work-study money and government loans. This ultimately benefited 25% of all US students.

The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Arts supported writers and artists and, in 1967, the Public Broadcasting Act created educational television programmes to supplement the existing broadcast networks.

DISCUSSION POINT

What benefits did Johnson's healthcare and education measures bring to US citizens? Why do you think his domestic reforms were regarded as 'Soviet' by his opponents?

By 1967, Johnson boasted that wages were the highest in history and unemployment was at a 13-year low. Levine and Papasotiriou speak of Johnson's Great Society reforms as 'the most impressive legislative feats in American history [which have] lastingly shaped the American welfare state'. However, Johnson underestimated both the scale and long-term cost of these health and education reforms; and the US could not afford such social changes while meeting the costs of war in Vietnam.

The draft riots

For over 50 years, the draft system – by which young men were required to serve in the armed forces if called up – had provided reserve personnel. As US troop strength increased in Vietnam, more and more men were drafted to serve in the conflict. The increasing number of casualties from the war, and the widening of the draft, fuelled national resentment. In 1964, only 16% of those drafted had been killed; by 1968 this had risen to 60%.

The draft also drew unfairly on the population – wealthier young men were able to join the National Guard or reserve units, or could put off their military service until they had completed their university education. The draft hit African Americans and white working-class men hardest – 80% of conscripted men came from such backgrounds. Many questioned why they should fight in Vietnam when they faced discrimination and lack of opportunity at home. Some escaped to Canada or Mexico in order to avoid being called up.

Student protests against the draft began to break out, during which rioters publicly burned their draft cards. These demonstrations grew after November 1965, when 40 000 protesters surrounded the White House and called for an end to the war. On the same day, Johnson announced a Vietnam troop increase from 120 000 to 400 000.

Johnson had a great deal of support from the teachers' unions, but none of his education reforms appeased professors and students. Increasingly unhappy with the situation in Vietnam, student protests in 1967 and 1968 angered Johnson, who was disappointed by the 'ingratitude' shown by those he felt he had done so much to help.

Mexican Americans had been eager to serve their country during the Korean War, but many now felt differently about Vietnam – refusing to serve while thousands more, men and women alike, demonstrated against it.

A major Latino demonstration against the Vietnam War took place in Los Angeles in August 1970. The protesters questioned why they should serve in Vietnam while suffering inequality at home. Mexican Americans comprised less than 15% of the population in the south-western states, yet accounted for nearly 20% percent of all casualties in the war. They felt deeply uncomfortable about the war, at a time when the US itself was so divided.

The end of the 'Great Society'

Vietnam now seriously affected domestic policy. Black civil rights, anti-war protests and student movements challenged the government and radicalised a generation. The Free Speech Movement at the University of Berkeley, California, objected to bans on student meetings and occupied the administration building. The students were evicted by state troops and arrested, but this only fuelled student resentment nationwide. During the 1968 election campaign, the Youth International Party (Yippies) and the Radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) began calling for fundamental social change, battling with Chicago police at the Democratic Party Convention.

Amid this serious unrest – and in the aftermath of the 1968 Tet Offensive (see 4.2, The Tet Offensive) – liberals finally spoke out against Johnson. They were angry that social reforms were being set aside in favour of a war costing $150 million and being fought by unwilling soldiers. Johnson stepped down from the presidential race when challenged for the nomination by candidates in his own party, who wanted an end to the war. He is now remembered for being politically destroyed by Vietnam – an event that overshadows his considerable advances in social reform.

SOURCE 4.9

I tried to make it possible for every child of every colour to grow up in a nice house, eat a solid breakfast, attend a decent school, and to get a good and lasting job. I asked so little in return, just a little thanks. Just a little appreciation. That's all. But look at what I got instead! Riots in 175 cities. Looting. Burning. Shooting... Young people by the thousand leaving the university, marching in the streets, chanting that horrible song about how many kids I had killed that day... it ruined everything.

Lyndon Johnson, speaking to an advisor in 1968. Quoted in Chafe, W. H. 2003. **The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II.** *New York, USA. Oxford University Press. pp. 338–39.*

Figure 4.9: A political cartoon of Lyndon B. Johnson from the 1960s.

Nixon's inheritance

Richard Nixon's election in November 1968 coincided with the onset of inflation and the end of a period of unprecedented prosperity. Nixon inherited the task of overseeing US withdrawal from Vietnam, but was soon approving the secret and illegal bombing of Cambodia to destroy the Ho Chi Minh Trail (see 4.2, The Tonkin Resolution and Rolling Thunder). When the *New York Times* printed the story, major protests broke out. Demonstrations took a tragic turn when a peaceful anti-war protest at Kent State University in Ohio resulted in four students being shot and killed by the National Guard. There was widespread anger when Nixon was reported as referring to the victims as 'bums'.

Figure 4.10: A student who has been shot and wounded during an anti-war protest against US escalation in Vietnam and Cambodia, at Kent State University, Ohio, May 1970.

The protests at Kent State caused a conservative outcry, calling for moderation and traditional values, but radical students had drawn attention to deep-rooted problems in US society. Criticism of the war's planning and conduct led to debates in Congress about the way in which military action was authorised. One result of this was the War Powers Resolution, passed in 1973 (see 4.2, The consequences of the Vietnam War). Nixon was angered by this, but was soon distracted by the unfolding Watergate crisis.

Levine and Papasotiriou view America's withdrawal from Vietnam and Nixon's downfall as reversing a trend towards a strong presidency that originated in the 1930s: 'The shift in power from the presidency to Congress coincided with an intense questioning… of the foreign policy of Nixon and Kissinger.' Many hoped to replace power politics with world cooperation, opposing the idea of realpolitik – the practice of government politics or diplomacy based on pragmatism rather than on ideals or ethical considerations.

The legacy of Vietnam for the US

The Vietnam War had a powerful domestic impact, leaving 55 000 US soldiers dead and more than 300 000 wounded. Events in Vietnam encouraged the belief that protest could influence foreign policy. After North Vietnam won the war, there was mass emigration from the region, with 1 million refugees arriving in America, including Cambodians, Vietnamese and Amerasians (the children of Vietnamese and US citizens). Other effects included the increased use of drugs in 1970s America, which grew out of the near-epidemic level of heroin use among troops in Vietnam. There were also health problems among veterans previously exposed to the chemical Agent Orange, which had a significant impact on welfare payments and employment.

SOURCE 4.10

Ultimately the 1970s became a microcosm of the unresolved conflicts within American society… Americans faced a frightening array of prospects… and bitter division over fundamental cultural values.

Chafe, W. H. 2003. **The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II.** *New York, USA. Oxford University Press. p. 432.*

QUESTION

How did Nixon's handling of Vietnam change the US public's perception of him? What was Vietnam's legacy to the US?

The energy crisis

Middle Eastern politics affected the US directly when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in October 1973. The Soviets offered assistance to Egypt, and the US backed Israel. The superpowers persuaded Egypt and Israel to accept a ceasefire, but Saudi Arabia imposed an embargo on oil shipped to Israel's allies. Soon, other members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled their oil prices. The embargo ended in 1974, but prices remained high. US gasoline edged towards the then-unheard-of level of $1 a gallon. This situation dramatically highlighted US dependency on Arab oil.

During this period, Jimmy Carter introduced rationing of petroleum products, as the stock market shrank. A number of government agencies – including the Department of Energy – were founded in an attempt to change the way in which Americans used energy, and a national speed limit of 90 km/h (55 mph) was introduced.

The New Right attacked Carter, blaming him for the domestic stagnation. However, as energy became a key issue, America would involve itself further in Middle Eastern politics.

ACTIVITY

Look back at this section and the information on Carter's foreign policy. Why might Americans have felt a general sense of frustration and a lack of confidence by 1980?

Retrospective

For over 40 years, US–Soviet relations affected US domestic politics, as the Cold War influenced attitudes at home. However, by 1981 the US had gradually become a more tolerant, diverse and permissive society – but it had taken defeat in Vietnam, presidential humiliation and a major energy crisis to make Americans self-critical.

Many decided that Ronald Reagan's wholehearted belief in the country was the answer to the problems it had faced since the 1960s. His uncomplicated patriotism, populism and anti-communism resonated with many, and led to his heavy defeat of Carter in the 1980 election.

Reagan was elected on his record as a conservative Republican, calling for a tougher line in the Cold War and criticising Carter's weakness in foreign policy. Entering the White House in January 1981 and championing conservative economic and cultural values, he endorsed a foreign policy that sought to move beyond détente by undermining the USSR and its communist satellites. Reagan's immediate allocation of $50 billion extra to the defence budget, and growing interference in Central American politics, led to a revival of anti-nuclear protest in Europe and the US. This wasn't the accession of a president seeking to end the Cold War. A new era had dawned.

Paper 3 exam practice

Question

'US policy in Vietnam between 1965 and 1973 made ordinary Americans feel betrayed by its government.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? **[15 marks]**

Skill

Avoiding irrelevance

Examiner's tips

Do not waste valuable writing time on irrelevant material. If it is irrelevant, it will not gain you any marks. Writing irrelevant information can happen because:

- the candidate does not look carefully enough at the wording of the question
- the candidate ignores the fact that the question requires selection of information, an analytical approach and a final judgement; instead, the candidate just writes down all that he or she knows about a topic (relevant or not), and hopes that the examiner will do the analysis and make the judgement
- the candidate has unwisely restricted his or her revision (for example, if a question comes up on the US and the Korean War, rather than one a candidate had hoped for on the US and the Vietnam War), then the candidate might try to write a response to the question he or she wanted).

For this question, you will need to:

- establish what is meant by 'betray' and by 'ordinary Americans'?
- cover the various aspects and details of US policy and involvement in Vietnam between 1964 and 1973
- outline the results of those policies and their impact in the US
- provide a judgement about whether the US government did 'betray' ordinary Americans, and in doing so, comment on how far US policy in Vietnam was justified in a wider international context.

Common mistakes

One common error with questions like this is for candidates to write about material they know well, rather than material directly related to the question.

Another mistake is to present too much general information, instead of material specific to the person (or government or institution), period and command terms.

Finally, candidates often elaborate too much on events outside the dates given in the question. (See the activities at the end of Chapter 3.)

Sample paragraphs of irrelevant focus or material

A comment made by anti-war protestors in 1968 – at the height of the Vietnam War – accused President Johnson and the US government of 'betraying ordinary Americans' by escalating the war in Vietnam and widening the draft so as to disadvantage massively, young working class males, African Americans and other ethnicities. The criticism also targeted the landing of ground troops at Da Nang in March 1965, followed by the massive increase in bombing with Operation Rolling Thunder. By 1968, the US was at a stalemate, had experienced the humiliation of the Tet Offensive by the Vietcong, and Americans saw many of Johnson's social and economic projects being derailed by the need to fund the military. Part of the betrayal was this effect of the war, given that Johnson and Humphrey won a landslide victory in 1964 for the Democrats largely based on their desire to create a Great Society.

Lyndon Johnson promised a 'Great Society' in a speech at the University of Michigan in May 1964. Then he and Hubert Humphrey won the November election that year with over 60% of the vote. They also had the widest popular margin in American history, beating Republicans Barry Goldwater and William Miller by more than 15 000 000 votes.

The Great Society programme went to Congress in January 1965. In it was aid provided to education, plans for renewal in depressed industrial areas, plans for remote rural areas like the Appalachians, greater civic and rural beautification, national conservation, and above all plans for a wide-scale fight against poverty. For African Americans, an extension to the 1964 Civil Rights Act was on the agenda, with the Voting Rights Act aimed at the removal of obstacles to the right to vote. Congress, with a large Democrat majority following the 1964 landside election result, enacted Johnson's recommendations swiftly.

By 1966, millions of elderly people were being helped by the Medicare Act, which provided free healthcare, paid for by social-security taxes. Johnson later passed the Medicaid Act, providing free healthcare for the unemployed, the disabled, and certain low-income groups who were under the age of 65 and therefore failed to qualify for Medicare. Around $7 billion was spent on providing health-care access to people previously denied it. Johnson's opponents said that it was 'Soviet socialism' being practiced in America, but his social legislation acts were widely popular.

[There then follows yet another paragraph on the Great Society, describing how by 1967, Johnson could show that wages were the highest in history and unemployment was at a 13-year low; and how the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Arts supported writers and artists. But although all this reveals commendable knowledge by the candidate on US domestic policy, it is not answering the question about betrayal and Vietnam. It is only after this next paragraph that the candidate actually gets to full-scale US troop involvement in Vietnam in 1965. Nowhere have they mentioned – yet – the fact that Vietnam and its cost forced Johnson to curtail some of his planned future reforms. Nor is there yet any defining of 'betrayal' and 'ordinary Americans'.]

EXAMINER'S COMMENT

This is an example of a weak answer. Although comments on the significance of Johnson's Great Society are relevant and helpful in the sense that they formed a major domestic backcloth in the US between 1964-68, there is certainly no need to go into such detail. So, most of the material is irrelevant, and will score few marks, if any. In addition, the candidate is using up valuable writing time, which should have been spent on providing relevant points and supporting knowledge.

Activity

In this chapter, the focus is on avoiding writing answers that contain, to a greater or lesser extent, irrelevant material. Using the information from this chapter, and any other sources of information available to you, write an answer to **one** of the following Paper 3 practice questions, keeping your answer fully focused on the question asked. Remember – doing a plan first can help you maintain this focus.

Remember also to refer to the simplified Paper 3 mark scheme given in Chapter 8.

Paper 3 practice questions

1 To what extent was the US policy of containment successful in the years 1961 to 1981?

2 Discuss the impact of the Cuban Missile Crisis on US foreign policy after 1962.

3 Evaluate the domestic impact of the Vietnam War on the US between 1965 and 1974.

4 Examine how far Kennedy's Alliance for Progress subsequently failed Latin America between 1961 and 1981.

5 'The US declined both internationally and domestically between 1973 and 1981.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?