Chapter 30
Lecture Outline

The 1950s: Affluence and Anxiety in an Atomic Age
The Cold War
A People of Plenty

• Postwar Prosperity
  – the economy would almost double in size by 1960

• A Consumer Culture
  – postwar construction boom
  – # of homeowners would increase by 50 % before 1960
  – TVs in homes increased the opportunities for marketing through commercials,
    • which added to Americans’ desire to have the best and latest technology.
A People of Plenty

• The GI Bill of Rights
  – The GI Bill of Rights was introduced to provide for the returning soldiers in the form of loans for homes, education, businesses, unemployment benefits, and so on.
  – For the first time, a great multitude had the financial capacity to earn a college degree.

• The Baby Boom
  – The return of the 12 million veterans to private life led to the creation of a postwar baby boom, which reached its peak in 1957.
A People of Plenty

• The Suburban Frontier
  – Led by William Levitt, a New York developer, the suburban movement would craft neighborhoods within an easy drive of urban settlements.

• Minorities on the Move
  – the movement of African Americans after WWII involved more than 5 million people.
  – Many of those who moved north to find jobs only found heartache, as they were unprepared for the demands of the work or the deceit of their landlords.
A Conformist Culture

- Corporate Life
  - For the first time in history salaried workers outnumbered hourly wage earners. Big business had grown larger during WWII as the government had relaxed anti-trust enforcement. Women’s “Place”
  - After the war ended, most women were encouraged, or forced, to quit the jobs they had taken to allow the men to return to work.
The Perils of Conformity

- Many critics of postwar life attacked the conformity that most Americans seemed to have adopted.
- Some argued that the cookie-cutter approach to building houses in suburbs would be a problem.
Alienation and Liberation

• Beats
  – A group of popular, if controversial, writers, poets, painters, and musicians, known as the Beats, was more interested in transforming themselves than transforming society.
Ralph Ellison is best remembered for his 1952 novel *Invisible Man*.

https://youtu.be/SswMzUWOiJg

"HERE'S TO THE CRAZY ONES
THE MISFITS. THE REBELS. THE TROUBLE MAKERS.
THE ROUND HEADS IN THE SQUARE HOLES.
THE ONES WHO SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY.
THEY'RE NOT FOND OF RULES & THEY HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THE STATUS QUO.
YOU CAN QUOTE THEM, DISAGREE WITH THEM,
GLORIFY OR VILIFY THEM.
THE ONLY THING YOU CAN'T DO IS IGNORE THEM.
BECAUSE THEY CHANGE THINGS.
THEY PUSH THE HUMAN RACE FORWARD &
WHILE SOME MAY SEE THEM AS THE CRAZY ONES,
WE SEE GENIUS.
BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK
THEY CAN CHANGE THE WORLD
ARE THE ONES WHO DO."  Jack Kerouac

https://youtu.be/NA_tjY8osGE
“Jack the Dripper” Artist Jackson Pollock became famous for his unique painting style; here he dribbles house paint and sand on a canvas in his studio barn in Springs, NY.
Alienation and Liberation

• Rock and Roll
  – To this era came the advent of rock and roll. Singers such as Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Ray Charles soared up the charts with their mixture of swing and rhythm-and-blues music.
Moderate Republicanism—
The Eisenhower Years

• The Election of 1952
  – Tired of Truman, Americans look for leadership in General Dwight D. Eisenhower ("Ike").

• 22nd Amendment
  – ratified in 1951, limited the president to two terms and not more than ten years in the office.
Moderate Republicanism—The Eisenhower Years

• A “Middle Way” Presidency
  – Ike believed that the most important power of the president was that of persuasion

• “Dynamic Conservatism” at Home
  – conservative when spending money
  – liberal when it came to human beings
  – the Federal-Aid Highway Act, which allowed federal funding for up to 90% of the nation’s highways.
The Red Scare

- The armistice to the Korean War also ended the witch hunt of Joseph McCarthy. On December 2, 1954, the Senate voted to censure McCarthy, and his political career collapsed. Within three years he was dead.
The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement

• Eisenhower and Race
  – he was committed to civil rights in principle, and he worked to expand opportunities for minorities in federal agencies

• We Shall Overcome
  – Since 1930s NAACP tried to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson*.
  – In 1950, in *Sweatt v. Painter*, (SCOTUS) would rule that this was not followed at UT and order the state to remedy it or allow African Americans to attend
Chief Justice Earl Warren One of the most influential Supreme Court justices of the twentieth century.
The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement

• The *Brown* Decision
  - In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was no longer allowed. A year later, when nothing was done, they ordered that it be done with all deliberate speed. Very few states acted on this order.
The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement

- The Montgomery Bus Boycott
  - In 1955, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of the bus and was arrested. The city of Montgomery, Alabama, would organize a boycott the next night, led by Martin Luther King Jr. The boycott lasted 381 days, and a year later the protesters won a case in the Supreme Court that ruled that separate but equal treatment was no longer allowed.

Montgomery, Alabama

Martin Luther King Jr., here facing arrest for leading a civil rights march, advocated nonviolent resistance to racial segregation.
The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement

• The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960
  – Civil Rights Act of 1957, which created the Civil Rights Commission in the Department of Justice.
  – the act of 1960, required federal courts to register African Americans. It too lacked the teeth to be enforced.
The Early Years of the Civil Rights Movement

• Desegregation in Little Rock
  – In 1957 the governor of Arkansas mobilized the National Guard to prevent nine African American students from entering Little Rock High School as decreed by a federal court. When it turned violent, Ike sent in one thousand soldiers to protect the students. They would remain there all year.
Foreign Policy in the 1950s

• Concluding an Armistice
  – Ike would promote a policy known as “brinksmanship,” in which the United States would be willing to “go to the brink” of nuclear war in order to confront communism.

• Massive Retaliation
  – When Ike entered the White House, the Korean War peace talks were at a stalemate. In order to bring the North Koreans to the table, he ordered an increase in aerial bombardment. Negotiations soon commenced and the armistice was signed in 1953.
“Don’t Be Afraid—I Can Always Pull You Back.” Secretary of State John Foster Dulles pushes a reluctant America to the brink of war.
Foreign Interventions

• The CIA and the Cold War
  – Ike would involve the CIA in toppling unfriendly governments. This would illustrate the US had finally cast off its isolationist stance and had become fully involved in the cold war.

• Indochina: The Background to War
  – Modern-day Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Vietnam’s Communist forces leader was Ho Chi Minh. He would overthrow the French.
  – Like Korea it was divided by North (C) & South (US supported)
A seasoned revolutionary, Ho Chi Minh cultivated a humble, proletarian image of himself as Uncle Ho, a man of the people.
Dien Bien Phu Captured French soldiers march through the battlefield after their surrender.
Reelection and Foreign Crises

• A Turbulent Election Year
  – Eisenhower would be renominated for the presidency in 1956. The Democrats would nominate Stevenson again. Aided by crises in Hungary and Egypt, Ike was able to win another landslide election.
Reelection and Foreign Crises

• Repression in Hungary
  – Stalin had died in 1953, and the new premier of the Soviet Union was Nikita Khrushchev. As premier, he planned to lessen Stalin’s policies of control over the satellite nations and allow some independence. Hungarian leader Imre Nagy announced that he was taking Hungary out of the Warsaw Pact in 1956. The result was invasion by Soviet forces and Nagy’s overthrow.
Reelection and Foreign Crises

• The Suez War
  – The most fateful development in the Middle East involved the ownership of the Suez Canal. Newly empowered Egyptian officer Gamal Nasser seized the jointly owned French-Egyptian canal and announced arms deals with the Soviets. Commandoes from Israel, France, and Great Britain would attack the canal to retake it but would not be successful. Ike demanded all three leave, and they did.
Reelection and Foreign Crises

- Reactions to *Sputnik*
  - On October 4, 1957, the Russians launched the first satellite into orbit. Though it was little more than a radio transmitter, Americans were shocked to see the advances of the Soviet space program and feared that soon space could become a war zone. The United States would respond by increasing the spending on new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). NATO members would soon request missiles from the United States to defend themselves and the National Aeronautic and Space Agency (NASA) would be established.
Festering Problems Abroad

- **The Eisenhower Doctrine**
  - In 1958 Congress would approve the *Eisenhower Doctrine*, which promised economic and military assistance to all Middle East nations to expel Communist forces.
  - The creation of the United Arab Republic, the overthrow of the pro-Western regime in Iraq, and an appeal for forces to Lebanon to support the tottering government there all marked this time period.
Crisis in Berlin
Berlin was still divided, as it had been after World War II. Khrushchev was losing thousands of East Berliners to West Berlin. He requested a summit in 1960 to discuss the Berlin issue.
Festering Problems Abroad

• The U-2 Summit
  – unmanned plane was revealed to have been piloted (by Francis Gary Powers), Eisenhower took full responsibility but refused to repudiate the flight. Thus the summit ended.
Festering Problems Abroad

- Castro’s Cuba
  - Fidel Castro’s Communist forces defeated the Cuban dictator Batista after two years of fighting in 1959.
  - Originally, Americans hoped that Castro would reform the government, but soon those hopes were dashed.
  - He nationalized all foreign-owned property, majority was American, and redistributed the land.
  - In 1960 Castro would sign a trade agreement with the (USSR).
  - The US would react by limiting importation of Cuban goods.
Assessing the Eisenhower Presidency

- **Avoidance of volatile issues**
  - During Ike’s second term, Alaska and Hawaii would be added to the union.
  - The nation would also enter a brief economic slump but would soon rebound.

- **Eight years of relative peace and prosperity**
- Many historians at first viewed his presidency as having accomplished very little, but recent scholarship has shed light on his policies’ long-lasting effects.