

## The Marshall Plan for Rebuilding Western Europe

The Marshall Plan was a series of economic strategies and reforms that helped to strengthen Western Europe after World War II. It also helped to make the United States the leader of the free world.

During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union fought together as allies against Nazi Germany. When the war ended, Soviet troops occupied much of Eastern and Central Europe. Communist governments, allied with the Soviet Union, soon controlled this area and set up police states. In 1946, Winston Churchill, who had served as British prime minister during the war, famously warned that an “iron curtain” divided Western and Eastern Europe and that communism threatened to spread throughout war-ravaged Europe.

The wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States was ending. A new period of conflict between the two powers—known as the Cold War—was beginning. In January 1947, President Harry S. Truman appointed a new secretary of state—George C. Marshall. Marshall was a career military officer and had headed the Army during World War II. As the leader of the Army, Marshall had earned the admiration of the American public.

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Soon after Marshall took office, a crisis arose over Greece. Greece had been occupied by Nazis during the war. Two resistance groups had fought the Nazis. One supported the Greek monarchy. The other was communist. After liberation from the Nazis, the communists refused to join a new government and rebelled against the monarchy. British troops put down the rebellion. In 1946, a new rebellion erupted. In February 1947, the British announced that they could no longer afford to give military and financial support to Greece.

Based on what had happened in Eastern Europe, many in the U.S. government suspected that the Soviet Union was funding the communist rebels. (Most historians have since concluded that the



*Pedestrians walk past bomb-damaged buildings in Berlin, Germany, c. 1946. (Library of Congress)*

Soviet Union, weakened by the war, gave little support to the rebels.)

Marshall realized that only the United States was economically able to provide aid to Greece. The war had devastated the economies of other nations.

At a key meeting in the White House, President Truman, Secretary of State Marshall, congressional leaders, and a few others debated what the United States should do about Greece. Marshall’s assistant Dean Acheson warned that this crisis was just the beginning. If the communists were

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### Nation-Building

This issue of *Bill of Rights in Action* examines what some characterize as “nation-building” efforts by the United States. The first article looks at one of the greatest successes in U.S. foreign policy—the Marshall Plan. The second looks at one of the greatest failures—Vietnam. The final article compares two reports issued in 2003 on U.S. nation-building efforts and their successes and failures.

**U.S. History:** The Marshall Plan for Rebuilding Europe

**World History:** Different Visions for Vietnam

**U.S. Government:** U.S. Involvement in Nation-Building Before Iraq

not stopped, he said, Soviet domination might extend “to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.”

On March 12, 1947, President Truman addressed Congress and asked for \$400 million in economic aid for Greece and its neighbor Turkey. He announced what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine: “I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure.” Truman had in mind mainly economic aid to eliminate “misery and want” that often became the “seeds of totalitarian regimes.”

Some criticized this new doctrine as too aggressive and likely to lead the United States into a costly “reckless adventure.” Within two months, however, the fear of a communist power grab in Greece prompted Congress to approve Truman’s request for aid.

### **The Idea of the Marshall Plan**

In 1946, George F. Kennan, a State Department Russian specialist, wrote a long telegram from Moscow analyzing Soviet intentions in Europe. The following year, *Foreign Affairs* magazine published the telegram as an article by “X.” The article caused a stir and was widely discussed. Kennan concluded that the Soviets, surrounded by capitalist countries, were insecure and wanted to expand their power. Kennan called for a “long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”

Secretary of State Marshall appointed Kennan to head a planning group to assess whether European nations could resist Soviet expansion. Kennan quickly reported that the war had left Europe in terrible economic shape. He reported on the grim realities in Europe:

- Many survivors of the war were homeless, hungry, and unemployed.
- Inflation robbed the wages of those who were employed.
- Factories, railroads, bridges, electric power plants, and water systems were damaged or destroyed.
- Farmers suffered from drought and when they brought their products to market, city dwellers could not afford them.
- Trade and the flow of capital needed to finance reconstruction were interrupted.

Kennan recommended that the United States help rebuild “the economic health and vigor of European

society.” He saw this not just as humanitarian aid, but as the best way to fight communism in Europe. He believed that the European nations receiving U.S. aid needed to operate as an economic unit, much like the 13 colonies did after the American Revolution. Eventually, he argued, a rebuilt Europe would benefit the United States by once again being able to buy American factory and farm products. More importantly, an economically strong Europe would stop the spread of communism.

Only a few weeks after President Truman requested aid for Greece and Turkey, Kennan and other top advisors to Secretary of State Marshall convinced him of the need for a massive aid program for all of Europe.

On June 5, 1947, Secretary of State Marshall made an innovative proposal in a speech at Harvard University. Noting the disastrous conditions in Europe, Marshall called for a “joint effort” by the European nations to plan the rebuilding of Europe. The United States would provide “friendly aid” in drafting the plan, but this was really “the business of the Europeans.”

Marshall promised that once the plan was in place, the United States would provide the necessary funds to make it work. “Our policy,” Marshall made clear, “is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos.”

### **Making the Marshall Plan**

Marshall even invited the Soviets to participate. But Kennan predicted that the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries under its control would refuse to join. He believed that Stalin, the Soviet dictator, would never go along with an American-inspired plan that required the free exchange of economic information.

As predicted, the Soviets refused Marshall’s invitation to help develop a plan to rebuild Europe. They charged that his plan was a scheme to dominate Europe economically. Under Soviet control, the Eastern European nations also declined to participate.

In July 1947, 16 Western European nations met in Paris to put together an economic recovery plan. But the Americans soon became disappointed about the direction of the planning. Rather than a unified plan for Europe as a whole, each country was developing its own “shopping list.” In addition, the French argued that western Germany, occupied by Britain, France, and the United States, should remain economically weak and not receive much Marshall Plan aid. The

French believed this would prevent Germany from ever again going to war.

Marshall insisted that the plan must establish an independent economy, a reasonable standard of living, and the elimination of trade barriers for the whole of Western Europe. Marshall expected all this to occur within four years. He also stressed the importance of full German participation. He saw it as necessary for the economic recovery of Western Europe.

With this push from Marshall, the Europeans compromised and submitted a plan to the United States in September 1947. The Europeans said they needed \$19 billion to carry out the Marshall Plan.

### **Selling the Marshall Plan**

In November 1947, President Truman called a special session of Congress to request immediate aid for France, Italy, and Austria, which all had active communist parties. Truman then followed up with the main Marshall Plan funding request of \$17 billion over four years.

The Republican Party had been out of power during the Great Depression and war years. But it gained control of Congress in the 1946 election on a platform of reducing government spending and returning to an isolationist foreign policy. Congress and the president were completely at odds. But Marshall commanded great respect, and Truman put Marshall's name on the proposal.

The Truman Administration assembled many experts to present arguments for funding the Marshall Plan. They pointed out that the Marshall Plan would do many necessary things—from providing humanitarian help for war-torn Europe to preventing another economic depression in the United States by making Europe a market for American products.

But the most powerful argument for Congress and the American public was that the Marshall Plan would contain the spread of communism. In February 1948, at the peak of the debate on the Marshall Plan, communists overthrew the government of Czechoslovakia. Shortly



*President Harry S. Truman and General George C. Marshall greet each other. Marshall directed the U.S. war effort in World War II and later served as secretary of state under Truman. (Library of Congress)*

afterward, President Truman spoke to Congress. “There are times in world history,” he said, “when it is far wiser to act than to hesitate.”

Congress moved quickly to approve emergency aid to France, Italy, and Austria. The lawmakers then passed the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, which funded the Marshall Plan at a slightly lower level than Truman had requested. During the next four years, the United States provided over \$13 billion in aid to 16 Western European nations, including West Germany. (That is more than \$100 billion in today's dollars.)

### **The Marshall Plan in Action**

The basic purpose of the Marshall Plan, according to the Economic Cooperation Act, was to ensure

“individual liberty, free institutions, and genuine independence” by restoring “sound economic conditions.” Between 1948 and 1951, the Marshall Plan attempted to implement several economic strategies and reforms to rebuild Western Europe. It aimed to:

- meet immediate needs for food, medicine, and housing.
- increase industrial and agricultural production rapidly by rebuilding factories, railroads, bridges, etc.
- expand trade among the European nations and with the rest of the world.
- combat inflation and establish financial stability.
- create a common market free of national trade barriers.

Some Marshall Plan aid came as technical assistance. The U.S. Economic Cooperation Administration arranged for technical aid and advisors from American businesses, banks, farm organizations, and labor unions. Advisory groups worked on improving European production, business organization, and labor-management relations.

Most aid came as cash grants or loans (\$11.8 billion). The Europeans used this money to buy essential goods

like wheat and oil and to reconstruct factories and housing.

The Europeans decided how to divide the American aid among the 16 nations. They sometimes disagreed over how much each should get. The United States constantly pressured them to compromise and make “collective use” of the aid to rebuild Europe as a whole.

Many Europeans were skeptical of American intentions, particularly in France. But as the Marshall Plan proceeded, skepticism dropped off. In a 1947 poll, 47 percent of French citizens thought Marshall’s idea for aiding Europe was mainly to stimulate markets for U.S. goods. Only 18 percent looked on the aid as a “sincere desire to help France.” By 1953, however, 57 percent of the French people polled believed the Marshall Plan was “indispensable” or “useful” for France. Only 14 percent expressed negative opinions, and these views came overwhelmingly from communist sympathizers.

### Did the Marshall Plan Succeed?

By the time the Marshall Plan ended in 1951, industrial production in Western Europe had risen 40 percent above the prewar level. Trade and exports also increased far above what they were before the war. People had returned to work and their standard of living was rising. Politically, communist parties lost influence everywhere. After Czechoslovakia, no European nation fell to communism. Also, the economic revival of West Germany helped rather than threatened its neighbors.

The Marshall Plan did not cure all of Europe’s economic problems. Western Europe was still importing 30 percent of its food in 1951. Inflation remained a problem in some countries. The Marshall Plan’s proposal of a common market for Europe remained just an idea. National trade barriers continued to block the free flow of goods and services, which would have lowered prices. In the next decades, Europeans eventually created a common market and other institutions that today make up the European Union.

George C. Marshall, the professional soldier who inspired the rebuilding of Western Europe, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. The United States, by investing in the future of Europe, cut the cycle of wars that had plagued that continent for centuries. In doing so, the United States turned away from its traditional isolationism to become the leader of the free world. Winston Churchill called Marshall’s decision to rebuild Europe “the highest level of statesmanship.”

### For Discussion and Writing

1. Make a list of reasons why the United States decided to provide Western Europe with more than \$13 billion in Marshall Plan aid. What do you think was the most important reason? Why?
2. In what way did the Americans and Europeans differ over the Marshall Plan?
3. Do you think the Marshall Plan was a good idea? Explain.

### For Further Study

“The Marshall Plan.” George C. Marshall Foundation. 2002. URL: [http://www.marshallfoundation.org/about\\_gcm/marshall\\_plan.htm](http://www.marshallfoundation.org/about_gcm/marshall_plan.htm)

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## A C T I V I T Y

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### Foreign Aid Priorities

Considering the war on terror in the world today, what should be the priorities of the United States in providing foreign aid?

- A. Form small groups to discuss and rank the following forms of U.S. foreign aid from most (1) to least (6) important.
  - **humanitarian aid** (food, clothing, medicine, etc.) to nations experiencing droughts, earthquakes, civil wars, and other disasters
  - **cash grants** to poor developing nations
  - **loans** to poor developing countries
  - **civilian advisors** to provide assistance in building the economy and democracy in poor developing countries
  - **U.S. military bases and troops** in strategic countries around the world
  - **military arms and equipment** to countries threatened by terrorists
- B. Each group should report to the class on its choice for the most and least important form of U.S. foreign aid along with the group’s reasons for its choices.

## Standards Addressed

**National U.S. History Standard 27: Understands how the Cold War and conflicts in Korean and Vietnam influenced domestic and international politics.** (1) Understands U.S. foreign policy from the Truman administration to the Johnson administration . . . . (2) Understands the political elements of the Vietnam War.(e.g., the constitutional issues involved in the Vietnam War, the legacy of the war)

**National Civics Standard 22: Understands how the world is organized politically into nation-states, how nation-states interact with one another, and issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy.** (1) Understands the significance of principal foreign policies and events in the United States' relations with the world (e.g., . . . Marshall Plan, . . . Korean and Vietnam Wars . . .).

**National U.S. History Standard 30: Understands developments in foreign policy and domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies.** (5) Understands the influence of U.S. foreign policy on international events from Nixon to Clinton (e.g., the U.S.'s role in the evolving political struggles in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Latin America; foreign policy in the post-Cold War era; U.S. goals and objectives in the Middle East; the pros and cons of U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf under Reagan and Bush; how human rights has been used in American foreign policy).

**National World History Standard 43: Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up.** (2) Understands the impact of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (e.g., the effects of United States and Soviet competition for influence or dominance upon such countries as . . . Vietnam . . .

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.9: Students analyze U.S. foreign policy since World War II.** (3) Trace the origins and geopolitical consequences (foreign and domestic) of the Cold War and containment policy, including the following: . . . The Vietnam War . . .

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 11.7: Students analyze America's participation in World War II.** (8) Analyze the effect of massive aid given to Western Europe under the Marshall Plan to rebuild itself after the war and the importance of a rebuilt Europe to the U.S. economy.

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.9: Students analyze the international developments in the post-World War II world.** (2) Analyze the causes of the Cold War, with the free world on one side and Soviet client states on the other, including competition for influence in such places as . . . Vietnam . . . . (3) Understand the importance of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which established the pattern for America's postwar policy of supplying economic and military aid to prevent the spread of Communism and the resulting economic and political competition in arenas such as Southeast Asia (i.e., the Korean War, Vietnam War . . .).

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.9: Students analyze the international developments in the post-World War II world.** (1) Compare the economic and military power shifts caused by the war, including the Yalta Pact, the development of nuclear weapons, Soviet control over Eastern European nations, and the economic recoveries of Germany and Japan.

**California History-Social Science Content Standard 10.10: Students analyze instances of nation-building in the contemporary world . . .**

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### Vietnam

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Dobbins, James. *America's Role in Nation-Building, From Germany to Iraq*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2003. • Pei, Minxin and Sara Kasper. “Lessons from the Past: The American Record in Nation-Building.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. URL: <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Policybrief24.pdf>

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## Different Visions for Vietnam

**In 1954, the Geneva Accords split Vietnam into two parts—North and South. Although the leaders of both parts wanted an independent Vietnam, they differed greatly on what they wanted Vietnam to be.**

**I**n the 1800s, during the European powers' scramble for colonies, France took control of Indochina. By 1900, this region in Southeast Asia consisted of three French possessions: Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

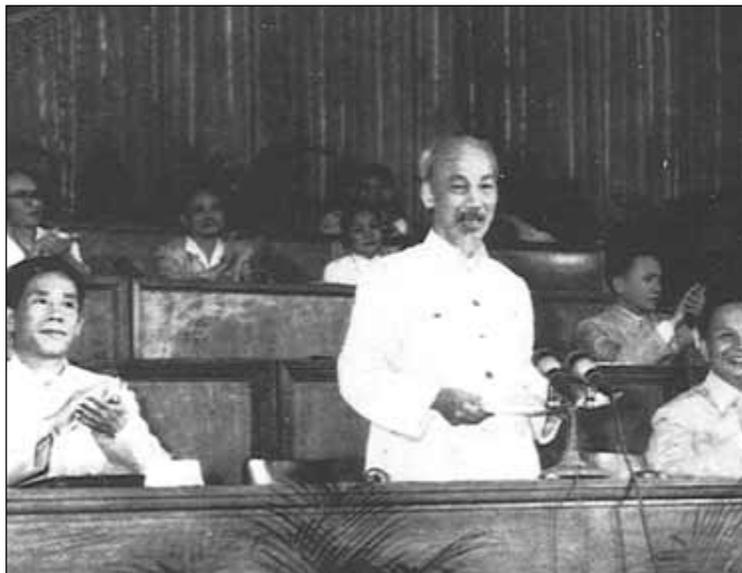
In Vietnam, French colonists and some wealthy Vietnamese owned most of the factories in the cities and productive land in the countryside. The great majority of Vietnamese were peasants, poor rice farmers who paid high rents to landlords to work small plots of land.

During World War II, the Japanese seized control of Vietnam and eventually installed a puppet regime under Bao Dai, head of the Vietnamese royal family. When Japan surrendered in 1945, Ho Chi Minh emerged as the main leader for Vietnamese national independence. American journalist David Halberstam described Ho as “part Gandhi, part Lenin, all Vietnamese.”

### Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh (1890–1969) was born in a village in central Vietnam. His name at birth was Nguyen Sinh Cung. His father had been a civil servant working for the French government, but quit in disgust with French rule and worked as a teacher. Ho grew up hating the French colonial occupation of his country. In 1911 at age 21, he left Vietnam in search of some way to gain independence for Vietnam. He worked as a cook on a French steamship, traveling to Africa and the American ports of Boston and New York. He lived in London for two years before moving to Paris in 1917.

In Paris, he worked odd jobs, joined with other Vietnamese exiles, and was active in socialist politics. He called himself Nguyen Ai Quoc (“Nguyen the Patriot”). In 1919, following World War I, Ho wrote and hand-delivered a petition to the Allied Powers attending the



*Ho Chi Minh stood to address the Congress of the Vietnam Communist Party in Hanoi in September 1960. (Indochina Archives, University of California, Berkeley)*

Versailles Peace Conference in France. His petition called for democratic reforms in Vietnam, but he never received any response.

While in France, Ho learned of the Russian Communist Revolution of 1917. He began to read the works of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the new Soviet Union. Impressed by them, he joined the newly formed French Communist Party. In 1923, he went to Moscow for training by the Communist International (Comintern), the organization established by Lenin to promote a world communist revolution.

Later in life, Ho remarked that only the communists showed any interest in freeing the Vietnamese and other colonial peoples. Today, historians debate whether Ho was mainly a patriot, using communism to liberate Vietnam, or mainly a Comintern agent, using Vietnam to further communist revolution in the world.

Ho went on to China where he formed the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP). The ICP emphasized overthrowing French rule in Vietnam and confiscating the land of the rich landlords and redistributing it to the poor peasants.

After the Japanese took control of Vietnam during World War II, Ho started using the name Ho Chi Minh (“The Bringer of Light,” or “The Enlightener”). Ho formed a new organization, known as the Viet Minh, to fight for Vietnamese independence. To gain wide sup-

port, the Viet Minh promoted a moderate political program, focusing on reducing peasant land rents.

From a mountain cave in Vietnam near the Chinese border, Ho recruited a guerrilla army to fight the Japanese. He also began to build his reputation as the only real leader for Vietnam's independence. Ho even worked with and received military aid from American agents.

A few days after Japan surrendered in August 1945, the Viet Minh took control of the main cities of Vietnam, including Hanoi in the north and Saigon in the south. On August 25, Ho entered Hanoi. On September 2, 1945, he appeared before thousands of Vietnamese in Hanoi to proclaim Vietnam's independence. In his proclamation, Ho quoted the beginning sentences of the American Declaration of Independence.

The Viet Minh established the Democratic Republic of Vietnam with Ho Chi Minh as president. Hoping to win the support of all elements of Vietnamese society, Ho argued against immediately changing Vietnam into a communist society.

France, however, was not ready to give up its colony. It sent troops to retake Vietnam. By the end of 1946, French troops had driven the Viet Minh out of Saigon and Hanoi. France then re-established its colonial government headed by Bao Dai, the former Japanese puppet.

The Viet Minh revived its war for independence, this time against the French. The French occupied all of Vietnam's major cities and little else. In the countryside, the Viet Minh worked to gain the support of the peasants by giving them land confiscated from wealthy landlords.

Communist China supplied some advisors and military aid to the Viet Minh. But Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin never trusted Ho Chi Minh. He did not think he was a true Marxist and offered the Viet Minh little help. But the United States viewed the war as a struggle against international communist expansion. It had seen China fall to communists in 1949 and communist North Korea invade South Korea in 1950. President Harry Truman started providing the French with military aid and advisors.

The French attempted to destroy the Viet Minh using their superior army and weapons. But Ho's guerrilla fighters prevented the French from occupying the countryside. The war dragged on. Then in 1954,

French forces suffered a humiliating defeat at a fortified outpost called Dienbienphu. Ho's forces controlled more than three-fourths of the country. The French agreed to negotiate with the Viet Minh. France, the Viet Minh, Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and the United States met at Geneva, Switzerland, to work out an agreement to end the war.

The Soviet Union and China, fearing American military intervention in Vietnam, persuaded Ho Chi Minh to accept the temporary division of the country into North and South Vietnam. The Geneva Accords, which the United States did not sign, scheduled elections to reunify the country in 1956.

In the fall of 1954, "Uncle Ho," as millions of Vietnamese called him, returned to Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam. The government began a rapid transition to a communist society in North Vietnam. For the next two years, North Vietnam conducted a "class war." The government confiscated privately owned land and businesses. The government executed up to 15,000 "cruel landlords" and others accused of treason. Nearly 1 million more, many of them Catholics, abandoned their homes and fled to non-communist South Vietnam. Ho admitted that "errors have been made," but did little about them.

As the time neared for elections to reunify North and South Vietnam, a new anti-communist leader emerged in South Vietnam with his own ideas about Vietnam.

### **Ngo Dinh Diem**

Ngo Dinh Diem (1901–1963) was born into an important Vietnamese Catholic family. More than 80 percent of the people of Vietnam were Buddhists. But the official religion of France was Catholicism, and being Catholic helped Diem rise in the French colonial civil service. At age 25, he became a provincial governor. In 1933, he was named minister of the interior. But Diem quickly grew frustrated with French rule and resigned from the government. He stated that he would not "act against the interests of my country."

For the next 12 years, Diem lived in Hue, which was then the capital of Vietnam. When the Viet Minh briefly took control of Vietnam in 1945, they took Diem into custody. Seeking support from Catholics in the country, Ho Chi Minh invited Diem to join the Viet Minh government in Hanoi. Ho pointed out that both of them wanted the same thing: an independent Vietnam. Diem refused Ho's offer. The Viet Minh had killed one of his brothers, and Diem held strong anti-

*(Continued on next page)*

communist views. He left Vietnam for almost a decade. He ended up living in the United States and making contacts with many influential Americans.

Following the Geneva Conference in 1954, Bao Dai, the head of the government of South Vietnam, appointed Diem as prime minister. Bao Dai thought that Diem's American contacts would prove useful. The next year, Diem deposed Bao Dai and made himself president of South Vietnam.

Diem formed an anti-communist government that relied heavily on his family members and other Vietnamese Catholics. But he lacked support from most other South Vietnamese. Fearing that Ho Chi Minh would easily win the elections planned for 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower backed Diem's refusal to go ahead with them.

Ho Chi Minh worried that the Americans might intervene if he launched a full-scale war of liberation in South Vietnam. Even so, in 1959, Ho agreed to begin guerrilla warfare against Diem's regime. North Vietnam, aided by military supplies from China, began to send fighters and arms into South Vietnam over a maze of jungle trails, called by Americans the "Ho Chi Minh Trail."

In 1960, Ho helped form and began supporting the National Liberation Front (NLF) and its guerrilla force, the Viet Cong. Among other things, the NLF promised to establish a "democratic regime," distribute land to poor peasants, end illiteracy, and refuse a military alliance with any other nation.

To counter Ho Chi Minh's vision for a communist Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem organized a series of projects that depended on the people to volunteer their labor and resources for the good of all. Diem wanted to spark a cooperative pioneer spirit among the South Vietnamese to defeat the communists and build a new nation from the bottom up. Diem, however, believed this effort required strong leadership from the top to compel uneducated peasants to work together for their own good.

During the late 1950s, Diem tried to organize model pioneer settlements, which the peasants would build while farming nearby plots of land. But Diem's officials often uprooted families from their traditional villages to inhabit these new settlements. Once in the settlements, the peasants resented Diem's government forcing them to take time away from tending their crops to construct the model towns.

Discontent, encouraged by the always-present Viet Cong, grew against Diem. As the guerrilla war intensified, a new American president, John F. Kennedy, took office.

## **The United States**

In April 1954, President Dwight Eisenhower had predicted that if all Vietnam became a communist nation, nearby countries would also fall to communism "like a row of dominoes." President Kennedy agreed with this "domino theory" and believed the United States had to take a stand against South Vietnam falling to the communists.

Like Eisenhower, Kennedy did not send U.S. combat troops to South Vietnam. Instead, he ordered more American military advisors and equipment to build up Diem's army so it could defeat the Viet Cong. Kennedy also wanted to provide economic aid directly to the impoverished peasants. Finally, he concluded that Diem must increase his popularity by relaxing his tight grip over South Vietnam's government and allowing more democratic freedoms.

Diem welcomed U.S. military help, but thought that sending economic aid directly to the peasants would make them too dependent on the Americans. He also resented Kennedy's attempts to interfere with how he ran his government.

In 1961, Diem and his brother, Nhu, launched a new self-help program. It relied on the people to fortify their existing settlements, form self-defense militias, and create their own local government and economy. Diem believed these "strategic hamlets" would protect the people from the Viet Cong and inspire a true Vietnamese path to a new nation.

This new program, however, suffered from the same fault as the pioneer settlements. It again burdened the peasants by demanding their labor and time. Government officials focused more on forcing the people rapidly to construct fortifications rather than developing among them a "revolutionary spirit," as Diem wanted.

As the "strategic hamlet" program floundered, more and more young men from peasant villages of South Vietnam joined the Viet Cong. They saw the Diem regime as the enemy.

In the cities, Buddhists began openly protesting Diem's discrimination against them. Diem had long favored the Catholic minority over the Buddhists. The spark that

ignited the protests came in May 1963 when officials in Hue stopped Buddhists from flying flags during a festival. The Buddhists noted that Catholics had been allowed to fly flags at a recent festival. When thousands of Buddhists gathered to hear a speaker, the Vietnamese Army sent troops to break up the gathering. The troops fired their guns and eight children and one woman died in the stampede trying to escape.

Diem claimed that the troops were not his, but Viet Cong. When Diem refused to investigate the incident further, Buddhists began protesting. They held rallies and hunger strikes. Diem ignored them. Then individual Buddhists began setting themselves on fire. American officials urged Diem to take action. Diem turned them down. His sister-in-law and close advisor, Madame Nhu, further incited the protestors with public insults. Referring to the Buddhists, Diem's sister in law told a reporter, "Let them burn, and we shall clap our hands."

As protests increased, Diem decided to clamp down. Troops raided Buddhist temples in many cities, dragging off more than a thousand people, injuring and killing some. Protests only increased, with many young people joining in.

As chaos mounted, generals in the Vietnam army started plotting against Diem. On November 1, 1963, they overthrew his government. The next day they executed Diem and his brother Nhu. The United States did not directly participate in Diem's overthrow, but welcomed it. President Kennedy and his advisors knew about the generals' plot ahead of time and did nothing to stop it. But the executions shocked President Kennedy. He had expected the generals would send Diem into exile.

President Kennedy believed that the new military government in Saigon would defeat the Viet Cong and make South Vietnam a barrier to communist expansion in Asia. Kennedy hoped the Americans could withdraw from South Vietnam in a year or two. Just three weeks later, however, on November 22, Kennedy was assassinated.

### **The Final Failure**

The new U.S. president, Lyndon Johnson, carried on Kennedy's policy in Vietnam. But the South Vietnam government was shaky. In 1965, Johnson ordered U.S. troops into Vietnam. Eventually, 500,000 American soldiers took over most of the fighting. U.S. troops were able to hold back the Viet Cong. But the South Vietnamese government remained weak.

In 1973, after more than 58,000 American soldiers and a million Vietnamese had been killed, North Vietnam reached an agreement with President Richard Nixon to withdraw all U.S. military forces. When the last Americans left Saigon in 1975, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese regular troops swiftly took control of South Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh died in 1969 before achieving his vision of an independent and communist Vietnam. The Communist Party leaders who followed him imposed a harsh regime that crushed any dissent and forced peasants to work on large government-owned farms. As a result, thousands fled the country. Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

### **For Discussion and Writing**

1. What mistakes do you think Ho Chi Minh, Ngo Dinh Diem, and the United States made in developing their visions for nation-building in Vietnam?
2. Do you think the Vietnam War was a civil war or a war of aggression? Why?
3. What advice about South Vietnam would you have given to President Johnson in 1963? Why?

### **For Further Reading**

Catton, Philip E. *Diem's Final Failure*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2002.

Duiker, William. *Ho Chi Minh, A Life*. New York: Theia Books, 2000.

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## **A C T I V I T Y**

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### **Your Vision for America**

- A. What is your vision for America in the 21st century? Form 10 small groups. The members of each group should discuss and describe what they would want America to be like in one of the following areas by the year 2050:
  1. schools
  2. business and work
  3. technology
  4. transportation
  5. health care
  6. environment
  7. leisure time
  8. role of the federal government
  9. role of America in the world
  10. space exploration
- B. Each group should report the vision it has developed for its area. The other members of the class should then have a chance to express their opinions on the group's vision.

## U.S. Involvement in Nation-Building Before Iraq

The United States is currently involved in a major effort to bring democracy to Iraq. We have had mixed results in taking on nation-building since World War II.

After World War II, the United States helped rebuild the defeated nations of Germany and Japan into new democratic nations. The rebuilding took many years and cost billions of dollars. These efforts are the two great success stories in nation-building. They showed that democracies could be built in countries that had little experience with democracy. Other nation-building efforts, however, have a checkered history—with some successes and many failures.

Two recent reports have examined previous U.S. nation-building efforts in hopes of shedding light on what can be accomplished in Iraq. One is a book titled *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*. It was published in 2003 by the Rand Corporation, a highly respected U.S. think tank. A blurb on the back of the book has this statement from Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. civilian administrator of Iraq: “I have kept a copy handy for ready consultation since my arrival in Baghdad and recommend it to anyone who wishes to understand or engage in [nation-building activities].” The other report is a policy paper also published in 2003 titled “Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation Building.” It was written by two researchers from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a non-profit organization founded in 1910 by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The reports agree that not every U.S. military operation constitutes nation-building. They disagree, however, on the definition of “nation-building.” The Carnegie report gives three criteria for nation-building. The U.S. intervention must:

1. Be for the purpose of changing the regime or propping it up.
2. Deploy large numbers of U.S. ground troops.
3. Involve U.S. troops and civilians in the political administration of the country.

If all three criteria are met, then it is a case of nation-building. The Carnegie report finds nine cases of nation-building since World War II. It evaluates the success of the nation-building based on whether democracy exists in the country 10 years after U.S. troops have left.



Villagers in Haiti look at U.S. soldiers passing by in February 1995. (United States Department of Defense)

The Rand report offers a different definition of nation-building. It says that nation-building attempts to “bring about fundamental societal transformations.” The report examines seven cases of nation-building since World War II that fit this definition.

Both reports consider the reconstruction efforts in Japan and Germany examples of nation-building at its best. The reports echo each other in calling nation-building in the two countries “unambiguous successes” that “set a standard” that “has not since been matched.”

### Germany

In May 1945, Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered after a long and destructive war. The victorious American, British, French, and Soviet allies each occupied a zone in Germany and set up military governments.

In 1947, as Cold War tensions grew with the Soviet Union, the United States initiated the multi-billion dollar Marshall Plan to rebuild and strengthen the democracies of Western Europe. The United States included the American, British, and French occupation zones of Germany in the Marshall Plan. Americans also took the lead in transforming Germany from a dictatorship to a democracy.

American nation-building in Germany included first outlawing the Nazi Party, firing all government officials, and disbanding the military. After such a devastating war, Germans had little will to resist the occupation. So by the end of 1946, the United States had reduced its occupation troops from 1.6 million to 200,000. The U.S. military trained a new German police force to take over most law-enforcement functions. But American occupation authorities were forced to bring back many former low and mid-level Nazi government officials because they possessed the needed expertise to run the country.

Germany had some experience with democracy before Hitler took power in 1933. Therefore, the American occupation government decided to hold local elections in 1946. But the first national elections in the combined American, British, and French zones did not take place until 1949.

The 1949 elections formed the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). But West Germany did not regain full sovereignty (supreme power) from the occupiers until 1955, 10 years after the occupation began. Since then, Germany has remained a strong democratic nation. (West and East Germany were unified in 1990 when the Cold War ended.)

## **Japan**

Japan unconditionally surrendered following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Unlike in Germany, the United States alone occupied Japan. U.S. General Douglas MacArthur served as supreme commander of the reconstruction efforts.

Gen. MacArthur decided to keep Japanese government officials, except war criminals, in office from the beginning of the occupation. MacArthur generally issued broad decrees to the Japanese officials and then monitored them to make sure they carried out his orders.

MacArthur believed he would need up to 600,000 occupation troops to pacify the home islands of Japan. But no resistance emerged, and he ended up needing less than half that number.

During the American occupation of Japan, MacArthur oversaw efforts to help the country's starving and homeless people. He also distributed millions of dollars in U.S. aid for Japan's economic reconstruction.

Japan had never been a democracy with western-style freedoms. Japan did have a constitution, but it placed sovereignty in the hands of the emperor rather than the people. Fortunately, the emperor supported MacArthur's actions.

MacArthur wrote a new democratic constitution, which the Japanese government adopted in March 1946. One of the unique features of this constitution is that Japan renounced war forever.

The first national parliamentary elections, which included women voting for the first time, took place in April 1946. Japan never received the tremendous amount of economic aid that the United States provided Europe under the Marshall Plan. But during the Korean War (1950–53), Japan served as a staging area for U.S. forces and benefited economically. In 1953, a little more than seven years after the occupation began, Japan regained full sovereignty. Since then, democracy has become firmly rooted in Japan.

## **Vietnam**

The Rand report rejects as examples of nation-building the two biggest wars that the United States has fought since World War II: the Korean and Vietnam wars. The United States, says the Rand report, did not attempt fundamental societal transformations in Korea or Vietnam. Instead, the wars were fought as part of the U.S. policy of containing communism.

The Carnegie report similarly rejects the Korean War as an example of nation-building. The U.S.'s purpose was not to prop up a regime in Korea, but to defend its ally, which had been attacked by North Korea.

But the Carnegie report considers Vietnam—and neighboring Cambodia—as cases of nation-building. In the 1960s and '70s, the United States poured more than 500,000 troops into Southeast Asia to prop up the anti-communist regimes of Vietnam and Cambodia. It used military and economic aid to pressure the anti-communist leaders to adopt democratic reforms. The U.S.-backed regimes collapsed after American forces withdrew. The Carnegie report says the collapse is typical of "American-supported surrogate regimes, which are characterized by their near total dependence on Washington." The report argues that these regimes invariably fail probably due to lack of popular support or because the military is overemphasized and military states develop instead of democracies.

The Carnegie report also considers as nation-building three Caribbean interventions by the United States—in the Dominican Republic (1965–6), Grenada (1983), and Panama (1989). It views the interventions in Grenada and Panama as successes. It attributes their success to two factors: The countries are small, which makes nation-building easier, and the United States quickly returned power to democratically elected leaders. The report views the Dominican nation-building a failure, as authoritarian rulers emerged when the United States left. The report attributes the failure to the United States turning power over to a U.S. surrogate regime. The Rand report rejects all three as examples of nation-building because they were "undertaken to overthrow unfriendly regimes and reinstall friendly ones, rather than bring about fundamental societal transformations."

## **Interventions in the 1990s**

The two reports also differ over whether three interventions in the 1990s involved nation-building. In 1992, civil war and starvation prompted the United Nations to intervene in Somalia, a country on the east coast of Africa just south of the Arabian Peninsula. A military force, under both U.S. and U.N. commands, attempted to establish order and provide security for rebuilding the economy and government. But fighters for a Somali warlord shot

*(Continued on next page)*

down two American military helicopters and killed 18 U.S. soldiers, some of whom were mutilated. President Clinton ordered all American troops out of the country. He drew heavy criticism for entangling U.S. troops in a nation-building mission directed by the United Nations. The Rand report faults the lack of unity in command between the United States and United Nations. It also points out that nation-building cannot succeed when a country is not secure and that neither the United States nor United Nations was willing to commit enough forces to pacify Somalia. The Carnegie report fails to mention Somalia. The authors apparently believe it was not an example of nation-building because no attempt was made to topple or prop up a regime in Somalia.

In the late 1990s, President Clinton authorized American military forces to work with the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to end ethnic conflict and genocide in the Balkans. Yugoslavia was breaking up and ethnic warfare was enveloping the area. Two separate interventions took place. One was in Bosnia, a country that had been part of Yugoslavia. The other was in Kosovo, a region in Serbia that had been treated as almost a separate republic before Yugoslavia collapsed. Critics in Congress predicted U.S. troops would end up in the middle of centuries-old ethnic fighting. But a relatively large number of American and other NATO troops restored peace with few casualties. U.S. and other NATO peacekeeping troops still remain in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Rand report sees these two interventions as modest successes in nation-building. Both places have held elections. But the government is weak in Bosnia, and organized crime threatens the success of building a democracy.

In Kosovo, a great deal of economic aid has led to economic growth. But tension remains between the various ethnic groups. The Rand report emphasizes that using a NATO force instead of a U.S. force led to economic contributions by other nations. The United States has paid only 16 percent of the costs and sent 16 percent of the troops in Kosovo. The Carnegie report also notes the cost-savings for the United States of using a multilateral approach in Bosnia and Kosovo. But it considers both to be “cases of multilateral humanitarian intervention (not regime change)” and therefore not nation-building.

Another U.S. intervention took place in the Caribbean nation of Haiti in 1994. Both reports agree that it was a case of nation-building and that it failed. In 1994, the United Nations approved military intervention in Haiti to restore the elected president whom the army had overthrown. President Clinton sent in American troops who joined with smaller forces from other countries. They established order, abolished the Haitian army, trained a

national police force, and oversaw elections. An unsupportive Republican-controlled Congress pressed President Clinton, a Democrat, to set a deadline for removing American troops. He removed troops in 1996 before economic and democratic reforms had taken root.

The two reports differ on what we can learn from Haiti. The Rand report emphasizes that nation-building takes time. It points out that all the successful transformations of countries into democracies since World War II took at least five years. The Carnegie report is far more pessimistic on the prospects of turning Haiti into a democracy. It compares Haiti to Grenada and Panama where the United States also quickly turned over power to democratically elected leaders. Democracy grew in Panama and Grenada, but failed in Haiti. The Carnegie report mentions that Haiti’s “deep ethnic fissures, religious animosities, and high levels of inequality” make nation-building difficult if not impossible.

### **Afghanistan**

Following the Al Qaeda terrorist acts against the United States in 2001, the United Nations approved the American attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban had provided sanctuary for Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda organization. Currently, U.N. and NATO peacekeepers keep order in Kabul, the capital city. About 10,000 American troops continue to search for Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters in remote areas of the country. But widespread disorder and violence in many parts of Afghanistan continue to delay economic rebuilding projects and national elections.

Both the Rand and Carnegie reports view the intervention in Afghanistan as nation-building. They both agree that it is too early to judge the success of the effort. The Rand report believes that more troops and other resources are needed. It states: “The low input of military and civilian resources yields low output in terms of security, democratic transformation, and economic development.”

### **Conclusions**

Both reports make conclusions on what is needed for nation-building to be successful. Many of the conclusions can be grouped under the following four categories:

**1. Security.** Both reports agree that nothing can be achieved if the nation is not secure. People must feel safe to go out and conduct their lives. The Rand report stresses the importance of having a large number of troops on the ground. Kosovo, for example, had 20 troops for every 1,000 inhabitants. “The higher the proportion of troops relative to the resident population, the lower the number of casualties suffered and inflicted. Indeed, most

of the post-conflict operations that were generously manned suffered no casualties at all.”

**2. The country’s internal characteristics.** The Carnegie report emphasizes four characteristics that aid nation-building efforts. First, it’s better if the nation is united with a strong national identity. It hurts if the country is torn into factions (e.g., among ethnic groups). Second, nation-building requires local people to be available to take over most of the basic tasks of government. In both Germany and Japan, for example, most civil servants and bureaucrats remained on their jobs. The Carnegie report says that outsiders probably cannot train people to do these jobs and that if outsiders take over the jobs, they may soon be viewed with hostility. Third, it helps if the country is economically developed. The Carnegie report stresses “the difficulty of such efforts in *underdeveloped* countries.” Fourth, it helps if the nation has had “periods of constitutional rule—characterized by the effective rule of law and binding limits on the government’s power . . . .”

**3. Multilateralism.** Both reports give examples of failures and successes when the United States acted alone or with other countries in nation-building efforts. So this factor alone, say the reports, is not decisive. Multilateralism can make decision-making more difficult. But it has several advantages. It can be far less expensive, because other nations also bear the costs. It can also confer greater legitimacy to the U.S. military intervention. And the Rand report notes that it’s very important to get the support of neighboring countries in the nation-building effort. “It is exceptionally difficult to put together a fragmented nation if its neighbors are trying to pull it apart.”

**4. Level of effort.** As the saying goes, “Roman wasn’t built in a day.” The same is true for democracy. The Rand report gives five years as the minimum amount of time for successful nation-building. It particularly stresses the importance of great effort. It states: “Many factors—such as prior democratic experience, level of economic development, and social homogeneity—can influence the ease or difficulty of nation-building, but the single most important controllable determinant seems to be the level of effort, as measured in troops, money, and time.”

### For Discussion and Writing

1. What is nation-building? Which definition of nation-building do you think is better—that of the Rand or Carnegie report? Why?
2. Germany and Japan are the standard by which other nation-building efforts are judged. What factors do you think were most important in ensuring the success in Germany and Japan? Why?

3. The article mentions several nation-building efforts that failed. What factors do you think led to their failure? Explain.

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## A C T I V I T Y

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### Is It Nation-Building?

The term “nation-building” is frequently in the news. As the article shows, its meaning varies. The Rand and Carnegie reports offer two different definitions. In small groups, do the following:

1. Read the **Situations** below.
2. For each, discuss and answer these questions:
  - Is it nation-building as defined by the Carnegie report? Why?
  - Is it nation-building as defined by the Rand report? Why?
  - Do you think it is a nation-building mission? Explain.
  - Do you think intervention is likely to bring a democracy to the country? Why?
3. Prepare to report to the class your answers and the reasons for them.

### Situations

- A. A nearby small country has a long history of poverty and dictatorial rule. The latest dictator flees the country, and order collapses. People are rioting, buildings are on fire, and people are getting killed. The United Nations has authorized the United States to send troops to restore order and put a democratic government in place.
- B. A large Muslim country in Asia has been run by dictators for decades. Its current leader seems intent on aiding the terrorist group Al Qaeda and may even try to transfer nuclear technology to it. As the crisis develops, the dictator further threatens the United States. The United States builds a multi-national force and invades to overthrow the dictator.
- C. In South America, a country has a long history of ethnic violence. A civil war has erupted, and genocide is taking place. The Organization of American States has authorized the United States to intervene to stop the slaughter.



# PostScript

## RESOURCES AND MATERIALS FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

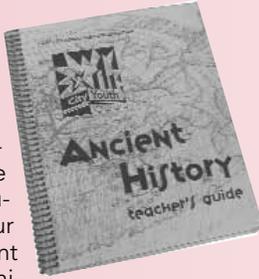
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**Unit 3: Ancient Greece** looks at the rise of Greek city-states and Athenian democracy under Pericles; compares two contrasting Greek city-states: democratic Athens and militaristic Sparta; and explores ideas about what makes a good society from three of the Western world's greatest philosophers—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

**Unit 4: Ancient Rome** traces the history of Rome from its founding myths through the Roman Republic; examines the political and social institutions of the republic; explores the leadership of Augustus when Rome made its transition from republic to empire; and discusses religious toleration and persecution in the Roman Empire.

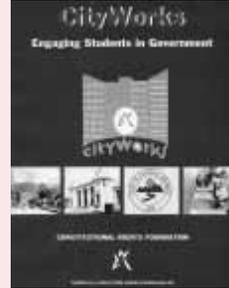
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- **The CityWorks Teacher's Guide** includes everything you need—instructions for lessons, reproducible masters for all lesson handouts (including the *Bugle*), instructions for the CityWorks project activities, and reproducible masters of the Student Handbook.
- **The Central Heights Bugle**, six issues of a simulated newspaper in class sets of 35. Each edition is linked to one of the lessons in the teacher's guide and provides students with readings and information for the lesson.
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Class Set (6 issues, 35 ea.)

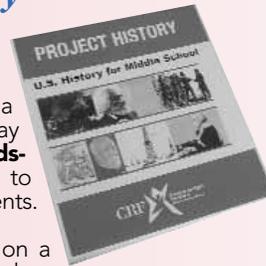
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- **American History Museum Exhibit.** Students create an exhibit using visuals and narrative descriptions.
- **Project History Book.** Students create an alphabetically arranged "encyclopedia" defining, illustrating, and describing the significance of words or phrases.

**Web Links:** The CRF website ([www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org)) supports each lesson with online links to focused readings and other resources.

#32030CBB Project History, 138 pp. \$21.95

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CRF's program areas include the California State Mock Trial, History Day in California, youth internship programs, youth leadership and civic participation programs, youth conferences, teacher professional development, and publications and curriculum materials.

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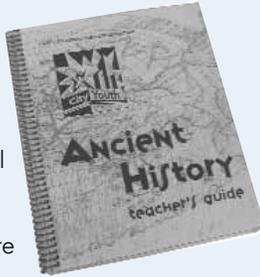
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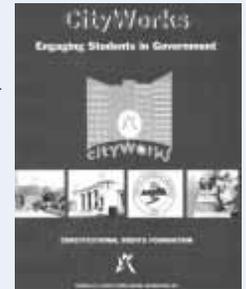
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