

SSUSH20 – Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social changes during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

a. Analyze the international policies and actions developed as a response to the Cold War including containment, the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and the Korean War.

The Soviet Union controlled the eastern half of Europe after World War II and, despite promises, showed no desire to allow free elections in the area that they controlled. In fact, the Soviets had not withdrawn their military forces back to their own frontiers. These implicit threats of force by the Soviet Union led to a state of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union that became known as the Cold War, which lasted from 1945 through 1991.

The Cold War ushered in a new approach to foreign affairs by the United States. Until the Truman administration, the nation had followed the precedent and recommendation of George Washington to not get involved in entangling alliances. U.S. involvement in wars had, for the most part, been a reluctant last resort. The United States did not take a leadership role in foreign affairs until after World War II. President Truman recognized America's new responsibility to use its vast resources to combat the spread of communism, which would in turn provide greater security for the United States.

Europe was in ruins following World War II. Millions of homes had been destroyed. Factories lay bare to the sky and bombs or fire had destroyed machinery. Rail and road networks were blocked by destroyed bridges and viaducts. The specter of famine stalked much of Europe because of shortages of labor, seed, and farm machinery. The traditional European powers were physically, financially, and emotionally unable to reconstruct the continent.

The Truman Doctrine was a new United States foreign policy approach. It was an expression of the United States' belief that communism would infiltrate those areas of Europe that were left weakened by the effects of World War II. In 1946, a civil war broke out in Greece between the democratically elected government and a communist-backed insurgent movement. The British government, that had traditionally supported and protected the Greeks, informed the United States that they were no longer able to assist the Greeks in resisting the communist attempt to take over the nation. Truman then issued a warning to the Soviets that the United States was prepared to use any means necessary to contain communism. Funds were promised to Greece and Turkey to assist in resisting communist take-overs.

Truman's policy of **containment** became the United States' key foreign policy approach until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. While the policy was at first applied to Europe, it was later extended to the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. By pledging to protect the world from communist expansionism, the United States in effect became the world's protector from aggression. As a part of the Truman Doctrine, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created to provide for the mutual defense of Western Europe amid fears of the newly atomic armed USSR. NATO-like treaties were also created with Asia and Pacific nations. This meant an expansion of America's military, economic, and diplomatic presence to all areas of the world.

Truman's Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, proposed a European Recovery Program (later known as the Marshall Plan) to combat the negative economic impacts of World War II in Europe. The plan had two major aims. First, the **Marshall Plan** aimed to prevent the spread of communism in Western Europe. The second aim was to stabilize the international political order in a way that was favorable for the development of political democracy and free-market economies. Over the Marshall Plan's four-year existence, Congress appropriated \$13.3 billion for European recovery. The money aided 22 European nations in their economic recovery by providing much needed capital and assisted American businesses by opening up European markets to American goods. The Eastern European nations were prevented from receiving Marshall Plan money from the United States because they were satellite states of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union did not want American financial influence threatening their control over Eastern Europe. The Marshall Plan's relatively small injection of capital helped to stabilize European politics and enable Western European nations to resist communist infiltration.

The Truman Doctrine of containment was a success in Western Europe, but was not as effective when applied to Asia in the late 1940s. China was embroiled in an on-again, off-again civil war. The war was between the U.S.-backed Nationalist forces and the Soviet-backed Communist forces. Chiang Kai-shek led the Nationalists and Mao Zedong led the Communists in China. In 1949, the Chinese civil war ended in a communist victory. The United States' support of the Nationalists earned the enmity of the Chinese communists, who then controlled the country. The creation of a communist state in Asia also altered the balance of power in the region. U.S. strategists believed that the communist Chinese and the Soviet Union would form a single monolithic communist state, which would threaten the remaining democratic states in Asia.

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to administer the formerly Japanese ruled Korean peninsula under a joint-trusteeship. However, the leaders of the two dominant Korean political parties, the right-wing (U.S. backed) party led by Syngman Rhee and the left-wing (Soviet backed) party led by Kim Il-sung, objected to the trusteeship. Each leader quickly organized his own country with the objective of re-unifying Korea under the image of either democracy or communism. When the United States publically announced that South Korea was not in the defensive sphere of the United States, Kim Il-sung (with Soviet blessing) launched a war to re-unify South and North Korea in June of 1950.

The fear of a total communist takeover of Asia seemed to be confirmed when North Korea invaded democratic South Korea to begin the **Korean War**. President Truman and the United Nations extended the policy of containment to Korea. They launched a defense of South Korea. After three years of fighting, the United States and the United Nations forces stabilized the Korean frontier along the 38th Parallel (the original border before the fighting started). No peace treaty has been signed and the armistice is still in place. Hostilities between the two states continue today.

The Cold War brought a new approach to foreign policy. Instead of isolating itself, the United States began to take the lead in containing the spread of communism. The Truman Doctrine became the framework for America's role in international affairs for decades after World War II.

Define

Cold War

Marshall Plan

Truman Doctrine

Korean War

- 1. What are the international policies and actions developed as a response to the Cold War?**
- 2. What was the U.S. trying to Contain?**
- 3. Why was the Marshall Plan created as a response to the Cold War?**
- 4. Why was the Truman Doctrine created as a response to the Cold War?**
- 5. Why was the Korean War fought as a response to the Cold War?**