

Harry Truman and the Origins of the Cold War

Pam Vaughn
Westside High School

INTRODUCTION

This curriculum unit will explain and analyze the origins of the Cold War with particular emphasis on the Truman administration. The executive branch grew in power in this period. President Truman dealt with the challenges presented by the aftermath of World War II, the nuclear age, and the threat from the Soviet Union. The emergence of the United States as a superpower, with global responsibilities, obligations, and interests, placed President Truman on a world stage. He had to consider almost every foreign policy decision in terms of how it would affect the balance-of-power with the Soviet Union.

Heightened suspicion, fear, and uncertainty characterized the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States beginning around 1945 and increasing through 1963. There is considerable disagreement about a precise beginning of the Cold War. Some historians take the position that the Cold War began when the U.S. ended its Lend-Lease program with the Soviets during the war. Others trace its beginning to President Roosevelt's decision to delay the opening of a second front against Nazi Germany to relieve some of the pressure the Red Army was dealing with before D-Day. The exact date may be in dispute, but it is safe to say that before 1945, relations between America and Russia had been unfavorable even though they were allies in both WWI and WWII. The United States had strained relations and a certain amount of apprehension about the Soviets since the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917. Free markets and the private ownership of assets are fundamental principles in American society. The desire of the Soviets to export communism, which called for state-run markets and the dissolution of private property, gave Americans reason to bemoan the existence of this ideology and fear the consequences of its aggressive expansion. Following WWII, these incompatible ideologies would compete militarily as well as philosophically in a worldwide struggle for the hearts and minds of people in developing countries. The superpowers would engage in overt and covert actions that had both intended and unintended consequences for the superpowers themselves and for the rest of the world. President Truman shaped the future by setting precedents and establishing doctrines that would have far reaching implications for a new world order that was complex, threatening, and costly.

UNIT OBJECTIVE

By thinking about and studying Cold War history in general, and the origins of the Cold War in particular, we could easily fall for a simplistic and quaint explanation of the actions, policies, and affairs of the world powers as being either good or evil. Upon deeper thought and further study, however, we must reckon with and at least attempt to grasp the more complex and cruel realities that the leaders of the world either created or watched unfold in the aftermath of a global war. The events of this era show the students of history that President Harry S. Truman inherited a changing world in which the limits of power would be tested, the costs of war remembered, and these limits and remembrances constantly factored into the practical questions concerning what was desired and what was possible. The Truman Doctrine was the manifestation of American idealism. However, the application of this doctrine required actions that were less than ideal. Through presenting these events to students, we invite the consideration of eternal questions that draw attention to the difficulty of implementing or accomplishing high-minded foreign policy

goals. Democratic ideals are certainly worthy of pursuit. However, the Cold War teaches us that goodness, like power, has its limits. The Cold War also teaches us the perils of choosing allies based on common enemies instead of common ideals. There are many lessons presented by the consideration of the Cold War and its origins. The most profound lesson is the importance of considering both the possibilities and the limitations of American power.

WHO

This unit is a resource for teachers of high school American History.

WHY

This unit's purpose is to provide basic information about the origins of the Cold War. However, in addition to providing a factual account of some of the global events that occurred during the beginning of the Cold War, this unit will pose critical questions that may require deeper study and thought. Some of those questions are:

- Why did the United States and Great Britain allow Stalin's Red Army to capture Eastern European nations and maintain his power through fear and oppression?
- Why did the United States champion the symbols of freedom, self-determination, human rights, and democracy while resisting active domestic reform and equal rights for minorities during this same period?
- What was the status of refugees following the war? WWII ended in 1945, but the Marshall Plan did not begin until 1947.

The questions presented here are few, but the thinking student will form other questions framed from other perspectives. The most essential value of studying this period of United States history lies in creating a context from which current events can be analyzed, producing some potential for guidance, activism, and a more informed vision concerning today's world.

DEFINING THE COLD WAR

The Cold War was a period of time in which the powers of the world grappled with the notion that they each possessed the capability but not the desire to destroy all of civilization. In addition to this trouble, there was also the problem of transitioning from a state of global warfare, with the horrors of industrial-powered destructive potential, to an existence characterized by fragile peace, flux, and uncertainty. Germany and Britain, previously the superior world powers were defeated or crippled by war and debt. Power shifted outside of Europe to the United States and the Soviet Union. The third situation was first an opportunity, but quickly morphed into many problems and many questions. Nationalist sentiment quickly spread among countries that had for centuries been colonies of one of the formerly strong European powers. The transformation of these nations from colonial status to sovereign nations demanded that they align with either the Soviets or the Americans. The struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States for the hearts, minds, and resources of these developing countries turned into a satellite-like existence for the developing world. This struggle affected the balance of power between polarized ideologies and created fear, death, destruction, and great suffering for millions.

BACKGROUND, THE ELECTION OF 1944

World War II took a tremendous toll on FDR. His health was failing and people who worked closely with him noticed. Henry Wallace, the vice president in Roosevelt's third term, presented problems for the campaign because of his leftist leanings. Many influential Democrats saw President Roosevelt's failing health and could not bear the thought of having Henry Wallace finish Roosevelt's fourth term. FDR engaged in some political jockeying and at one point even considered Wendell Wilkie, who had run against him in 1940 as a Republican, as a possible running mate (Fleming 409). The position seemed wide open, but most political insiders were

looking for a moderate for the ticket. Roosevelt chose Harry Truman, a Democratic Senator from Missouri. This arrangement was called the Second Missouri Compromise (Dalek Track 8). He was chosen more because of what he was not rather than what he was. Even so, Truman was a loyal New Dealer and had distinguished himself in the Senate as being fair-minded and nonpartisan.

Roosevelt's strategy to win the war and his political shrewdness were both remarkable. President Roosevelt had given considerable thought to America's future role as a superpower, and he had the credentials necessary to implement his vision for a new world order. However, between his inauguration in January of 1945 and death in April of the same year, Roosevelt made little effort to keep Truman informed regarding significant issues surrounding the prosecution of the war. In fact, there is little evidence that would suggest that Roosevelt had much affinity for Truman at all. His choice to place him on the ticket was largely political. Once Roosevelt won the election, he carried out the responsibilities of the office of the president in an odd sort of denial. His workday was shortened because of his failing health, yet he apparently either ignored or was unable to see the need to keep Truman apprised of substantive issues surrounding the war or the plans for peace following the war. When Truman was sworn in following Roosevelt's death, he knew very few details about the Manhattan Project to produce the atomic bomb (McCullough 289). During his Senate investigation of government spending, Truman discovered huge, unexplained expenditures. He called Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, to find out what was happening. Stimson explained to Truman in a very brief conversation that these expenditures were part of a special and unique project. Stimson seemed willing to offer more details, but Truman interrupted him and said, "That's all I need to know" (McCullough 289). That was the extent of his information regarding this top-secret program. Roosevelt had great charisma and vision and he had used these gifts to steer and pressure Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin toward his ideals for the future. Truman was for the most part unknown to these larger-than-life characters and lacked the sureness and charm possessed by FDR. He approached the July 1945 Potsdam Conference with much apprehension.

BAPTISM BY FIRE: TRUMAN'S DECISION TO DROP THE BOMB

Despite the fact that Truman had been uninformed on important issues concerning Roosevelt's strategy to end the war and make the peace, he chose to carry out Roosevelt's plan once Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, briefed him. Stimson played an important role in the top-secret Manhattan Project. Churchill and Roosevelt withheld information about the atomic bomb from Stalin not realizing that the Soviets had successfully infiltrated the Roosevelt administration and the Manhattan Project, ("Klaus Fuchs") as well as the highest levels of British government (Fleming 319). Initially, Stalin knew more about the Manhattan Project than Harry Truman.

The decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, examined closely by historians, offers an insightful look into the enormously consequential political and moral questions that shape the future of life on Earth. Many have criticized the decision. Others have taken the position that Truman's course of action was both understandable and correct. Truman was informed while at the Potsdam Conference that the atomic bomb had been successfully tested. Some members of the Manhattan Project feared that the explosion of this first atomic bomb would set off a chain reaction that would destroy the world. Obviously, and thankfully, this theory proved incorrect. Still, it is significant because it is an example of how little was known about the immediate and long-term effects of this new weapon. With Germany defeated, the United States could now focus on defeating Japan. Truman was successful in getting a commitment from Stalin to provide troops, but at the same time he was reluctant to make use of this offer. The Soviets had occupied all of Eastern Europe and had become increasingly intransigent about what future governments would look like in these areas. Stalin reneged on his promise to hold free elections in Soviet occupied Eastern European countries. Truman and

Churchill recognized that the cost of defeating Hitler's fascism and establishing order in the region would be the creation of communist satellite states across Eastern Europe. Truman was opposed to the idea of giving the Soviets a foothold in Japan. In addition to the threat of introducing Soviet-style communism in Japan, there was also the belief that Japan, although for the most part defeated, would fight to the very last man. Here, Roosevelt's policy of unconditional surrender could be criticized. To the Japanese, surrender was worse than death. The consensus among Truman's advisors was that Japan would not surrender and that in order to defeat them without using atomic bombs, the United States would have to launch an invasion of the Japanese mainland. This would have resulted in extremely high casualties from a war-weary nation. Sadly, World War II was a war in which both the Allied and Axis powers bombed civilian targets without mercy. Dresden, which had absolutely no militarily significant targets, had been firebombed. The thought was that waging war in this manner would destroy the enemy's will to fight. In reality, this manner of waging war actually emboldened the people and steeled their resolve. Similarly, the British were affected when the German Luftwaffe hit civilian towns and cities during the Battle of Britain. Tokyo had been firebombed as well. Therefore, the precedent of killing civilians had already been established and Truman was willing to continue down this slippery slope to the tragic end. The use of an atomic weapon was viewed as just a more efficient way of carrying out this strategy (Dalek Track 1). On July 24, 1945, President Truman gave the order to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki and this brought the war with Japan to a quick end. On August 14, 1945, President Truman announced the surrender of Japan. Almost all Americans supported the decision to use the atomic bomb. After all, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and was guilty of terrible atrocities. There was also a racial factor in the animosity toward the Japanese people. The bomb, Little Boy, was dropped on Hiroshima August 6, 1945. Nagasaki was bombed on August 9, 1945.

Potsdam Conference (1945)

Harry Truman, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Clement Atlee worked from the agreements reached at Yalta concerning the ending of WWII (July 17th – August 2nd). Germany was divided into four occupation zones to be controlled by France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Berlin was divided into sectors, despite the fact that it was located within Eastern Germany, which was designated as the Soviet Sphere. The Foreign Ministry Council was established to oversee the occupation of Germany. Truman met with General Eisenhower and other military men. He raised an American flag over Berlin and made an impromptu speech. The flag raised was the same flag that had flown over the U.S. Capitol when Germany declared war on the United States. After Truman received word that the atom bomb had been successfully tested, he issued the Potsdam Declaration, which was an ultimatum to Japan – “surrender or face total destruction.” Truman gave the order to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

THE LONG TELEGRAM

Throughout the war Roosevelt balanced a realist's view of a changing world and a changing role for America in the world with international, universal ideals. He realized that although unpleasant to think about, spheres of influence and balance-of-power issues could not be ignored. Yet there would also be new opportunities to establish a lasting peace based on universally shared values. The United Nations had been established and fifty-one nations joined. The people of the United States, although traditionally isolationist, concluded that it could not shirk its responsibilities to the rest of the world. The American people realized that it had been a mistake to reject the Versailles Treaty and to refuse membership in the League of Nations in 1919. The destructive capacity of the military in a most advanced industrial age made the consequences of retreat from world involvement too costly to bear. Roosevelt had given careful and thoughtful treatment to emerging nationalist sentiment among colonial territories and nations. He knew

rights to self-determination had to be part of any new world order. In the aftermath of WWII, these idealistic visions were increasingly marginalized as cold, hard reality took its grip. According to Nadeau, “Roosevelt was torn between Woodrow Wilson’s idealism and Churchill’s European pragmatism” (Nye). In *Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt Divide Europe*, by Remi Nadeau, Roosevelt and America are portrayed as innocent and naïve while the British are presented as being wise, calculating and far more experienced in diplomatic affairs. “Nadeau’s essential argument is reduced to the suggestion that Europe was divided because the United States had enough power but did not know how to use it, the British knew how to use power but did not have enough and the Soviets had enough and knew how to use it” (Siracusa 32).

On February 22, 1946, George Kennan working out of the American Embassy in Moscow sent a telegram that changed the course of history. Kennan articulated in a compelling way, the sources of Soviet behavior and their view of the world. This message is known as *The Long Telegram*. Truman and his staff reviewed it carefully, and this telegram formed the basis for the policy of containment. Kennan provided an insightful representation of the motivating factors behind Soviet aggression. He explained that this was a nation grown accustomed to insecurity because the Soviets had been a country surrounded by enemies with few natural frontiers (Siracusa 33). Kennan’s position was that the Soviets, threatened by their lack of development, feared exposure to the West. Increased Soviet fears fueled suspicion and informed their interpretation of events thus, the Soviet vision for the future. He went on to make the case that it was the Soviet intention to destroy western traditions, authority, and power in order to preserve its own existence (Siracusa 34). Kennan also posited that in his view, Stalin himself was ill informed and held a conspiratorial interpretation of world events. In Kennan’s view, the Soviets would respond to force and resistance by withdrawing from its course of aggressive action (Siracusa 38).

THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE, THE MARSHALL PLAN, AND THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

The Long Telegram was significant because it explained in a thoughtful yet alarming way what Soviet intentions were (to destroy American institutions and traditions), how they had come to this line of thinking, and how the U.S. should respond. The telegram was 8,000 words long and almost everybody who was anybody in the administration read it. Its impact should not be questioned. Truman read it, of course, but he remained for a time at least, relatively quiet on the substance of this message. Churchill delivered his famous *Iron Curtain* speech in Fulton, Missouri only two weeks before *The Long Telegram* was received at the state department (March 1946). Winston Churchill, with his typically honest and inspiring oratory delivered the speech after Truman had graciously introduced him to the audience. Truman sat on the stage and listened with a smile as Churchill so eloquently described the current situation in Europe:

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain had descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow... I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines. (Quoted in McCullough 489)

Maybe Truman overestimated the intelligence of the press and the American people. The speech created a widespread condemnation. This caught Truman off guard. He had anticipated the opposite reaction. He and Churchill had traveled to Missouri together. Westminster College, where Churchill delivered the speech, was a small Presbyterian men’s school just outside Jefferson City, Missouri. Truman was eager to accompany Churchill to Missouri. Truman had

extended the invitation himself: “This is a wonderful school in my home state. Hope you can do it. I will introduce you. Best regards” (McCullough 487). This trip with Churchill to Missouri was very enjoyable for Truman. He loved Missouri and Missouri loved him. The town flew both British and American flags, and everybody tidied up as if they were getting ready for a favorite guest. All of the bad press and criticism of both Truman’s foreign policies and the speech caught Truman by surprise and kind of took the wind out of him. It was a tremendous blow. He fidgeted around a little and then later denied that he knew what was going to be in the speech. This may explain why the *Long Telegram*, while eventually creating substantive and significant change in U.S. foreign policy, was not initially put forward as the foundation for new foreign policy.

In July of 1946, Truman asked Clark Clifford, special counsel to the president, to write a report that analyzed U.S.-Soviet relations. This report was almost 100,000 words long and drew heavily from Kennan’s *Long Telegram*. Truman delivered the famous Truman Doctrine speech before Congress on March 12, 1947. It was only eighteen minutes long, but it was a landmark point in foreign policy. Its message came from the Clifford report, which had been influenced by the *Long Telegram*. “It is the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure” (McCullough 546). The United States needed to provide 400 million dollars to keep Greece and Turkey from falling into the Soviet sphere. Truman in a very straightforward way had delineated the threat from the Soviets and asked the Congress to provide support for this new policy.

In June of 1947, Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, spoke at Harvard’s commencement service and described the outlines of an aid package that planned to allocate six billion dollars for the first year of funding to Western European countries so they could rebuild their infrastructure and shore up the economies devastated during the war. The Marshall Plan was an aid package that had far-reaching implications. It was unprecedented in the long history of international relations. It came into being for both moral and pragmatic reasons. Roosevelt had spoken of the “Four Freedoms” – freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Now America was prepared to deliver a fifth freedom, free enterprise for a war-torn Europe (Foner 231). The people of Europe had endured great suffering during the war years, and they desperately needed assistance. On a more practical realm, the thought was that if aid were not granted, the Soviets would increase their hold and further expand communist ideology.

Part of the plan to rebuild Europe was restoring confidence in economic opportunity and getting rid of a thriving black market. Operation “Blue Dog,” as it was codenamed, was the strategy to secretly stabilize the currency of West Germany. Cases of Deutsche Marks were clandestinely flown in with the intention of replacing the worthless Reichsmark at once and without warning. The plan was a huge success, almost overnight consumer goods became available in shop windows, and the barter system was replaced. This alarmed the Soviets and they announced that there could be no railway traffic or highway traffic into Berlin. Their plan was to force Western powers out of Berlin. The Soviets blockaded the city of Berlin and created worldwide fear. It looked like the Soviets and the West were to have a military showdown. Truman, always characterized as stubborn, would not back down. He fielded all sorts of “what if” questions about how the Soviets would react to the U.S. decision to airlift everything West Berliner’s needed indefinitely. The Truman administration had drawn a line in the sand, and Truman had no intention of backing down. West Berlin and the Berlin Airlift became symbols of American resolve to remain committed to freedom, liberty, and democracy, no matter what the cost. This airlift ended up giving Truman, as well as the West, a public relations boost. Truman had no way of knowing this going in, and he never discussed any political considerations about his decision. The operation was a colossal undertaking. There were two and a half million people living in West Berlin. Some military officers thought it would be impossible to supply all the needs of two and a half million people by air. The U.S. Air Force and the Royal Air Force

teamed up for this operation. Planes landed and took off from Berlin airfields twenty-four hours a day. At the height of the operation, the allies were transporting 4,760 tons of supplies every twenty-four hour period. In the end, this operation did not change the balance-of-power in Europe. However, it did win the hearts and minds of the people of West Berlin. The airlift started in June of 1948 and ended in August of 1949 when the Soviets lifted the blockade.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Following WWII, the Soviets made it clear that they intended to maintain military strength despite the fact that Western European countries were disarming. In addition to maintaining a full-strength military, they were engaging in aggressive actions that had become a menace to the West. The Soviets threatened Greece, Turkey, Norway, Iran, and Czechoslovakia between 1947 and 1949. In response to this threat, Western European countries as well as North American countries created a treaty that would provide for their collective security. An attack on one would be considered as an attack on all. The United States, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, and Luxembourg formed a North Atlantic Alliance.

HARRY AND IKE

Truman asked Dwight D. Eisenhower to become the Supreme Allied Commander of the NATO forces. Eisenhower felt his NATO command was unique because it was the first time an international force had been organized for the purpose of maintaining peace (“Dwight D. Eisenhower”). Truman had an incredible amount of respect for Eisenhower and actually offered to endorse him if he chose to run as a Democrat in 1952. Earlier while Truman was in Europe for the Potsdam Conference (1945), General Eisenhower, General Bradley and Truman were riding together in a car and Truman said to Eisenhower, “General there is nothing I wouldn’t do for you and that includes the presidency in 1948.” Eisenhower was caught off guard and laughed, saying, “Mr. President, I don’t know who your opponent will be in 1948, but it will not be I.” (Neal). Truman valued Eisenhower’s opinion and continued to hold him in high regard, but the election of 1952 and the Korean War created an uncomfortable tension between them that was not resolved until, on the occasion of Kennedy’s assassination and funeral, they made amends, went to the gravesite together, and later had coffee and visited. They remained on friendly terms thereafter.

KOREA

North Korea backed by Soviet firepower, attacked South Korea in June of 1950. The U.S. was not prepared for war. It had pulled most of its troops out of South Korea. Military budgets had been cut in an attempt to curtail government spending. Regardless, Truman knew this aggression could not go unanswered. The Munich Agreement of 1938 had taught its lesson about the consequences of appeasement. Aggression unchecked would lead to more aggression. The famous National Security Council-68 report, written by Paul Nitze, had been delivered to Truman and discussed in April of 1950. The report was a huge shock. It stated that the U.S. lacked the military capacity to enforce the Truman Doctrine. The report stated that without a proper military build-up the Truman Doctrine was nothing more than a bluff. Truman did not panic. He preferred to adopt a wait and see approach. On June 24, 1950, his wait turned into see. Reports from the front made it clear that this was a well-organized, well-equipped, massive attack. This war provided a test for the effectiveness for the unproven and untested United Nations. It adopted a resolution that backed U.S. action. The Soviets had withdrawn from the U.N. because the United States refused to recognize the People’s Republic of China, thus there was no veto of the resolution.

Initially, it was thought that the U.S. could avoid sending in ground troops. This was not the case; eventually American forces were flown into Korea from Japan, and most of them were inexperienced in combat. It was utter disaster. The American forces were outnumbered ten to one and, in some places, twenty to one. Refugees clogged the muddy roads and further hampered American efforts. Without adequate supplies, American forces, fighting in 100-degree temperatures were drinking water out of ditches filled with drainage from fields fertilized with animal manure. Dysentery was rampant. Casualties were as high as 30 percent (McCullough 787). The North Korean Army was well equipped and highly disciplined. It was a rout.

Truman was determined to keep the war limited. He feared it would escalate into WWII. General Douglas MacArthur disagreed with the limited war approach and began opposing the Commander-in-Chief openly with members of congress as well as the press. Truman had previously decided that he disliked and mistrusted MacArthur. He thought he was arrogant and power-hungry. This thought was further reinforced when in October of 1950, Truman traveled to Wake Island to meet with MacArthur. When President Truman got off the plane and walked down the steps to a waiting MacArthur, the general did not salute. "Truman later exclaimed to eyewitness Vernon Walters, a military aid, 'You're Goddamned right he didn't salute me!'" (Doyle 63). In the opening weeks and months of the war, American forces were punished but later MacArthur executed a brilliant counter-attack that pushed far north within miles of the Chinese border.

George Kennan, Paul Nitze and Chip Bohlen, all junior staffers at the State Department, advised against moving U.S. forces north of the 38th parallel but their advice never reached Truman (Doyle 63). Later, their concerns became reality. The Chinese and North Korean Armies routed MacArthur and his U.N. forces on November 25, 1950. Truman fired MacArthur in 1951 after the General sent a telegram to Republican Congressman Joe Martin proclaiming that there was no substitute for victory, thus undermining Truman's efforts to end the war. This was a move that showed real courage and commitment to rightness of action, not popularity. MacArthur was a true American hero, and his firing did not sit well with people. In typical Truman fashion, he dismissed these concerns and instead did what he thought was right. Truman firmly believed that the military had to answer to the president.

THE ELECTION OF 1952

Truman decided not to run for president in 1952 because he believed, having served most of two terms, he should step down. Adlai Stevenson was the Democratic nominee and Dwight Eisenhower beat out Robert Taft for the Republican nomination. Truman had Stevenson sit in on a foreign policy briefing during the campaign, and Eisenhower remarked that this was improper. Truman then extended an invitation to Eisenhower to come to the same briefing with the CIA. His invitation included some remarks about how "crackpots" were putting them against one another despite their good working relationship and accomplishments in the past. Eisenhower declined the invitation and Truman was highly offended. He thought Eisenhower was not only disrespecting their friendship, but more importantly, he was disrespecting the office of the president. Later, Truman dished out some distasteful rhetoric when he commented about the company Eisenhower was keeping. This remark was in reference to Eisenhower's traveling on the same train and attending the same events as Joseph McCarthy. Ironically, Eisenhower would later bring the vile and drunken McCarthy down while Truman had said nothing to oppose his absurdity.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, THE WAR HERO

The United States has never elected a better-credentialed president than Dwight David Eisenhower. He commanded the forces in Europe that saved the world, literally. He served as the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO. He graduated first in his class at the Army General Staff

College. People identified with him and he had appeal throughout all segments of society. He was courted by the Democrats to be their candidate before he declared himself a Republican. Eisenhower seemed above politics. “Eisenhower was the most gifted of all politicians – the kind who can appear to be nonpolitical” (Crabb 167). “*I Like Ike*” was his campaign slogan. His campaign promoted the idea that the containment policy of Truman’s administration was immoral. The Eisenhower administration promised to “roll back” communism and “liberate” people who had been forgotten by the “immoral” Truman Doctrine (Crabb 160). The rhetoric of the campaign was unusually focused on foreign policy. Most of the time Americans pick their presidents based on where they stand concerning domestic issues. However, during this period, people were especially aware of foreign policy problems and they looked to the hero, Eisenhower, to lead them through the difficult times ahead.

This rhetoric promised a lot but in practice, foreign policy did not change much. The U.S. still settled for the “containment” of communism and did not engage in much “roll back” or “liberation.” In fact, the Hungarians did rise up against communism in 1956 and anticipated American support but received none. For all the talk about “massive retaliation,” Eisenhower was reluctant to use military action to achieve foreign policy goals. All of the big talk kept everyone guessing about what he might do. John Foster Dulles was his Secretary of State, and he believed in the brinkmanship tactic – “The ability to get to the verge of war without getting into war is a necessary art. If you cannot master it, you inevitably get into war” (Crabb 163). Dulles and Eisenhower had learned the lesson of Munich—stand up to aggression and show strength and resolve. They thought this tactic, while possibly reckless, was the best way to deal with the Soviet threat. A general in the White House made the first stalemate in American warfare palatable (Crabb 162).

The Korean War serves as an example of the limits of military power. The war was not winnable, so Eisenhower negotiated a ceasefire. He had the prestige and credibility to pull this off and sell it to the American public. If Truman had done the same thing, he would have gotten much more criticism and blame. Joseph McCarthy launched a vigorous campaign that blamed the Truman administration and the state department for “losing China,” as if China belonged to the United States and was “lost” because of Truman’s misguided policies and the “pro-communist Roosevelt years.” McCarthy met his match with Eisenhower. When his distasteful and ridiculous accusations of pro-communist operatives focused on the U.S. Army, Eisenhower proceeded to shed light on McCarthy’s true motives. In the end, the Army, under Eisenhower’s guidance, exposed McCarthy as the despicable, drunk, publicity hound that he was. Eisenhower was self-confident and had the complete trust of the American people. Eisenhower was in the unique position of being able to take on the Joint Chiefs and the Pentagon brass with great effectiveness. “The quip that Eisenhower could not be impressed by the pentagon brass because he had one more star than their highest ranking officer is true” (Crabb 163).

CONCLUSION

Despite the missteps and tragedies of American foreign policy during the Cold War, American foreign policy had legitimacy. Certainly there were disagreements among U.S. allies and public protest during the 1960s, but for the most part America’s foreign policies throughout the Cold War period were supported by the comity of nations. State Department officials as well as the president worked to make decisions by consensus and followed many, if not most international laws. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, America’s allies question the legitimacy of her power and her willingness to take unilateral action as well as oppose decisions made by the United Nations. The U.S. refuses to join the International Criminal Court and it denies its authority. It will be interesting to see how America’s foreign policy will attempt to regain its legitimacy.

Cold War history, studied from varied perspectives, provides a contradictory story. Talk of brinkmanship, containment, resistance, and subversion offers a narrative focused on military force, the proliferation of nuclear power, and spheres of influence. Rhetoric about freedom, democracy, liberty, collective security, and individual rights serves the purpose of winning the hearts of the easily distracted. The correct conclusions must consider the contradictions that will not explain how the government of the United States practiced enthusiastic support for the symbolic, support for the fiction of its moral purpose, while actions necessary to upholding these principles were rare.

No comprehensive treatment of the Cold War would be complete without examining the most tragic mistake of U.S. foreign policy during this period. This unit is not a comprehensive treatment of this era. Still, interested students of Cold War history may be appreciative of some direction concerning future analysis. The Truman administration was riding the wild and new notion of a global super power, whose military and economic superiority was without rival. It possessed moral credibility backed by unquestioned supremacy. Perhaps these factors, all easily categorized as positive, obscured the necessity to recognize the fact that communism was not monolithic. This false assumption led to a narrow set of strategies and tactics consistently and tragically exercised in resisting the spread of the communism in the developing world. During the postwar years, the U.S. established a global military presence and stepped into the role of the benevolent super-cop, out to defend freedom, and more importantly, contain communism. The president relied on the National Security Council more and the State Department's influence waned. This change may explain why U.S. policy feared peasant societies and assumed that as the developing world progressed and attempted to join an industrialized, commercialized world, anything other than a pure, free market, friendly to American institutions, had to be opposed. The transition from foreign policy formed by the State Department's staff to policies proposed by a marginalized State Department, and a vigorous, less cautious National Security Council resulted in missteps. The Department of State had input certainly, but its influence waned. Foreign policy objectives, based on exaggerated threats instead of common interests, pursued by military means and therefore limited to achieving only those goals reached by the application of power instead of diplomacy, led to costly campaigns, crusades, missed opportunities and war.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan 1: Origins of the Cold War

Provide students with a map showing what Europe looked like following World War II. Divide Eastern and Western Europe, (color code) and discuss the Iron Curtain. Encourage students to think about the Soviet's rationale for surrounding itself with satellites – protection. Divide Germany (color code) into the Soviet sphere and Western sphere. Discuss how the Berlin Airlift demonstrated Western strength and resolve. Note the location of Berlin, within Soviet sphere. Color code NATO countries and Warsaw Pact countries. Place the letters MP in each country that received aid through the Marshall Plan. On the back of the map, have students write a diary entry, imagining that they are living in West Berlin during the time of the blockade and airlift. Students may discuss the shortage of consumer products as well as worries about food and heat for their homes.

Original members of NATO were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Original members of Warsaw Pact (1955) were Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Rumania, Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia.

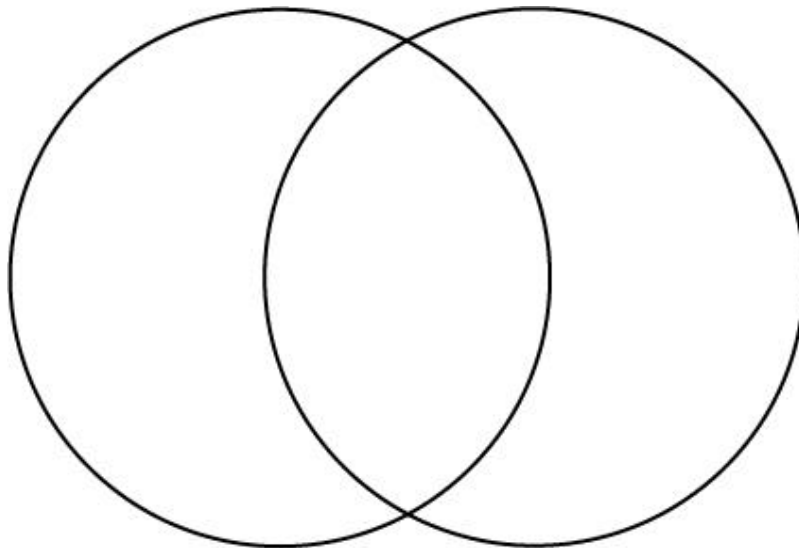
After students have completed the map exercise and the diary entry, ask students to explain how the Allies of WWII could have, in the aftermath of this war, created such different institutions, livelihoods, and goals.

Teacher Talking Points

- A) Military alliances are created based on necessity. Stalin, Hitler, Tojo—each cruel and inhumane—showed their evil intentions in different ways. Germany and Japan were far more aggressive and together posed an immediate threat to all of humanity. Britain and the U.S., desperate for assistance in defeating Tojo and Hitler, as well as the nuisance, the Soviets.
- B) Stalin used the war to consolidate his power, modernize, industrialize, and militarize his terror society while receiving assistance in defeating Germany. Germany attacked the Soviets defying the Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact. Stalin lost much in terms of blood and treasure, but the war gave him a pretext for oppressive practices. His utter ruthlessness was responsible for his political success. The Soviets were now safe from Japan, a traditional enemy. In consequential ways, the Soviets improved their power position in the world as a result of being on the winning side following WWII.
- C) France, Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union had a common interest in defeating Germany and Japan but certainly did not have a common vision for the future of their societies. Once Japan and Germany were defeated, the Soviet and Western ideologies had a period of cautious co-existence called the Cold War.

Lesson Plan 2: Origins of the Cold War

Students will think about and discuss the similarities and differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. Have students draw a Venn diagram to illustrate and conceptualize these differences and similarities. Students may include the information here, but answers may differ. The major similarities are: enormous military power, enormous industrial capability, educated / indoctrinated citizenry, perceived its own institutions to be superior, perceived its own institutions to be threatened by different ideologies, willingness to use its political and military power to exert its will. The characteristics that distinguish these countries are: United States – democratic institutions, private ownership of property, free press, individual rights, dissent tolerated; Soviet Union – government controlled economy, totalitarian, oppressive, no individual rights, media is government controlled.



Siracusa, Joseph M. *Into The Dark House: American Diplomacy and the Ideological Origins of the Cold War*.

Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1998.

This explains the shifts in power following WWII and how the Soviets and Great Britain and the United States struggled to reshape the postwar world.

NARRATOR: Harry S. Truman became the 33rd president of the United States upon the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1945. Truman led the country through the final stages of World War II and the tense early years of the Cold War. Born in rural Missouri, Truman left his family's farm to lead an artillery unit in France during World War I. After the war he and an Army friend opened a men's clothing store in Kansas City, Missouri. When the store failed in the early 1920s, Truman decided to pursue politics. In 1926 he was elected presiding judge of the county court. In this post he be Truman Doctrine: An American foreign policy created to counter Soviet geopolitical spread during the Cold War, first announced to Congress by President Harry S. Truman on March 12, 1947. NATO: An intergovernmental military alliance based on the North Atlantic Treaty, signed on 4 April 1949. Berlin Airlift: A campaign in response to the Berlin Blockade that delivered food and other supplies, such as coal, to East Berlin on a massive scale using military aircraft. proxy wars: A conflict between two nations in which neither country directly engages the other. Overview. Harry S Truman became President of the United States on 12 April 1945, amidst profound concern about his capacity for national or world leadership. He was untutored in foreign affairs, and knew nothing about the complex diplomacy of his predecessor, Franklin D Roosevelt. At the same time the expedient Anglo-American-Soviet alliance - formed in opposition to Nazi Germany during World War Two - was growing strained over Russian actions in eastern Europe, and over Allied policy differences towards a soon-to-be defeated Germany.Â A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War by Melvyn P Leffler (Stanford University Press, 1992). Truman by David McCullough (Simon and Schuster, 1993). The events of this era show the students of history that President Harry S. Truman inherited a changing world in which the limits of power would be tested, the costs of war remembered, and these limits and remembrances constantly factored into the practical questions concerning what was desired and what was possible.Â There are many lessons presented by the consideration of the Cold War and its origins. The most profound lesson is the importance of considering both the possibilities and the limitations of American power. WHO This unit is a resource for teachers of high school American History. WHY This unit's purpose is to provide basic information about the origins of the Cold War. At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union controlled the largest army the world had ever known. Yet the "Mother Country" lay ravaged: nearly one third of its wealth had been destroyed. 32,000 factories were in ruins, 65,000 kilometers of railway track were now useless, and an untold number of citizens had been killed. 17,100 townships had been destroyed; 70,000 villages and hamlets had been burned to the ground; 100,000 collective farms had been completely demolished in the military occupation

Typed diary of Harry S. Truman, January 6-September 14, 1948, covering various issues and events, including decision to remain in Berlin and the 1948 campaign. Papers of Harry S. Truman: Post-Presidential Files. State Department Memorandum, n. d. (c. April 1949), regarding the potential for the Soviets to lift their blockade of Berlin. Papers of Harry S. Truman: Naval Aide Files. Dean Acheson to Harry S. Truman, Department of State Incoming Telegram, September 15, 1950, addressing some fundamental problems with the development of NATO. Papers of Harry S. Truman: President's Secretary's Files. Dwight D. Eisenhower to Harry S. Truman, February 24, 1951, relating to challenges in establishing the command of NATO. Harry S Truman became President of the United States on 12 April 1945, amidst profound concern about his capacity for national or world leadership. He was untutored in foreign affairs, and knew nothing about the complex diplomacy of his predecessor, Franklin D Roosevelt. At the same time the expedient Anglo-AmericanSoviet alliance - formed in opposition to Nazi Germany during World War Two - was growing strained over Russian actions in eastern Europe, and over Allied policy differences towards a soon-to-be defeated Germany. ...growing acclaim for his policies has overlooked the way in which his parochial outlook infused his policy-making... Get access to the full version of this content by using one of the access options below. If you should have access and can't see this content please contact technical support. Full text views. To send this article to your Kindle, first ensure no-reply@cambridge.org is added to your Approved Personal Document E-mail List under your Personal Document Settings on the Manage Your Content and Devices page of your Amazon account. Then enter the "name" part of your Kindle email address below. Find out more about sending to your Kindle. Find out more about sending to your Kindle.