

28 TRUMAN AND COLD WAR AMERICA, 1945–1952

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Analyze how America's expectations regarding world affairs affected the foreign policy choices of the Truman administration between 1946 and 1952.
2. Explain the choices and constraints Truman confronted when considering policy options as the North Koreans invaded South Korea.
3. Discuss the constraints Truman faced in implementing his domestic programs and how these constraints influenced his choices.
4. Explain the constraints and choices the Cold War placed on American politics and society.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

People hoped that the end of World War II would usher in a period of international cooperation and peace. This *expectation* vanished as the world entered a period of armed and vigilant suspicion called the Cold War. To protect the country and the world from Soviet expansion, the United States *chose* to assume a primary economic, political, and military role around the globe. The *outcome* was Truman's containment policy. First applied to Western Europe, it eventually included Asia as the Cold War became a hot war in Korea. By 1952, with the "loss" of China and the stalemate in Korea, Americans turned against Truman's foreign policy. Many thought that the United States was losing the Cold War and that containment was not a strong enough policy to defeat Communism and protect American interests.

At home the Cold War had its impact as well, acting as a *constraint* on the expansion of liberalism. Many, moderates and conservatives alike, *chose* to use the fear of Communism to promote their own political, social, and economic interests. They attacked liberals, unions, and civil rights advocates as radicals, fellow travelers, and Communists. Economic prosperity also reduced public support for further growth of the New Deal as postwar Americans turned their attention toward enjoying the "good life." Politically the *outcome* was that although some existing New Deal-style programs—Social Security, a minimum wage, and farm supports—grew in scope, initiatives, like civil rights and national health care, that would have enlarged the federal government's domestic role were rejected.

As Americans adjusted to postwar life, one of the major *outcomes* was a reemphasis on home and family. Women experienced strong social pressure to give up their wartime jobs and responsibilities and take up "domestic" life. Marriages and births rose as many Americans *chose*

to move to suburbs. While jobs and homeownership multiplied for white males and white families seemed poised to achieve the American dream, minorities found that the *constraints* of discrimination ended or limited many of the economic and social gains they had made during the war. Although pushed out of the work force or into lesser jobs and still living in a socially segregated society, many nonwhites, joined by some white women, *chose* to resist being cast in customary roles.

ANNOTATED OUTLINE

- I. The Cold War Begins
 - A. Truman and the Soviets
 1. Truman and other American leaders identified two overlapping paths to peace: international cooperation and deterrence based on military strength.
 - a. Not all nations accepted the American vision for peace and stability.
 - b. The Soviets advanced opposing goals in Eastern Europe and were unwilling to allow an open political and economic system.
 - c. Truman confronted the Soviets for not fulfilling its Yalta promises and was less compromising with the Soviets than Roosevelt had been.
 - d. By early 1946, Truman was “tired of babying the Soviets.”
 2. The U.S. adopted the containment policy to meet the Soviet threat head-on.
 - a. The fear of Soviet expansion quickly became a bipartisan issue.
 - b. Churchill warned of the Soviet threat in his “iron curtain” speech in 1946.
 - c. Ideology and geography determined postwar credits and loans to Europe.
 - B. The Division of Europe
 1. Events in Europe assumed first priority for the U.S. as Communist forces pressured Greece and Turkey.
 - a. The Truman Doctrine offered help to those nations opposing Communism.
 - b. The Marshall Plan expanded the Truman Doctrine to all of Europe.
 - c. The Soviets were unwilling to participate and tightened their control over Eastern Europe.
 2. The Soviets engineered a coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 and installed a Communist government.
 3. The Berlin Blockade of June 1948 heightened Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.
 - a. The Soviet goal was to force Western abandonment of West Germany or face losing Berlin.
 - b. The Berlin Airlift, which flew in supplies to support West Berlin, was a tremendous victory for the U.S. over the Soviets.
 - c. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created in May 1949 to defend Western Europe from Communist forces.
 - C. A Global Presence
 1. The U.S. expanded its economic and political interests in Latin America.
 - a. The U.S. government encouraged private firms to develop the region through business and trade.
 - b. The Rio Pact of 1947 encouraged Latin Americans toward “collective security.”
 - c. Adding to this feeling was the establishment of the Organization of American States (OAS).

2. U.S. fear of future oil shortages promoted expansion of its interests in the Middle East.
 - a. The U.S. also became a powerful supporter of a new Jewish state, Israel, as a representative voice of its interests in the region.
3. Asia, however, provided severe disappointments to U.S. foreign policy.
 - a. In China, a civil war led to Communist rule by 1949.
 - b. The Nationalist government fled to Formosa (Taiwan).
 - c. Many Americans complained that the Truman administration was “too soft” on Communism.
4. The Soviet Union detonated its own atomic bomb in August 1949.
 - a. NSC-68 called for global containment and a massive military buildup so that the U.S. could adequately defend itself against the growing Soviet threat.
 - b. Truman hesitated to implement the report’s recommendations, but North Korea’s invasion of South Korea helped change his mind on the issue.

II. The Korean War

A. The UN Responds to Communist Aggression

1. Although U.S. public opinion supported intervention in Korea, there was no World War II-like rush to arms.
 - a. By 1950, North Korean forces occupied most of South Korea.

B. Seeking to Liberate North Korea

1. According to Truman and MacArthur, restoring prevailing conditions prior to the invasion was no longer enough for the U.S.
 - a. They now wanted to unify the peninsula under South Korea, and an invasion seemed safe.
 - b. An overconfident MacArthur, however, violated his commander in chief’s orders.
 - c. MacArthur moved forces to within a few miles of Yalu.
 - d. Within three weeks, the Communists had shoved UN forces back to the thirty-eighth parallel dividing North and South Korea.
2. Truman abandoned his goal of a unified Korea and sought a negotiated settlement that would leave two Koreas.
 - a. Truman’s decision was not popular with the American public because they wanted victory.
 - b. Truman replaced MacArthur with General Ridgway in April 1951.
3. The Korean conflict had far-reaching military and diplomatic results for the United States.
 - a. It resulted in the expansion of U.S. military spending and the rearming of West Germany and Italy.
 - b. The U.S. made its presence in Asia and the Pacific permanent, including the ANZUS Treaty (1951), which promised protection to Australia and New Zealand.
 - c. George F. Kennan’s containment theory was formally and financially incorporated throughout the world.

III. Homecomings and Adjustments

A. Demobilization

1. Demobilization began as soon as World War II ended.
 - a. The military and the State Department protested the rapidness of demobilization.

- b. By November 1945, 1.25 million GIs were returning home each month.
 - c. As a result, the nation faced a massive housing shortage, and developers like William Levitt supplied mass-produced housing in the suburbs.
 - d. As more whites moved to the suburbs, the Supreme Court in *Shelly v. Kraemer* in 1948 ruled that the courts could not enforce restrictive housing covenants written to exclude minorities but the decision had little impact on ending discrimination.
 - e. Veterans also expected jobs and expected female workers to relinquish theirs.
 - 2. Many, but not all, women accepted the role of contented wife and homemaker.
 - a. The divorce rate jumped dramatically as a result of postwar tension and hasty wartime marriages.
 - b. Marriage, however, was still more popular than ever with two-thirds of the population married by 1950 and having children.
 - 3. Like women, nonwhites found that “fair employment” vanished after World War II.
 - a. Nonwhite Americans still lived in a distinctly segregated world.
 - b. Having risked their lives and fought for democracy, minorities were determined not to return to their old ways.
- B. Truman and Liberalism
 - 1. Emphasizing his roots, Truman expanded some New Deal programs.
 - a. He continued governmental controls over the economy.
 - b. Truman also renewed the Fair Practices Employment Commission (FPEC).
 - c. This expanded New Deal, however, never fully developed.
 - d. Republicans, conservative Democrats, business leaders, and other conservatives were determined to prevent it.
 - 2. Critics warned that Truman’s program involved too much government.
 - a. They believed it threatened to destroy private enterprise.
 - b. Some critics thought Truman’s program endangered existing class and social relations.
 - 3. As prices rose, most workers’ incomes fell.
 - a. “Right-to-work” laws banned compulsory union membership.
 - b. In some cases, legal and police protection was provided for “scabs.”
 - c. Other laws restricted boycotts and sympathy strikes.
 - d. Some laws promoted the “open shop” and company-organized groups.
 - e. Even Truman squared off against railroad and coal miners’ unions.
 - f. Strikes, soaring inflation rates, and divisions within the Democratic ranks resulted in Republican party victories in Congress in 1946.
 - 4. The Taft-Hartley Act (June 1947) was passed over Truman’s veto and became a clear victory for management over labor.
 - a. It banned the “closed shop” and prevented industry-wide collective bargaining.
 - b. In addition, it legalized state-sponsored “right-to-work” laws.
 - 5. Truman’s position on civil rights was cautious but generally supportive.
 - a. The *To Secure These Rights* (1947) report stressed racial inequalities in American society and called upon government to take steps to correct the imbalance.
- C. The 1948 Election
 - 1. Republicans had high expectations in this election as a result of 1946 congressional victories and Truman’s low approval rating.
 - a. They nominated New York governor Thomas E. Dewey.

2. The Dixiecrats were southern Democrats who were unhappy with their party but unwilling to support a Republican.
 - a. They nominated South Carolina's governor J. Strom Thurmond.
 - b. The Progressive party nominated liberal and foreign policy critic Henry A. Wallace.
3. Confounding pollsters, Truman defeated Dewey.
 - a. With Congress again Democratic, Truman launched the Fair Deal.
 - b. He called for increases in Social Security, public housing, and the minimum wage.
 - c. In addition, he proposed the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act and proposed the institution of a national health program.
 - d. Truman gave civil rights and federal aid to education a place on the national agenda.
 - e. He rewarded farmers by promoting the Brannan Plan.

IV. Cold War Politics

A. Congress

1. Congress responded favorably to well-established New Deal continuation programs.
 - a. It did not, however, support new proposals going beyond the scope of the New Deal.
2. The Federal Employee Loyalty Program was established in March 1947.
 - a. After a hearing, a federal employee could be fired if "reasonable grounds" existed for believing he or she was disloyal.
 - b. In almost every case, the rights of the accused were restricted and he or she had no right to confront accusers or to refute evidence.
 - c. Few of those forced to leave government service were Communists.

B. The Red Scare

1. Joseph McCarthy headed the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).
 - a. He announced his intention to root out Communism within government and society and worked with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover.
 - b. He targeted State Department officials, New Dealers, labor activists, entertainers, writers, educators, and those with known liberal philosophies.
 - c. McCarthy made his first Cold War splash with his investigation of Hollywood.
2. Anti-Communism was in vogue and proved to be a weapon for a variety of causes.
 - a. Alger Hiss was the perfect target for HUAC but he was found guilty only of perjury and sentenced to five years in prison.
 - b. Communist victory in China and the Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb only heightened American fears, since some thought only American traitors could have made these events possible.
 - c. The McCarran Internal Security Act, passed over Truman's veto, required all Communists to register with the attorney general.
 - d. This act made it a crime to conspire to establish a totalitarian government in the United States.

C. Joseph McCarthy and the Politics of Loyalty

1. Feeding on fear of the enemy within, McCarthy emerged at the forefront of the anti-Communist movement.

- a. The outbreak of the Korean War and the reversals at the hands of the Chinese only increased the senator's popularity.

USING ECCO

Students can complete a chart using the ECCO framework to compare the New Deal with the Fair Deal and write about the similarities and the differences between the two. What were the *expectations* of the two Democrats for their domestic programs? How were they the same and how were they different? What *choices* did each president make in selecting and implementing his programs? What *constraints* did each leader face? Were they similar? Why or why not? Finally, have students compare the *outcomes* of the New Deal and the Fair Deal? How did the Fair Deal build on the New Deal? How did it take a different course? You might also want to have students discuss how men with such totally different social and economic backgrounds could share some of the same political ideology.

SUGGESTED LECTURE TOPICS

1. David McCullough's *Truman* (1992), provides quite a bit of interesting material for any type of lecture on Harry Truman. McCullough's skills as a storyteller are unmatched, and his work definitely makes Truman come alive to his audience. Whether you want to lecture about his pre-presidential days, his administration, or his post-presidency, this work is full of information. For more scholarly accounts, you might want to use Robert Ferrell's recent biography, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (1994) or Alonzo Hamby's *Man of the People* (1995).
2. In a chapter titled "The Cold War and the 'Feminine Mystique,'" Sara M. Evans excellently portrays the role of women during this era in *Born for Liberty* (1989). An emphasis on femininity had returned, as Evans point out, and women were expected to resume their pre-World War II roles as keepers of the "hearth and home." Evans details the change feminist leaders tried to impart upon the United States and how it affected American society.
3. Another look at American society in the 1950s can be found in J. Ronald Oakley's *God's Country: America in the Fifties* (1990). While he describes the outward appearance of "the nifty fifties," Oakley also asserts that it was a puzzling time when many of the features of today's society came into their own. For example, America's fear of nuclear weaponry, television, the expanding youth culture, the drug culture, the civil rights movement, and space travel are among the topics he discusses in this work. Oakley has done an excellent job of researching the current material available on the history of the fifties and incorporates it into his writing.
4. In the foreign policy arena, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (1972), by John Lewis Gaddis, is an award-winning account of the beginning of the Cold War era. Gaddis correctly argues that it was not Soviet pressure to which Washington officials were responding during this era, but a wider range of complex sources. He includes domestic politics, bureaucratic inertia, quirks of personality, and perceptions of Soviet intentions among these influences.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have students discuss the points of conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States during and just after World War II and how the Atlantic Charter shaped American expectations about wartime goals.
2. The events between 1945 and 1950 caused the Cold War and reflected the containment policy. You might want to discuss these events and how they fit in with Kennan's theory with students.
3. Have students discuss why conservatives, both Republicans and Democrats, chose to oppose Truman in the 1948 election, and why Truman won the election.
4. This might be a good time to ask students to discuss when they think the Cold War actually ended and who or what was responsible for its demise.
5. In the area of social history, review with students the expected roles of women after World War II and compare them to today's expectations. Are marriage and children still the most valued options? Has there been a return to this more traditional attitude?

ANSWERS TO CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. What expectations did Americans have about the nature of the postwar world, and the Soviet Union? How did American choices regarding Europe and the rest of the postwar world reflect the containment theory?

America's expectations regarding world affairs affected the Truman administration's foreign policy choices between 1946 and 1952 in a variety of ways. World War II had ended most Americans' concept of a powerful, isolationist nation, and most U.S. citizens expected that their nation would lead the postwar world because it had "no other direct interest" except a lasting, just peace. In trying to seek this lasting peace, Truman tried to forge the structure of postwar world affairs, but the outcome was an unexpected one. By the end of 1947, the U.S. and the Soviet Union were bitter rivals instead of wartime allies. The containment theory guided the Truman administration and was evidenced by the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The U.S. hoped that by providing economic and eventually military aid to nations "at risk" of becoming communist, the superpower could keep the expansion of Soviet power in check. The Berlin airlift was a tremendous victory for the United States in this endeavor.

2. As the North Koreans invaded South Korea, what choices and constraints did Truman confront when considering policy options? What expectations did Truman and MacArthur have about defeating the North Koreans and unifying Korea? What was the outcome for both leaders?

As the North Koreans invaded South Korea, Truman chose to commit American troops to halt Communist aggression, since he believed that the region was vital to American interests. Since the Truman administration and most Americans believed that Moscow had directed this invasion, the wisdom of NSC-68's commitment to containment seemed the wisest course of action to follow. Although there was public support for Truman's decision to intervene, there was no rush to arms as in World War II. Truman was also constrained by his belief that a congressional declaration of war against Korea would expand the conflict to

involve the Chinese and the Russians. And, eventually, Truman and most Americans decided that unifying the peninsula was a better option than restoring the preinvasion conditions to the region. In addition, the overzealousness of General MacArthur also constrained Truman's actions in the Korean conflict. Truman eventually dismissed MacArthur and Truman moved forward with plans to rearm West Germany and Italy. Truman's choices now meant that the containment policy now included not only Europe but also East Asia and the Pacific.

3. Discuss how social, economic, and Cold War expectations interacted to influence political outcomes during the Truman administration.

While Americans expected new economic and social opportunities after the conclusion of World War II, the constraints Truman faced in implementing his domestic programs were many. The biggest constraint he faced was the perception that he was trying to “outdeal the New Deal.” The president's Fair Deal program, however, never fully developed as a result of the constraints placed upon it by Republicans, conservative Democrats, business leaders, and a variety of conservative groups that vigorously opposed what they called “emerging socialism.” In the end, Congress responded favorably to Truman's programs in areas already well established by the New Deal, such as a minimum hourly wage, funds for low- and moderate-income housing, and increases in Social Security payments. New proposals going beyond the scope of the New Deal, however, failed to generate the necessary support. Furthermore, Cold War expectations meant that Truman had to dedicate much of his time to foreign policy concerns.

4. What expectations and events heightened society's fears of internal subversion? What choices did politicians make in responding to those fears?

The Cold War presented constraints as well as choices to the political and social scenery of the United States and internal subversion was an ever-increasing fear. The Red Scare was the most forceful player on the scene of American politics in the early days of the Cold War. Senator Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunt constrained the lives and careers of a wide variety of usually loyal citizens. Many politicians were concerned that they could not stand up to McCarthy's charges without appearing to be a Communist sympathizer. Truman's Federal Employee Loyalty Program only helped to reinforce this overabundant fear of Communist infiltration in the United States. Truman's “losing China” and the outbreak of the Korean conflict only heightened these fears. The stalemate in Korea helped Americans decide to choose a new leader in 1952.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Individual Choices: Paul Robeson**
Ask students to research newspaper and news magazine accounts of Robeson's life. See if they can detect the bias of the times and also find out if they detect any change over time in the way the public seemed to respond to Robeson.
2. Help students prepare a chart on the chalkboard or on a transparency about the beginning of the Cold War. Have them suggest American actions and Soviet reactions as well as Soviet actions and American reactions to see how these activities were sometimes indistinguishable. Then, have them debate which nation was at “fault” for starting the Cold War.
3. You could conduct an in-class trial on the activities of Joseph McCarthy and the methods he used during his Communist witch-hunt. At its conclusion, you might ask if any present-day

popular figure has the potential for becoming another McCarthy. Would America tolerate another McCarthy-like figure?

4. Students could debate how the United Nations should have handled the Korean situation and what role the U.S. should have played both in Korea and in the UN handling of the events there. You could easily lead them into a discussion of similar issues in today's world.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Individual Choices: Paul Robeson
Ask students to think about why Robeson chose not to act in the movies. Would he not have been able to reach more people that way? Would students have made the same choices he did?
2. Students could write a detailed (two- to four-page) letter to President Harry Truman about how he could try to end the Cold War.
3. Have students research their own families' histories during this era and report back to the class about their findings.

MAP ACTIVITIES

1. The opening map provides students an opportunity to examine the relationship between the growing urban/suburban population and income and to see how wartime changes (see opening map in Chapter 27) continued into the postwar decade.
2. Have students examine a map to see how Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe, Iran, Greece, and Turkey represented expansionism to Americans, whereas American actions in Iran, Greece, Eastern Europe, and Germany were viewed as encirclement by Soviets.
3. Have students plot the stages of the Korean War on Map 28.3 and lead them in discussing how supply and communication lines, combined with the geography of Korea, may have influenced Communist and United Nations strategy and actions.
4. Using a blank world map, ask students to plot U.S. and Soviet expansion and extent of influence during this time period. From the information they place on the map, have them speculate as to where future problems might have lain as Cold War tensions increased between the two nations. As they make suggestions, discuss with them whether or not these places did indeed become scenes of Cold War battles.

SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS

1. Ask students to write an essay about whether or not they think Truman could have won the presidency had he decided to run in 1952. If not, what situations would have to have been different to increase his chances?
2. Have students research the Bracero Program using the ECCO framework.

- Students could compare Harry Truman's "common man" appeal with the more "upper-crust" appeal of Franklin Roosevelt. Which do they think was more successful in appealing to the common man?

AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCES

SOFTWARE

- Trinity and Beyond: A History of Nuclear Weapons*
Heizer Software
P.O. Box 232019
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
510-943-7667 or Fax: 510-943-6882

FILMS

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1942-1955: War Work, Housework, and Growing Discontent</i>
National Women's History Project
7738 Bell Road
Windsor, CA 95492 <i>Love in the Cold War</i>
PBS Video
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314-1698
1-800-344-3337 <i>McCarthy: Death of a Witch Hunter</i>
Film Archives
The Cinema Center
Botsford, CT 06404
1-800-366-1920 <i>Korea</i>
Film Archives (see above) <i>Korea: War at the 38th Parallel</i>
Film Archives (see above) <i>Korea: The Forgotten War</i>
Film Archives (see above) <i>This Is Korea</i>
Film Archives (see above) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Legacy of the Hollywood Blacklist</i>
Direct Cinema Limited
P.O. Box 69799
Los Angeles, CA 90069 <i>Korea: The Unknown War</i>
WGBH-Boston
125 Western Avenue
Boston, MA 02134
1-617-492-2777
Fax: 617-787-0714 <i>Seeing Red: Stories of American Communists</i>
New Day Films
22 Riverview Drive
Wayne, NJ 07470 <i>Are We Winning, Mommy? America and the Cold War</i>
First Run Features
153 Waverly Place
New York, NY 10014 <i>The Great Upset of '48</i>
WETA Visions
Educational Activities
P.O. Box 2626
Washington, DC 20013 |
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