

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

“Another Such Victory”:

President Truman, American Foreign Policy,
and the Cold War*

As the twenty-first century nears, President Harry S. Truman's reputation stands high. This is especially true regarding his stewardship of foreign policy although, ironically, he entered the Oval Office in 1945 untutored in world affairs, and during his last year in the White House Republicans accused his administration of having surrendered fifteen countries and five hundred million people to communism and sending twenty thousand Americans to their “burial ground” in Korea. Near the end of his term, Truman's public “favorable” rating had plummeted to 23 percent.¹

Within a decade, however, historians rated Truman a “near great” president, crediting his administration with reconstructing Western Europe and Japan, resisting Soviet or Communist aggression from Greece to Korea, and forging collective security through NATO. In the 1970s the “plain speaking” Truman became a popular culture hero.² Recently, biographers have depicted him as the allegory of American life, an ordinary man whose extraordinary character led him to triumph over adversity from childhood through the presidency, and even posited a symbiotic relationship between “His Odyssey” from Independence to the White House and America's rise to triumphant superpower status.³ Melvyn P. Leffler, in his *A Preponderance of Power*, has judged Truman to

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1. Kirk Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, eds., *National Party Platforms, 1940–1960* (Urbana, 1961), 497; Donald R. McCoy, *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945–1953* (Lawrence, KS, 1984), 297.

2. Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Our Presidents: A Rating by 75 Historians,” *New York Times Magazine*, 29 July 1962; Morton Borden, *America's Eleven Greatest Presidents*, 2d ed. (New York, 1971), v–ix; Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman and the Modern American Presidency* (Boston, 1983), 187–92.

3. Roy Jenkins, *Truman* (New York, 1986); David McCullough, *Truman* (New York, 1992), esp. 992 for “His Odyssey”; Robert H. Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman: A Life* (Columbia, MO, 1994); Alonzo L. Hamby, *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1995); an incisive, highly critical exception to this view on foreign affairs is William E. Pemberton, *Harry S. Truman: Fair Dealer and Cold Warrior* (Boston, 1989).

have been neither a naïf nor an idealist but a realist who understood the uses of power and whose administration, despite serious, costly errors, prudently preserved America's national security against real or perceived Soviet threats.⁴

Collapse of the Soviet Union and Europe's other Communist states, whose archives have confirmed Truman's belief in 1945 that their regimes governed largely by "clubs, pistols and concentration camps," has further raised the former president's standing.⁵ This has encouraged John Lewis Gaddis and others to shift their focus to Stalin's murderous domestic rule as the key determinant of Soviet foreign policy and the Cold War. As Gaddis has contended, Stalin was heir to Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, responsible for more state-sanctioned murders than Adolf Hitler, and treated world politics as an extension of domestic politics: a zero sum game in which his gaining security meant depriving all others of it. For Gaddis and others, that is largely the answer to the question of whether Stalin sought or caused the Cold War.⁶

But as Walter LaFeber has said, to dismiss Stalin's policies as the work of a paranoid is greatly to oversimplify the Cold War.⁷ Indeed, historians of Stalin's era seem to be of the preponderant view that he pursued a cautious but brutal realpolitik. He aimed to restore Russia's 1941 boundaries, establish a sphere of influence in border states, provide security against a recovered Germany or Japan or hostile capitalist states, and gain compensation, notably reparations, for the ravages of war. Stalin calculated forces, recognized America's superior industrial and military power, put Soviet state interests ahead of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and pursued pragmatic or opportunistic policies in critical areas such as Germany, China, and Korea.⁸

Thus, the time seems ripe, given our increased knowledge of Soviet policies, to reconsider President Truman's role in the Cold War. As Thomas G. Paterson

4. Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, 1992), 26–27. See also Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917–1953* (New York, 1994), 48–49.

5. Truman diary entry for 26 July 1945, in *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (New York, 1980), 56–57.

6. John Lewis Gaddis, "The Tragedy of Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 17 (Winter 1993): 1–16, and *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York, 1997), esp. 8–25. See also Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 9–35.

7. Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–1992*, 7th ed. (New York, 1993), 20–21.

8. On Europe see David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (New Haven, 1994); Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943 to 1956* (Manchester, 1995); Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York, 1996); Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Dmitri Volkogonov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (Rocklin, CA, 1996); and Zubok and Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. On Asia see Sergei N. Goncharov, John W. Lewis, and Xue Litai, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Stanford, 1993); Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York, 1994); and Odd Arne Westad, *Cold War Revolution: Soviet-American Rivalry and the Origins of the Chinese Civil War* (New York, 1993). See also Melvyn P. Leffler, "Inside Enemy Archives: The Cold War Reopened," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (July/August 1996): 120–35.

has written, the president stands at the pinnacle of the diplomatic-military establishment, has great capacity to set the foreign policy agenda and to mold public opinion, and his importance, especially in Truman’s case, cannot be denied.⁹ But contrary to prevailing views, I believe that his policymaking was shaped by his parochial and nationalistic heritage. This was reflected in his uncritical belief in the superiority of American values and political-economic interests and his conviction that the Soviet Union and communism were the root cause of international strife. Truman’s parochialism also caused him to disregard contrary views, to engage in simplistic analogizing, and to show little ability to comprehend the basis for other nations’ policies. Consequently, his foreign policy leadership intensified Soviet-American conflict, hastened the division of Europe, and brought tragic intervention in Asian civil wars.

In short, Truman lacked the qualities of the creative or great leader who, as James MacGregor Burns has written, must broaden the environment in which he and his citizenry operate and widen the channels in which choices are made and events flow.¹⁰ Truman, to the contrary, narrowed Americans’ perception of their world political environment and the channels for policy choices and created a rigid framework in which the United States waged long-term, extremely costly global cold war. Indeed, before we celebrate America’s victory in this contest we might recall that after King Pyrrhus’s Greek forces defeated the Romans at the battle of Asculum in 280 B.C., he reflected that “another such victory, and we are undone.”

II

Truman’s parochialism and nationalism, and significant insecurity, were rooted in his background, despite his claim to have had a bucolic childhood of happy family, farm life, and Baptist religiosity. In fact, young Harry’s poor eyesight, extended illness, and “sissy” piano playing alienated him from both his peers and his feisty father and fostered ambivalence in him toward powerful men. On the one hand, Truman deferred to “Boss” Thomas Pendergast, his dishonest political benefactor, and to Secretaries of State George Marshall and Dean Acheson, whose manner and firm viewpoints he found reassuring. On the other hand, he denounced those whose style or ways of thinking were unfamiliar. This included the State Department’s “striped pants boys,” the military’s “brass hats” and “prima donnas,” political “fakirs” [*sic*] such as Teddy and Franklin Roosevelt, and “professional liberals.” For Truman, Charles de Gaulle,

9. Thomas G. Paterson, “Toughness: Truman’s Style of Diplomacy,” and “Consent: American Public Opinion, Congress and the Cold War Mentality,” in *On Every Front: The Making and Unmaking of the Cold War*, rev. ed. (New York, 1992), 119–39, 140–63; idem, “Harry S. Truman, American Power, and the Soviet Threat,” in *Meeting the Communist Threat: Truman to Reagan* (New York, 1988), 35–53.

10. James MacGregor Burns, “A Note on the Study of Political Leadership,” in *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox, 1882–1940* (New York, 1956), 486–87.

Josef Stalin, Ernest Bevin, and Douglas MacArthur were each, at one time or another, a “son of a bitch.”¹¹

Truman’s need to demonstrate his authority underlay his upbraiding of both Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov in April 1945 for Russia’s alleged failure to keep its agreements and his secretary of state, James Byrnes, for allegedly exceeding his authority at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers (CFM) that December. Truman naively likened Stalin to Pendergast, who, like Harry’s father, always kept his word, but then took great umbrage at the thought that the Soviet leader had broken his word over Poland, Iran, or Germany. Truman also blamed MacArthur for misleading him at their Wake Island meeting in 1950 about Chinese intentions in the Korean War, but this was equally Truman self-deception.¹²

Truman’s self-tutelage in history derived largely from didactic biographies of “great men” and empires. This enhanced his vision of the globe but provided little sense of complexity or ambiguity and instilled exaggerated belief that current events had exact historical analogues that provided the key to contemporary policy.¹³ The new president was “amazed” that the Yalta accords were so

11. Truman once recalled that he had “the happiest childhood that could ever be imagined,” quoted in Merle Miller, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1973), 46; on Truman’s early life and father see Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, *Year of Decisions* (Garden City, NY, 1955), 112–19, and Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *The Autobiography of Harry S. Truman* (Boulder, 1980), 3–12, 21; “sissy” in Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 86; Truman’s views of powerful men in entry for 7 June 1945, Eben A. Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 25, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri; on “striped pants boys,” entry for 1 June 1945, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 25; “brass hats” and “prima donnas,” and political “fakers” [*sic*], in diary entries for 1 and 17 June 1945, Truman to Martha Ellen and Mary Jane Truman, 23 October 1945, and diary entry for 16 July 1948, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 39–41, 46–47, 71–72, and 144; “son-of-a-bitch,” for de Gaulle, in entry for 4 May 1945, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 26; for Stalin, in Fletcher Knebel Charles and W. Bailey II, *No High Ground* (New York, 1960), 1–2, and Truman to Acheson [unsent], 15 March 1947, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 348–49; for Bevin, entry for 15 January 1949, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 26; for MacArthur, Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 308, 329.

12. On Truman and Molotov, cf. Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 79–82, and Bohlen memorandum, 23 April 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945* (Washington, 1967), 5:256–58 (hereafter *FRUS*, and appropriate year and volume); Wilson D. Miscamble, “Anthony Eden and the Truman-Molotov Conversations, April 1945,” *Diplomatic History* 2 (Spring 1980): 167–80; on Truman and Byrnes see Truman to Byrnes 5 January 1946, Harry S. Truman Papers, President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), box 333, Truman Library; Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 157–60; Walter Robertson, *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes* (New York, 1994), 455–57; on Pendergast and Stalin, Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1972), 74–75; Ferrell, ed., *Truman Autobiography*, 81–84; diary entry for 17 July 1945, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 53; and Truman interview, 30 August 1949, Jonathan Daniels Papers, Jonathan Daniels Research Notes, box 1, Truman Library, and Truman to Acheson [unsent], 15 March 1957, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 348–49. In 1946 Truman noted that he had told newly appointed Ambassador Walter Bedell Smith “to tell Stalin that I held him to be a man to keep his word. Troops in Iran after March 2 upset that theory”; see Truman note, 23 March 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 83; on Truman and MacArthur see footnote 130 below.

13. Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 119–21; Truman memorandum, 14 May 1934, Truman Papers, PSF, box 334, among the volumes Truman read was Charles F. Horne, *Great Men and Famous Women*, 4 vols. (New York, 1894). See also Ferrell, *Harry S. Truman*, 19–20; and William Hillman, ed., *Mr. President: The First Publication from the Personal Diaries, Private Letters, Papers, and Revealing Interviews of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1952), 11–13, 81–95.

"hazy" and fraught with "new meanings" at every reading, which probably contributed to his "lackluster" adherence to them.¹⁴ Shortly, Truman uncritically applied analogues about 1930s appeasement of Nazi Germany to diplomacy with the Soviet Union and crises in Iran, Greece, Turkey, and Korea.¹⁵

Further, young Harry's Bible reading and church going did not inspire an abiding religiosity or system of morals so much as a conviction that the world was filled with "liars and hypocrites," terms he readily applied to his presidential critics, and a stern belief, as he wrote in 1945, that "punishment always followed transgression," a maxim that he applied to North Korea and the People's Republic of China (PRC).¹⁶

Truman's early writings disdained non-Americans and minorities ("Chink doctor," "dago," "nigger," "Jew clerk," and "bohunks and Rooshans"), and in 1940 he proposed to deport "disloyal inhabitants." As president in 1945 he questioned the loyalty of "hyphenate" Americans, and in 1947 he signed Executive Order 9835, creating an unprecedented "loyalty" program that jettisoned basic legal procedural safeguards and virtually included a presumption of guilt.¹⁷

Truman's command of men and bravery under fire in World War I were exemplary but not broadening. He deplored Europe's politics, mores, and food and sought only to return to "God's country." He intended never to revisit Europe: "I've nearly promised old Miss Liberty that she'll have to turn around to see me again," he wrote in 1918, and in 1945 he went reluctantly to Potsdam to his first and only European summit.¹⁸

Nonetheless, Truman identified with Wilsonian internationalism, especially the League of Nations, and as a senator he supported President Franklin Roosevelt on the World Court, neutrality revision, rearmament, and Lend

14. Notes of Truman-Stettinius meeting, 21 April 1945, in *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., 1943-1946*, ed. Thomas M. Campbell and George C. Herring (New York, 1975), 324-25; entry for 25 May 1945, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 25; Melvyn P. Leffler, "Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War," *International Security* 11 (Summer 1986): 88-123 ("lackluster," 111).

15. Ernest R. May, *Lessons of the Past: Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1973), 50-51; Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation* (Princeton, 1985), 146-47; Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers* (New York, 1986), 34-48.

16. Ferrell, ed., *Truman Autobiography*, 33; Miller, *Plain Speaking*, 44.

17. Truman to Elizabeth ("Bess") Wallace, 22 June and 16 October 1911, in *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1950*, ed. Robert H. Ferrell (New York, 1983), 39-40, 52-53. See also Truman to Bess Wallace, 10 January 1911, 8 September 1914, 28 October and 13 November 1917, and 27 March 1918, *ibid.*, 20, 174, 233, 234, 254; on "hyphenates," diary entry for 7 June 1945, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 44-45. See also Truman to Mamma and Mary Truman, 11 September 1945, *ibid.*, 65-66. On Truman and Executive Order 9835, Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948* (New York, 1977), 293-98, and Hamby, *Man of the People*, 428-29; also Lord Inverchapel to Foreign Office, 29 March 1947, Records of the British Foreign Office, File Number 371, Piece 1054, Public Record Office, Kew Gardens, London (hereafter File Number/Piece).

18. Truman to Bess Truman, 11 October 1918 and 3 and 6 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 274-75, 516-17.

Lease for Britain and Russia. He rightfully said "I am no appeaser."¹⁹ But his internationalism reflected unquestioned faith in American moral superiority, and his foreign policy proposals largely comprised military preparedness. He was indifferent to the plight of Republican Spain and too quickly blamed international conflict on "outlaws," "savages," and "totalitarians." After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, he hastily remarked that they should be left to destroy one another – although he opposed Germany's winning – and he likened Russian leaders to "Hitler and Al Capone" and soon inveighed against the "twin blights –atheism and communism."²⁰ Hence, while Truman supported the fledgling United Nations and the liberalization of world trade, the man who became president in April 1945 was less an incipient internationalist than a parochial nationalist given to excessive fear that appeasement, lack of preparedness, and enemies at home and abroad would thwart America's mission (the "Lord's will") to "win the peace" on its terms.²¹

President Truman inherited an expedient wartime alliance that stood on shaky ground at Yalta in February 1945 and grew more strained over Soviet control in Romania and Poland and U.S. surrender talks with German officials at Bern that aroused Stalin's fears of a separate peace. Truman lamented that "they didn't tell me anything about what was going on."²² He also had to depend on advisers whose views ranged from Ambassador Averell Harriman's belief that it was time to halt the Russians' "barbarian invasion" of Europe to counsel from FDR emissaries Joseph Davies and Harry Hopkins to try to preserve long-term accord.²³ Truman's desire to appear decisive by making quick decisions and his instinct to be "tough" spurred his belief that he could get "85 percent" from the Russians on important matters and that they could go along or "go to hell."²⁴

Initially, the president's abrupt style and conflicting advice produced inconsistent policy. His mid-April call for a "new" government in Poland and his

19. Truman speech, 25 March 1939, Truman Papers, Senate and Vice Presidential Files (SVPF), box 163.

20. Wilson D. Miscamble, "The Evolution of an Internationalist: Harry S. Truman and American Foreign Policy," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 23 (April 1977): 270–72; on disarmament, "pacifists," "savages," "totalitarians," Truman speeches, 20 April and 11 November 1937, 7 March 1938, and 20 February and 8 October 1939, Truman Papers, SVPF, box 1; on German attack, *New York Times*, 24 June 1941; on Russians and communism, Truman to Bess Truman, 30 December 1941, in Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 471, and Truman to Myron Taylor, 19 May 1946, Myron Taylor Papers, box 1, Truman Library.

21. Truman speech, 27 March 1946, in *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1946* (Washington, 1962), 170–71 (hereafter *PPSHT*); cf. Miscamble, "The Evolution of an Internationalist," 282–83.

22. Entry for 18 May 1945, in *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942–1946*, ed. John Morton Blum (Boston, 1973), 452.

23. Diary and journal entries, 13 May 1945, Joseph E. Davies Papers, Joseph E. Davies Diary and Journal, box 16, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948), 886–87; diary entries for 18 May and 19 May 1945, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 30, 31–32.

24. LaFaber, *America, Russia, and Cold War*, 16–17; Bohlen memoranda, 20 and 23 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945* 5:231–34, 252–55.

“one-two to the jaw” interview with Molotov brought only a sharp reply from Stalin, after which the United States recognized a predominantly Communist Polish government.²⁵ In May, Truman approved “getting tough” with the Russians by suddenly curtailing Lend Lease shipments, but Anglo-Soviet protests caused him to countermand the cutoffs.²⁶ He then refused Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s proposal to keep Anglo-American troops advanced beyond their agreed occupation zones to bargain in Germany and soon wrote that he was “anxious to keep all my engagements with the Russians because they are touchy and suspicious of us.”²⁷

Still, Truman determined to have his way with the Russians, especially in Germany. Tutored in part by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, he embraced the emergent War-State Department position that Germany was key to the balance of power in Europe and required some reconstruction because a “poor house” standard of living there meant the same for Europe, and might cause a repeat of the tragic Treaty of Versailles history.²⁸ Truman replaced Roosevelt’s reparations negotiator, Isador Lubin, with conservative oil entrepreneur Edwin Pauley, who brushed off both Soviet claims to Yalta’s \$20 billion in reparations and State Department estimates that Germany could pay \$12–14 billion. Truman also said that when he met with Churchill and Stalin he wanted “all the bargaining power – all the cards in my hands, and the plan on Germany is one of them.”²⁹

The other card was the atomic bomb, which inspired Truman and Byrnes to think that they could win their way in Europe and Asia. Byrnes told the president in April that the bomb might allow them to “dictate our terms” at the war’s end and in May indicated his belief that it would make the Russians more “manageable.”³⁰ Stimson counseled Truman that America’s industrial strength and unique weapon comprised a “royal straight flush and we mustn’t be a fool about how we play it,” that it would be “dominant” in any dispute with Russia

25. Bohlen memorandum, 23 April 1945, and Stalin to Truman, 24 April 1945, *FRUS, 1945* 5:256–58, 263–64.

26. George C. Herring, Jr., *Aid to Russia, 1941–1946: Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York, 1972), 203–11.

27. Churchill to Truman, 6 May 1945, and Truman to Churchill, 8 May 1945, *FRUS, Potsdam Conference* (Washington, 1960), 13–4; Truman to Eleanor Roosevelt, 10 May 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 20–22.

28. Entry for 16 May 1945, Henry L. Stimson Papers, Henry L. Stimson Diary, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Henry L. Stimson and MacGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1947), 582–83. See also Arnold A. Offner, “Research on German-American Relations,” in *America and Germany: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, ed. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia, 1985), 175–76.

29. Bruce Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with Russia over Reparations* (Ithaca, 1972), 126–28, 132; Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 308–9; Truman quoted in John Morton Blum, *From the Morgentbau Diaries: Years of War, 1941–1945* (Boston, 1967), 459.

30. Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 87; Byrnes paraphrased in Leo Szilard, “Reminiscences,” in *The Intellectual Migration: Europe and America, 1930–1960*, ed. Donald Fleming and Bernard Bailyn (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 127–28. See also Messer, *End of an Alliance*, 86–87.

over Manchuria, and a “weapon” or “master card” in America’s hand in its “big stakes” diplomacy with the Russians.³¹

The president readily analogized diplomacy with his poker playing and, as Martin J. Sherwin has shown, believed that use of his atomic “ace-in-the-hole” would allow him to wrest concessions from Stalin.³² Truman had incentive to delay a summit meeting until the bomb was ready and to take no steps to obviate its use. In late spring he passed over proposals to modify unconditional surrender that sought to induce Japan’s quick capitulation, and he would not give the Japanese or Russians notice of the atomic bomb.³³

Truman set sail for Potsdam highly disposed to atomic diplomacy, albeit not “blackmail.” His nationalist perspective shaped his thinking. He aimed to advance American interests only: “win, lose, or draw – and we must win.”³⁴ En route, he approved Pauley’s policy to give “first charge” priority to German occupation and maintenance costs over reparations. “Santa Claus is dead,” Truman wrote, and the United States would never again “pay reparations, feed the world, and get nothing for it but a nose thumbing.”³⁵ Further, after Stimson brought word on 16 July of the successful atomic test in New Mexico and urged an early warning and offer to retain the Emperor as means to induce Japan’s rapid surrender, Truman and Byrnes refused. That ended the last, brief chance at atomic restraint.³⁶

After meeting Stalin on 17 July Truman wrote that he was unfazed by the Russian’s “dynamite” agenda because “I have some dynamite too which I’m not exploding now.” The following day he asserted that the “Japs will fold up” before Russia entered the Pacific war, specifically “when Manhattan appears over their homeland.”³⁷ Truman agreed with Byrnes that use of the bomb would permit them to “out maneuver Stalin on China,” that is, negate the Yalta concessions in Manchuria and guarantee that Russia would “not get in so much on the kill” of Japan or its occupation.³⁸ Assured by 24 July that the bomb would be ready before Russia’s entry, the president had to be persuaded even to hint to Stalin that he had a new weapon and afterward exulted in the mistaken belief that the Russian leader had not caught on to the bomb. Truman then hastened to issue

31. Entries for 14 and 15 May 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary.

32. Larson, *Origins of Containment*, 191–92; Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and the Origins of the Arms Race*, rev. ed. (New York, 1987), 186–92. For further discussion of this complex issue see Barton J. Bernstein, “Early Thinking about Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *International Security* 15 (Spring 1991): 149–73; and the excellent compilation of essays in Michael J. Hogan, ed., *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (New York, 1996).

33. Entry for 21 May 1945, Davies Papers, Davies Diary, box 17; entries for 6, 25, and 26–30 June 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary. See also Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, rev. ed. (New York, 1985), 110–74.

34. Diary entry for 7 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 48–49.

35. Truman to Bess Truman, 20 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 520.

36. Stimson to Truman, 16 July 1945, *FRUS, Potsdam* 2:1265–66; entries for 16 July and 17 July 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary.

37. Diary entries for 17 and 18 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 53–54.

38. Entries for 20 and 24 July 1945, James F. Byrnes Papers, Walter Brown Diary, Clemson University Library, Clemson, South Carolina.

the Potsdam Declaration without Soviet signature on 26 July and signed his “release when ready” order on the bombs on the 31st.³⁹

News of the bomb’s power also greatly reinforced Truman’s confidence to allow Byrnes to press European negotiations to impasse by refusing the Russians access to the Ruhr, rejecting even their low bid for \$4 billion in industrial reparations, and withdrawing the Yalta accords.⁴⁰ Convinced that the New Mexico atomic test would allow the United States to “control” events, Byrnes pushed his famous 30 July tripartite ultimatum on German zonal reparations, Poland’s de facto control over its new western border (including Silesia) with Germany, and Italy’s membership in the UN. “Mr. Stalin is stallin’,” Truman wrote hours before the American-set deadline on 31 July, but that was useless because “I have an ace in the hole and another one showing,” aces that he knew would soon fall upon Japan.⁴¹

Truman won his hand, as Stalin acceded to zonal reparations. But Truman’s victory was fraught with more long-term consequences than he envisioned. He had not only equated his desire to prevent use of taxpayer dollars to help sustain occupied Germany with the Russians’ vital need for reparations but also given them reason to think, as Norman Naimark has written, that the Americans were deaf to their quest for a “paltry” \$10 billion or less to compensate for Germany’s having ravaged their nation.⁴² Further, America’s insistence on zonal reparations would impede development of common economic policy for all of Germany and increase likelihood of its East-West division.⁴³

39. Entry for 24 July 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary. On Truman’s mistaken belief that he had deceived Stalin about the bomb see Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 416; James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly* (New York, 1947), 263; and Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 116–18; Truman to Patrick J. Hurley, 24 and 25 July, and Potsdam Declaration, 26 July 1945, in *FRUS, Potsdam* 2:1278, 1281, 1474–76; “release when ready,” Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis*, 96; Stimson had recommended asking the Soviet Union to sign the Potsdam Declaration if it was already in the war; given Stalin’s assurances of Soviet entry, Truman had reason to make the Soviets part of the 26 July threat to Japan if he wished to hasten its surrender; see Stimson to Truman, 2 July 1945, *FRUS, Potsdam* 2: 888–94.

40. Entries for 16 July and 24 July 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary; “impasse” in diary entry for 30 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 56–57. On reparations see Ninth and Tenth Plenary Meetings, 27 and 28 July, and Soviet Reparations Proposal, 29 July 1945, *FRUS, Potsdam* 2:436–43, 471–76, 913–14; and Vojtech Mastny, *Russia’s Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Communism, and the Politics of Warfare, 1941–1945* (New York, 1979), 299–302; Gar Alerpovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York, 1995), 276–91, makes the sweeping argument that the Americans believed that their atomic bombs would allow them to control Germany without need of Russian help or need to weaken Germany industrially through reparations payments.

41. Byrnes quoted in entry for 29 July 1945, Davies Papers, Davies Diary, box 16; Tenth Meeting of Foreign Ministers, 30 July 1945, and Byrnes–Molotov conversation, 31 July 1945, *FRUS, Potsdam* 2:483–97, 510; Truman to Bess Truman, 31 July 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 522–23.

42. Naimark, *Russians in Germany*, 10, 141, 167–68; Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944–1949* (New York, 1996), 110.

43. Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany*, 161–66; Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, 113–15.

In addition, use of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – the second was not militarily necessary – showed that for Truman and Byrnes, the prospect of political gain in Europe and Asia precluded serious thought not to use the bombs. And this may have led the Russians to conclude that the bombs were directed against them, or their ability to achieve their strategic interests. But Stalin would not be pressured; he was determined to pursue a Russian atomic bomb.⁴⁴

Shortly, Truman backed Byrnes's "bomb in his pocket" diplomacy at the London CFM, which deadlocked over Russian control in Eastern Europe and American control in Japan. Truman told Byrnes to "stick to his guns" and tell the Russians "to go to hell."⁴⁵ The president then agreed with "ultranationalist" advisers who opposed international atomic accord by drawing misleading analogies about interwar disarmament and "appeasement" and by insisting that America's technological-industrial genius assured permanent atomic supremacy. Truman held that America was the world's atomic "trustee"; that it had to preserve the bomb's "secret"; and that no nation would give up the "locks and bolts" necessary to protect its "house" from "outlaws." The atomic arms race was on, he said in the fall of 1945, and other nations had to "catch up on their own hook."⁴⁶

In the spring of 1946, Truman undercut the Dean Acheson-David Lilienthal plan for international control and development of atomic resources by appointing as chief negotiator Bernard Baruch, whose emphasis on close inspections, sanctions, no veto, and indefinite American atomic monopoly virtually assured Russian refusal. Despite Acheson's protests, Truman analogized that "if Harry Stimson had been backed up in Manchuria [in 1931] there would have been no war." And as deadlock neared in July 1946, the president told Baruch to "stand pat."⁴⁷

Ultimately the UN commission weighing the Baruch Plan approved it on 31 December 1946. But the prospect of a Soviet veto in the Security Council precluded its adoption. Admittedly, Stalin's belief that he could not deal with the United States on an equal basis until he had the bomb and Soviet insistence

44. Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 132–33.

45. Entry for 12 August–3 September and 4 and 5 September 1945, Stimson Papers, Stimson Diary; Truman to Byrnes, 22 and 25 September 1945, Truman Papers, PSF, box 119.

46. James C. Forrestal memorandum, 21 September 1945, Truman Papers, PSF, box 157; Clinton Anderson to Truman, 25 September 1945, and Fred Vinson and Kenneth McKellar to Truman, 27 September 1945, Truman Papers, PSF, box 112; Truman Radio Report, 9 August 1945, in *PPHST*, 1945 (Washington, 1961), 431–38; entry for 18 September 1945, Davies Papers, Davies Journal; entry for 18 September 1945, in Blum, ed., *Price of Vision*, 481; Truman news conference, 8 October 1945, in *PPHST*, 1945, 383; Truman on armaments race, in Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1981), 39, and Lord Halifax to Foreign Office, 17 November 1945, F.O. 371/44539.

47. Herken, *Winning Weapon*, 153–70, and Larry G. Gerber, "The Baruch Plan and the Origins of the Cold War," *Diplomatic History* 6 (Winter 1982): 69–95; Truman quote on Stimson in "BMB Memorandum of Meeting with the President and J. F. Byrnes, June 7, 1946," in Lloyd C. Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941–1949* (Chicago, 1970), 195; Truman to Baruch, 10 July 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 113.

on retention of their veto power and national control of resources and facilities may have precluded atomic accord in 1946. Still, Baruch insisted that the United States could get its way because it had an atomic monopoly, and American military officials sought to preserve a nuclear monopoly as long as possible and to develop a strategy based on air power and atomic weapons.⁴⁸ As David Holloway has written, neither Truman nor Stalin “saw the bomb as a common danger to the human race.”⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Byrnes’s diplomacy in Moscow in December 1945 had produced Yalta-style accords on a European peace treaty process, Russian predominance in Bulgaria and Romania and American primacy in China and Japan, and compromise over Korea, with Soviet disputes with Iran and Turkey set aside. But conservative critics cried “appeasement,” and in his famous but disputed letter of 5 January 1946, an anxious president charged that Byrnes had kept him “completely in the dark”; denounced Russian “outrage[s]” in the Baltic, Germany, Poland, and Iran and intent to invade Turkey; and said that the Russians understood only an “iron fist” and “divisions” and that he was tired of “babying” them.⁵⁰ In fact, Truman knew of most of Byrnes’s positions; they had hardly “babied” Russia since Potsdam; and no Russian attack was imminent. The letter reflected Truman’s new “get tough” policy, or personal cold war declaration, which, it must be emphasized, came six weeks before George Kennan’s Long Telegram and Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech.⁵¹

Strong American protests in 1946 caused the Russians to withdraw their troops from Iran and their claims to joint defense of the Turkish Straits. In the latter case, Truman said he was ready to follow his policy of military response “to the end” to determine if Russia intended “world conquest.”⁵² Once again he had taken an exaggerated, nationalist stance. No one expected a Russian military advance; America’s action rested on its plans to integrate Turkey into its strategic planning and to use it as a base of operations against Russia in event of war.⁵³ And in September Truman approved announcement of a Mediterranean command that led to the United States becoming the dominant naval power there by year’s end.⁵⁴

48. Herken, *Winning Weapon*, 190–91; Melvyn P. Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945–1948,” *American Historical Review* 89 (April 1984): 371.

49. Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, 162–66.

50. John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York, 1972), 293–95; Truman to Bess Truman, 28 December 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 75–76; Truman to Byrnes, 5 January 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 333; Messer, *End of an Alliance*, 159, and Robertson, *Sly and Able*, 456–57, doubt that Truman read the letter to Byrnes.

51. Messer, *End of an Alliance*, 159–65.

52. Entry for 15 August 1946, in *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (New York, 1951), 192.

53. Melvyn P. Leffler, “Strategy, Diplomacy, and the Cold War: The United States, Turkey, and NATO, 1945–1952,” *Journal of American History* 71 (March 1985): 807–25, esp. 814–16; idem, *Preponderance of Power*, 124–25.

54. Entry for 30 September 1946, in Millis, ed., *Forrestal Diaries*, 211; Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton, 1980), 373–74.

Meanwhile, Truman ignored Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace's lengthy memoranda during March–September 1946 that sought to promote economic ties with Russia and questioned America's atomic policies and global military expansiveness. The president then fired Wallace after he publicly challenged Byrnes's speech on 6 September in Stuttgart propounding West German reconstruction and continued American military presence there. The firing was reasonable, but not the rage at Wallace as "a real Commy" and at "parlor pinks and soprano-voiced men" as a "national danger" and "sabotage front" for Stalin.⁵⁵

Equally without reason was Truman's face value acceptance of White House special counsel Clark Clifford's "Russian Report" of September 1946 and accompanying "Last Will of Peter the Great." Clifford's report rested on a hasty compilation of apocalyptic projections of Soviet aim to conquer the world by military force and subversion, and he argued that the United States had to prepare for total war. He wrote in the "black and white" terms that he knew Truman would like and aimed to justify a vast global military upgrade and silence political critics on the left and right. Tsar Peter's will was an old forgery purporting to show that he had a similar design to conquer Eurasia. Truman may have found the report so "hot" that he confined it to his White House safe, but he believed the report and the will and soon was persisting that the governments of the czars, Stalin, and Hitler were all the same.⁵⁶ Later he told a mild critic of American policy to read Tsar Peter's will to learn where Russian leaders got their "fixed ideas."⁵⁷

It was a short step, Clifford recalled, from the Russian Report to Truman's epochal request in March 1947 for military aid to Greece and Turkey to help "free peoples" fight totalitarianism. Truman vastly overstated the global-ideological aspects of Soviet-American conflict. Perhaps he sought to fire "the

55. Wallace to Truman, 14 March and 21 March 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 187; Wallace to Truman, 23 July 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 156; Truman to Wallace, 20 March 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 187; George M. Elsey Notes, 24 and 27 July 1946, George M. Elsey Papers, Truman Library; Truman to Wallace, 8 August 1946, Clark M. Clifford Papers, box 18, Truman Library; Truman memorandum, 19 September 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 333; Truman also called Wallace "a real Commy and a dangerous man," Truman to Bess Truman, 20 September 1946, in Ferrell, ed., *Dear Bess*, 538–39; for Truman's confusion over Wallace's speech of 12 September 1946 see Messer, *End of an Alliance*, 105–7, and Charles Ross memoranda, 20 and 21 September 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 156.

56. Russian Report in Clifford to Truman, [24] September 1946, and attached memorandum, "American Relations with the Soviet Union," Clark M. Clifford Papers, box 15. Truman's complaints in the summer of 1946 that he was tired of being "pushed around" by the "chiseling" Russians led to the drawing of the Russian Report, see Elsey Notes, 12 and 18 July 1946, Elsey Papers, box 63; J. Garry Clifford, "President Truman and Peter the Great's Will," *Diplomatic History* 4 (Fall 1980): 371–85; Clark Clifford quoted on Truman in Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 137; on sameness of governments, Truman to Mamma and Mary, 11 November 1946, and Truman to Margaret Truman, 13 March 1947, in Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1973), 323–24, 343, and Truman remarks to American Society of Newspaper Editors, 17 April 1947, *PPHST*, 1947 (Washington, 1963), 207–10.

57. Truman to Greenville Clark, 18 February 1948, in Clifford, "President Truman and Peter the Great's Will," 374.

opening gun” to rouse the public and a fiscally conservative Republican Congress to national security expenditures.⁵⁸ But he also said that this was “only the beginning” of the “U.S. going into European politics,” that the Russians had broken every agreement since Potsdam and would now get only “one language” from him. He added in the fall of 1947 that “if Russia gets Greece and Turkey,” it would get Italy and France, the iron curtain would extend to western Ireland, and the United States would have to “come home and prepare for war.”⁵⁹

Truman’s fears were excessive. Stalin never challenged the Truman Doctrine or Western primacy in Turkey, now under U.S. military tutelage, and Greece. He provided almost no aid to the Greek rebels and told Yugoslavia’s leaders in early 1948 to halt their aid because the United States would never allow the Greek Communists to win and break Anglo-American control in the Mediterranean. When Marshal Josip Broz Tito balked, Stalin withdrew his advisers from Yugoslavia and expelled that nation from the Cominform. Tito finally closed his borders to the Greek rebels in July 1949.⁶⁰

Perhaps U.S. officials feared that Britain’s retreat from Greece might allow Russia to penetrate the Mediterranean, or that if Greek Communists overthrew the reactionary Greek regime (Turkey was not threatened) they might align Athens with Moscow.⁶¹ Still, the Truman administration’s costly policy never addressed the causes of Greece’s civil war; instead, it substituted military “annihilation of the enemy for the reform of the social and economic conditions” that had brought civil war.⁶² Equally important, Truman’s rhetorical division of the world into “free” versus “totalitarian” states, as Gaddis once said, created an “ideological straitjacket” for American foreign policy and an unfortunate model for later interventions, such as in Korea – “the Greece of the Far East,” as Truman would say – and in French Indochina.⁶³

The Truman Doctrine led to the Marshall Plan in June 1947, but they were not “two halves of the same walnut,” as Truman claimed. State Department officials who drew up the European Recovery Plan (ERP) differentiated it from what they viewed as his doctrine’s implications for “economic and ultimately

58. Clark Clifford with Richard Holbrooke, *Counsel to the President: A Memoir* (New York, 1991), 129; “Truman Address Before a Joint Session of Congress,” 12 March 1947, *PPHST, 1947*, 176–80; Elsej to Clifford, 8 March 1947, and Elsej Notation, 9 March 1947, Elsej Papers, box 17.

59. Connelly Cabinet Notes, 7 March 1947, Matthew Connelly Papers, box 1, Truman Library; Truman to Margaret Truman, 13 March 1947, in M. Truman, *Truman*, 343; Truman remarks to American Society of Newspaper Editors, 17 April 1947, and Truman special conference with Association of Radio News Analysts, 13 May 1947, *PPHST, 1947*, 207–10, 238–41; diary entry for 4 November 1947, in C. L. Sulzberger, *A Long Row of Candles: Memoirs and Diaries, 1934–1954* (New York, 1969), 364–65.

60. Lawrence S. Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943–1949* (New York, 1982), 259–63; Zubok, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War*, 127–28.

61. Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston, 1977), 295.

62. Robert A. Pollard, *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1985), 130.

63. Gaddis, *Origins of the Cold War*, 352; “President’s Conversation with George M. Elsej,” 26 June 1960, Elsej Papers, box 71.

military warfare.⁶⁴ The Soviets likened the Truman Doctrine to retail purchase of separate nations and the Marshall Plan to wholesale purchase of Europe.⁶⁵

The Soviet view was narrow, although initially they had interest in participating and perhaps even harbored dreams that the United States would proffer a generous Lend Lease-style arrangement.⁶⁶ But as the British quickly saw, Soviet participation was precluded by American-imposed financial and economic controls and, as Michael J. Hogan has written, by the integrated, continental approach to aid rather than a nation-by-nation basis that would have benefited war-devastated Russia.⁶⁷ Indeed, in direct talks in Paris, U.S. officials refused concessions, focused on resources to come from Russia and East Europe, and insisted on German contributions to the ERP ahead of reparations payments or a peace treaty – and then expressed widespread relief when the Soviets rejected the ERP for themselves and East Europe.⁶⁸

The Marshall Plan proved to be a very successful geostrategic venture. It helped to spur American-European trade and Western European recovery, bring France into camp with Germany and satisfy French economic and security claims, and revive western Germany industrially without unleashing the 1930s-style “German colossus” that Truman’s aides feared.⁶⁹ The Marshall Plan was also intended to contain the Soviets economically, forestall German-Soviet bilateral deals, and provide America with access to its allies’ domestic and colonial resources. Finally, as the British said, the Truman administration sought an integrated Europe resembling the United States, “God’s own country.”⁷⁰

The Marshall Plan’s excellent return on investment, however, may have cost far more than the \$13 billion expended. “The world is definitely split in two,” Undersecretary of State Robert Lovett said in August 1947, while Kennan forewarned that for defensive reasons the Soviets would “clamp down completely on

64. Truman quoted in Joseph Marion Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York, 1955), 33; Kindelberger memorandum, 22 July 1948, and Kennan to Acheson, 23 March 1947, *FRUS, 1947* (Washington, 1972), 3:241–47, 223–30.

65. Smith to Marshall, 26 June 1947, *FRUS, 1947* 3: 294–95, cites *Pravda* comments.

66. Scott D. Parrish and Mikhail M. Narinsky, “New Evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947,” Working Paper #9 (March 1994), Cold War International History Project, Washington, 14–18, 43–44 (hereafter CWIHP).

67. Peterson memoranda, 24–26 June 1947, *FRUS, 1947* 3:268–93; Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (New York, 1987), 1–25.

68. F. B. A. Rundall minute, 1 July 1947, and Balfour to Foreign Office, 5 July 1947, F.O. 371/61055.

69. Pauley to Truman, 15 April 1947, and Steelman to Truman, [late April] 1947, Truman Papers, PSE, box 122.

70. Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–1954* (New York, 1972), 359–83, 428–76; Melvyn P. Leffler, “The United States and the Strategic Dimensions of the Marshall Plan,” *Diplomatic History* 12 (Summer 1988): 277–306; Michael J. Hogan, “American Marshall Planners and the Search for a European Neocapitalism,” *American Historical Review* 90 (February 1985): 44–72; British official quoted in Lawrence S. Kaplan, *The United States and NATO: The Formative Years* (Lexington, KY, 1984), 131.

Czechoslovakia” to strengthen their hold on Eastern Europe.⁷¹ Indeed, the most recent evidence indicates that Stalin viewed the Marshall Plan as a “watershed” event, signaling an American effort to predominate over all of Europe. This spurred the Soviets into a comprehensive strategy shift. They now rigged the elections in Hungary, proffered Andrei Zhdanov’s “two camps” approach to world policy, created the Cominform, and blessed the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948.⁷² Truman, in turn, concluded that the Western world confronted the same situation it had a decade earlier with Nazi Germany, and his bristling St. Patrick’s Day speeches in March 1948 placed sole onus for the Cold War on the Soviet Union.⁷³ Subsequently, Anglo-American talks at the Pentagon would culminate in NATO in April 1949.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the U.S. decision to make western Germany the cornerstone of the ERP virtually precluded negotiations to reunify the country. In fact, when Secretary of State Marshall proposed during a CFM meeting in the spring of 1947 to offer current production reparations to the Russians to induce agreement to unify Germany, the president sternly refused. Marshall complained of lack of “elbow room” to negotiate. But Truman would not yield, and by the time of the next CFM in late 1947 the secretary showed no interest in Russian reparations or Ruhr access.⁷⁵ Despite America’s public position, Ambassador to Moscow Walter Bedell Smith wrote, “we really do not want nor intend to accept German unification on any terms that the Russians might agree to, even though they seemed to meet most of our requirements.”⁷⁶

The Americans were by then onto their London Conference program to create a West German state and, as Stalin said in February 1948, “The West will make Western Germany their own, and we shall turn Eastern Germany into our own state.”⁷⁷ In June the Soviet dictator initiated the Berlin blockade to try to forestall the West’s program, but Truman determined to “stay period.”⁷⁸ He believed that to withdraw from Berlin would seriously undermine U.S. influence in Europe and the ERP and destroy his presidential standing, and he remained determined to avert military confrontation.

71. Bohlen memorandum of conversation, 30 August 1947, and Policy Planning Staff Report, 6 August 1947, *FRUS, 1947* (Washington, 1973), 1762–63, 770–78.

72. Zubok, *Inside Kremlin’s Cold War*, 50–51; Parrish and Narinsky, “New Evidence on Soviet Rejection of Marshall Plan,” 4–5, 31–40. See also William Taubman, *Stalin’s American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War* (New York, 1982), 175–78.

73. Truman special message to the Congress on the threat to the freedom of Europe, 17 March 1948, and Truman St. Patrick’s Day Address, 17 March 1948, *PPHST, 1948* (Washington, 1964), 182–90.

74. Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (Boston, 1988), 20–23.

75. Marshall to Acheson (for Truman), 31 March 1947, Truman to Marshall, 1 April 1947, and Marshall to Acheson (for Truman), 2 April 1947, *FRUS, 1947* (Washington, 1972), 2:298–99, 301–3, 307–9; Connelly Cabinet Notes for 4 April 1948, Connelly Papers; Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945–1949* (New York, 1987), 282–84.

76. Smith quoted in Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, 488.

77. Stalin quoted in Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York, 1962), 153.

78. Truman quoted in entry for 28 June 1948, James Forrestal Diaries, p. 2340, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscripts Library, Princeton University.

But Truman saw no connection between the London program and the blockade, as Carolyn Eisenberg has written. Further, his belief that “there is nothing to negotiate” and accord with General Lucius Clay’s view that to withdraw from Berlin meant “we have lost everything we are fighting for” exaggerated the intent of Stalin’s maneuver and diminished even slim chances for compromise on Germany, including Kennan’s “Plan A” for a unified, neutralized state with American and Soviet forces withdrawn to its periphery. As Marshall said in August 1948, there would be “no abandonment of our position” on West Germany.⁷⁹

Eventually, Truman and the airlift prevailed over Stalin, who gave in to a face-saving CFM in May 1949 that ended the blockade, with nothing else agreed. The new secretary of state, Acheson, said that the United States intended to create a West German government “come hell or high water” and that Germany could be unified only by consolidating the East into the West on the basis of its incipient Bonn Constitution.⁸⁰ Likewise Truman said in June 1949 that he would not sacrifice West Germany’s basic freedoms to gain “nominal political unity.”⁸¹

Long convinced that the United States was locked in “a struggle with the USSR for Germany,” the president showed no interest when Stalin made his most comprehensive offer on 10 March 1952, proposing a Big Four meeting to draft a peace treaty for a united, neutral, defensively rearmed Germany free of foreign troops.⁸² Whether Stalin was seeking a settlement to reduce great power conflict over a divided Germany has been debated.⁸³ His note came only after the United States and its allies were near contractual accord on West German sovereignty and Acheson had just negotiated his “grand slam” providing for German forces to enter a proposed European Defense Community (EDC) linked to NATO. Acheson held that Stalin had thrown a “golden apple” of discord over the iron curtain to forestall a sovereign, industrially strong, and rearmed West Germany joining an American-led alliance system.⁸⁴

79. Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line*, 415; Truman quoted in entry for 17 May 1948, Eban A. Ayers Papers, Eban Ayers Diary, box 26; and accord with Clay in Summary of NSC Meeting, 22 July 1948, Truman Papers, PSF, box 220; Kennan Plan A in George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925–1950* (Boston, 1967), 418–26, and report of the Policy Planning Staff, 15 November 1948, *FRUS, 1948* (Washington, 1973), 2:1320–38; Marshall to Smith, 26 August 1948, *ibid.*, 1:83–84.

80. Acheson quoted in John Lambertson Harper, *Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (New York, 1996), 284.

81. *New York Times*, 22 June 1949.

82. Truman quoted in Acheson memorandum, 17 October 1949, Dean G. Acheson Papers, box 64, Truman Library; Stalin note in Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs to the embassy of the United States, 10 March 1952, *FRUS, 1952–1954* (Washington, 1986), 7:169–72.

83. Rolf Steininger, *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*, trans. Janet T. Hodges (New York, 1990); Gerhard Wettig, “Stalin and German Reunification: Archival Evidence on Soviet Foreign Policy,” *The Historical Journal* 37 (1994): 411–19. See also Thomas Alan Schwartz, *America’s Germany: John F. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), esp. 263–67, 276–77; Mastny, *Soviet Insecurity*, 138–40; and Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 128–29.

84. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), 626, 629–32.

Truman gave full sway to Acheson, who hesitated to reject Stalin's offer out of hand. But he insisted that the allies "drive ahead" with the German contractuals and EDC. He also got support from West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to shape uniform allied replies, with conditions, such as UN-supervised elections in all of Germany prior to negotiations and unified Germany's right to join any "defensive European community," that he knew Stalin would reject.⁸⁵ Further, although Truman and Acheson had just coaxed Kennan to become ambassador to Moscow, they never asked his advice or gave him a policy clue despite meeting with him three times in April. This confirmed Kennan's view that "we had no interest in discussing the German problem with the Soviet Government in any manner whatsoever."⁸⁶

Stalin, meanwhile, told East German leaders in April 1952 that the West would never accept any proposal they made and that it was time to "organize your own state" and protect its border.⁸⁷ The United States won the so-called battle of the notes, although exchanges continued.⁸⁸ But the allies concluded the German contractuals and the EDC in late May. And when the French then reverted to proposing a four power meeting on Germany, Acheson said that four power control was long past. He then shaped the note so that it "puts onus on Sovs sufficiently to make it unlikely that Sovs will agree to mtg on terms proposed." He was right, and in September the note writing drew to its anticlimactic closure.⁸⁹

Prospect for accord based on Stalin's note was remote, but not just because Stalin wanted, as Vojtech Mastny has written, either a unified "pro-Soviet though not necessarily communist" Germany or a full-fledged East German satellite.⁹⁰ Truman had no interest in a unified, neutral, or demilitarized Germany and now believed that a rearmed FRG was as vital to NATO as West Germany was to ERP. German unity was possible only on the basis of West over East. Thus, Ambassador Kennan said after talking to U.S. officials linked to NATO in the fall of 1952 that they saw no reason to withdraw U.S. forces from Germany "at any time within the foreseeable future under any conceivable agreement with Russia." This meant that the "split of Germany and Europe" would continue.⁹¹ And it did, for the next forty years.

85. Acheson to Truman, 11 March 1952, Acheson Papers, box 66; Acheson to embassy in London, 14 and 17 March 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954* 7:173-75, 183-84; Acheson to U.S. high commissioner for Germany, 22 March 1952, and Cumming to State Department, 25 March 1952, *ibid.*, 188-91; Steininger, *German Question*, 49-54.

86. George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1950-1963* (Boston, 1972), 104-9; Kennan was in Washington during February-March 1952 for confirmation hearings.

87. Minutes of a conversation with Stalin, Molotov, Malenkov, Pieck, Ulbricht, and Grotewohl, 7 April 1952, Soviet Foreign Ministry Archives, *CWIHP Bulletin* (Fall 1994): 48

88. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (Boston, 1960), 50-51.

89. Acheson to embassy in United Kingdom, 10 June 1952, and Acheson to State Department, 28 June 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954* 7:263-64, 275-76; U.S. Embassy to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, 23 September 1952, *ibid.*, 324-27.

90. Mastny, *Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 138.

91. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1950-1963*, 161.

III

In Asia as in Europe the Truman administration pursued a policy of containment that became “liberation” or “rollback,” with fearful consequences. The president contributed significantly to the tragic conflicts that soon enveloped Asians and Americans through his lack of understanding of Asian politics, his sense of superiority and impatience with Asians who did not bend to American will, and his visceral anticommunism.

In the spring of 1945 Truman was content to continue aid to Jiang Jieshi’s (Chiang Kai-shek) Guomindang (GMD) government and urge that it broaden its political base in order to avert civil war with Mao Zedong’s (Mao Tse-tung) Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Truman also came to see Jiang’s government as the world’s “rottenest,” comprised of “corrupt bloodsuckers.”⁹² He realized that the GMD “would not fight it out,” and he likened aid to China to “pouring sand in a rat hole.” But at the same time he deplored China’s “so-called Commies” or “bandits,” alleged that they had aided the Japanese in the war, and insisted that the (North) Chinese would “never be Communists.” Later he branded the CCP a “cut throat organization” and “a bunch of murderers.”⁹³ In short, Truman’s parochial worldview led him to believe that Chinese society would never adapt to Marxism, and he never saw the extent to which the CCP had come to represent powerful aspirations of the Chinese people.⁹⁴

Most important, Truman could not perceive China’s civil war apart from the American-Soviet Cold War. He was relieved to learn in early 1945 that Stalin accepted GMD sovereignty over China, wanted only the Manchurian concessions granted to him at Yalta, and would respect the Open Door Policy. But by autumn Truman, relying on hard-line War Department advice, was insistent that the United States had to take a strong stand in China, or Russia would dominate Asia.⁹⁵ He sought to outmaneuver Stalin and Mao by moving five hundred thousand GMD troops to occupy North China and providing major military aid, including sixty thousand U.S. marines who occupied Beijing-Tianjin (T’ienstin) and skirmished with CCP forces. The president knew that American action was one-sided but insisted that “my policy is to support

92. Office of Far Eastern Affairs memorandum, 18 April 1945, Truman Papers, PSF, box 73; “rottenest” quoted in Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948–1972* (Stanford, 1990), 62; “corrupt bloodsuckers” in Truman to Hubert Humphrey, 22 August 1950, Truman Papers, PSF, box 122.

93. Connelly Cabinet Notes, 7 March 1947, Connelly Papers; “Commies” in Truman memorandum, [15] November 1945, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 74; “bandits” in Truman to Hugh De Lacy, 12 January 1946, Truman Papers, PSF, box 173; Chinese as non-Communists in entry for 11 May 1949, in David E. Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal: The Atomic Energy Years* (New York, 1964), 524–28. Truman also referred to the “grafters and crooks” in Jiang’s government, “cut throat organization,” and “murderers,” in Truman to William O. Douglas, 18 September 1951, Truman Papers, PSF, box 117.

94. Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 11–12.

95. Diary entry for 27 November 1945, Blum, ed., *Price of Vision*, 519–21; Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938–1945* (New York, 1979), 270–74.

Chiang K.C.” He ignored Secretary Byrnes’s proposal to seek mutual Soviet-American troop withdrawal and denied involvement in China’s incipient civil war by claiming that the United States could not “walk out” and leave one million armed Japanese.⁹⁶

In December 1945 Truman leapt at a cabinet suggestion to send recently retired Chief of Staff General Marshall to mediate in China. But the president accepted Marshall’s call for a secret codicil assuring military aid to the GMD even if it remained intransigent throughout negotiations, a fatal flaw in the general’s near-impossible mission.⁹⁷ Truman’s personal defensiveness also caused him to deride criticism of his China policy as coming from people who “are more loyal to the Russian government than they are to their own.” In 1948 he denied that efforts to get Jiang to broaden his government ever included Communists, who believed only in a “totalitarian state.”⁹⁸

Later on, Truman said that common sense had held him from major military intervention, given China’s size, Jiang’s weakness, and Mao’s consolidated strength. True enough; but the president also feared that loss of American lives and money would harm his 1948 election campaign and, perhaps most significant, Jiang Jieshi, unlike his counterparts in Greece, did not request intervention, which would portend American control of his regime’s army and finances.⁹⁹

More important, Truman opposed dealing with Communists under any circumstances. During debate in January 1949 over whether to continue Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) delivery of supplies and foodstuffs to CCP-controlled areas if only to keep a door ajar to the Chinese people, he ordered the cutoff on grounds that “we can’t be in a position of making any deal with a Communist regime.”¹⁰⁰ Shortly the president signed NSC policy papers that recognized the inevitability of a CCP victory but arrogantly posited that the Communists had just emerged from “caves to chancelleries” and had yet to prove they could govern effectively, and that if their new government did not remain independent of Moscow, the United States would foster a “new revolution” that might come to a “test of arms” with the CCP. At the same time, Truman persisted that he wished to maintain a “flexible” policy toward China.¹⁰¹

96. Entry for 19 October 1945, “President’s Appointments List,” September–December 1945, Ayers Papers, box 1; Westad, *Cold War and Revolution*, 116; Truman to Representative Ellis Patterson, 16 November 1945, Truman Papers, Official File 150, box 132. See also Truman memorandum, [15] November 1945, in Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 74.

97. Marshall memoranda of conversations, 11 and 14 December 1945, *FRUS, 1947* (Washington, 1972), 7:767–69, 770; Ernest R May, *The Truman Administration and China* (Philadelphia, 1975), 11.

98. Truman to Representative Hugh De Lacy, 12 January 1946, Truman Papers, PSE, box 173; Truman Press Conference, 11 March 1948, *PPIST, 1948*, 180–85.

99. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY, 1956), 63; May, *Truman Administration and China*, 45–47.

100. Connelly Cabinet Notes, 19 January 1949, Connelly Papers, box 1.

101. Souers Notes, 11 January 1949, NSC-34/1, “U.S. Policy Toward China,” and 4 February 1949, *FRUS, 1949* (Washington, 1974), 9:474–75, 484–85; Souers note, 28 February 1949, NSC-34/2,

Truman's narrow perspective militated against flexibility. For example, in early June 1949 Consul General O. Edmund Clubb and Ambassador J. Leighton Stuart reported on an alleged split between Soviet-leaning CCP officials and a more "liberal" faction led by CCP Foreign Minister Zhou En-lai (Chou En-lai), who wished to talk to the Americans. Ultimately the report proved unfounded, although before this was known Acheson agreed to limited contact. But Truman imposed his strict sanction "not to indicate any softening toward the communists."¹⁰²

Then in late June the CCP invited Stuart to Beijing for talks. To be sure, Mao and CCP leaders regarded the United States as the GMD's ally and an enemy of all revolutions. The Communists were in no hurry to seek recognition unless the United States ended the so-called unequal treaties and cut its ties to the GMD. And shortly Mao would declare that China had to "lean" to the side of socialism and Russia.¹⁰³

Most revealing, however, Truman, without knowledge of Mao's speech, not only ordered that "under no circumstance" was Stuart to go to Beijing but that he was to visit the GMD at their new Ghuangzhou (Canton) headquarters before returning to America. Stuart persuaded the president to rescind his directive. Still, as a White House aide recorded, the president was on record as saying that the Communists would not be recognized.¹⁰⁴

Even worse, the administration did nothing to halt the GMD's indiscriminate bombings in American-marked planes of Shanghai and other cities. The attacks began in June and intensified over the next year. Further, the president repeatedly called for "strict adherence" to his acceptance of the GMD's illegal blockade of China's major ports, a move that could not alter the war's outcome but could wreak havoc on civilians and harm evacuation of Americans.¹⁰⁵ As

"U.S. Policy Toward China," and Lay Memorandum to NSC, 3 March 1949, *ibid.*, 491-95, 499; Truman to Congressman John McCormack [29 March 1949], Truman Papers, PSK, box 173.

102. Clubb to Acheson, 1 and 2 June 1949, and Stuart to Acheson, 7 June 1949, *FRUS, 1949* (Washington, 1976), 7:357-60, 363-64, and 372-373; Webb memorandum of conversation with Truman, 16 June 1949, *ibid.*, 388.

103. Stuart to Acheson, 28 June 1949, *FRUS, 1949* 7:766-67; Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 38-42; most scholars hold that domestic politics barred Truman administration talks with the CCP, or that the CCP's chief goal was to undercut the GMD; Warren I. Cohen, "Acheson, His Advisers, and China, 1949-1950," in *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950*, ed. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (New York, 1980), 32-37; William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 122-25; Zhigong Ho, "'Lost Chance' or 'Inevitable Hostility?' Two Contending Interpretations of the Late 1940s Chinese-American Relations," *Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Newsletter* 20 (September 1989): 67-78.

104. Acheson to Stuart, 11 July 1949, *FRUS, 1949* (Washington, 1978) 8:769; Acheson memorandum, 11 July 1949, and Acheson to Stuart, 20 July 1949, *ibid.*, 780-81, 794; entry for 27 June 1949, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 25. See also Truman Press Conference, 11 August 1949, *PPHST, 1949* (Washington, 1964), 421.

105. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust: Chinese-American Relations and the Recognition Controversy, 1949-1950* (New York, 1983), 74-75; Clark to Acheson, 18 July 1949, *FRUS, 1949* 9:1127; Butterworth to Acheson, 24 June 1949, and Webb memorandum of conversation with Truman, 1 October 1949, *ibid.*, 1118-19, 1141; Acheson memorandum of conversation with Truman, 10 October 1949, Acheson Papers, box 64.

Consul General John M. Cabot in Shanghai complained in July 1949, the United States had rejected every chance to put foreign points of view before “top communists,” placed those who wanted relations with the West in “impossible” situations, and failed to lessen dangerous misunderstandings.¹⁰⁶

Finally, Truman fully accorded with the counterproductive Acheson-State Department White Paper of August 1949. Although this documentary compilation was intended to mollify China lobbyists by demonstrating past U.S. support for the GMD, Acheson’s letter of transmittal was a “diatribe” charging that the CCP had foresworn its Chinese heritage and had no legitimacy to govern.¹⁰⁷ He urged the Chinese people to throw off their foreign Russian “yoke” and not serve Soviet interests. This message ignored centuries of Russia-China conflict and failed to recognize that Stalin had not supported the CCP revolution or provided meaningful military aid until 1947–48 and had remained interested in a CCP-GMD settlement as late as the spring of 1949. The White Paper only incensed Mao, who published five articles excoriating American aggression against China and prepared to lean more toward Moscow.¹⁰⁸

Acheson now told the British that the United States intended to “play for a split” between the CCP and the Soviets.¹⁰⁹ But when Mao proclaimed the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October and called for relations on a basis of equality with all nations, the American response was to close numerous consulates. Shortly Truman, after meeting with Asia specialists, claimed to have gained “new insight” and a “new way” of thinking about Communist success, and he agreed on the need to encourage the PRC away from Russia.¹¹⁰ But when the PRC asserted its sovereignty and nationalism in January 1950 by requisitioning foreign military barracks in Beijing, the Americans invoked treaty rights based on a protocol drawn up after Western powers had quashed the Boxer Uprising in 1901. The standoff led to complete American withdrawal from China in April 1950.¹¹¹

Meanwhile Truman heartily approved Acheson’s denunciation of the February 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty, which included Soviet return of its Manchurian

106. Cabot to Acheson, 7 July 1949, *FRUS, 1949* 9:1261–65.

107. Acheson letter of transmittal, 30 July 1949, in *United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944–1949* (Washington, 1949), iii–xvii; Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 36–41.

108. Goncharov, Lewis, Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 6–14, 26; Michael Hunt, “Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1949–1950,” in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, 217–19.

109. Acheson memorandum, 13 September 1949, *FRUS, 1949* 9:80–84.

110. Acheson to certain diplomatic and consular officers, 13 October 1949, *FRUS, 1949* 8:1323; Acheson memorandum of conversation with Truman, 17 November 1949, Acheson Papers, box 64.

111. Webb to Truman, and Acheson to Clubb, 10 January 1949, and Clubb to Acheson, 20 January 1949, *FRUS, 1950* (Washington, 1976), 6:273–74, 275, and 286–89; Edwin W. Martin, *Divided Counsel: The Anglo-American Response to Communist Victory in China* (Lexington, KY, 1986), 106–13; the 1901 protocol had been reaffirmed in the 1943 Sino-American treaty in which the United States relinquished extraterritorial privileges.

concessions by 1953, a small credit for the PRC, and mutual defense against Japan and its allies. Acheson charged that the PRC had sold its sovereignty, but Mao was able to say that he had expelled all foreigners from China and gained a better treaty from Stalin than had Jiang in 1945 in fulfilling Yalta.¹¹² Further, the Truman administration now bowed to congressional pressure to continue aid to the Taiwan-based GMD, whose bombings of the mainland led Philip Sprouse, head of the Office of Chinese Affairs, to complain in February 1950 that it was “incredible” that the United States would allow a client state to “call the turn” on its vital interests and cause it to be arraigned before the “bar of opinion” in China. Acheson asked the State Department to weigh halting China aid but soon admitted that the GMD had already told the administration to “go to hell” with its bombing protests.¹¹³

The Truman administration involved itself more deeply in China’s civil war in the spring of 1950 by allowing the Joint Chiefs of Staff to commit to Taiwan’s defense, with abundant aid flowing to the GMD. Shortly Dean Rusk, head of the Far Eastern Affairs Office, proposed to have U.S. naval and ground forces “neutralize” Taiwan, stage a coup to be rid of Jiang, and put the island under UN trusteeship, even at the risk of “early war” with the PRC and the Soviet Union. Truman sent a family friend to Taiwan to assess matters, but before action could be taken the Korean War began on 24 June.¹¹⁴ The president promptly ordered the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits, which Mao denounced as a violation of the Cairo and Potsdam accords and an act of war.¹¹⁵ Perhaps it was not the latter, but President Truman’s China policies had already fixed the matrix for long-term, counterrevolutionary policy toward the PRC, whose complex origins and present concerns he never understood. From his parochial perspective, as he said on 6 July 1950, the Chinese Communist government was “nothing but a tool of Moscow just as the North Korean Government is.”¹¹⁶

Truman made his most fateful decisions during the Korean War, which he attributed solely to Soviet-inspired North Korean aggression against South Korea, and not to bitter conflict between two regimes struggling for supremacy. “If we let [South] Korea down,” he said, “the Soviets will keep right on going and swallow up one piece of Asia after another,” and that would cause “collapse” in the Near East and possibly Europe.¹¹⁷ Stalin, of course, had supplied military

112. Goncharov, Lewis, Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 121, 260–64; Ronald McGlothlen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and United States Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York, 1993), 158–59.

113. Sprouse memorandum, 16 February 1950, *FRUS, 1950* 6:312–14; Acheson memorandum, 27 March 1950, Acheson Papers, box 65.

114. David Allan Mayers, *Cracking the Monolith: U.S. Policy against the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949–1955* (Baton Rouge, 1986), 78–79; McGlothlen, *Controlling the Waves*, 117–27.

115. Goncharov, Lewis, Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 157.

116. Truman to Senator Arthur Vandenberg, 6 July 1950, quoted in David McLean, “American Nationalism, the China Myth, and the Truman Doctrine: The Question of Accommodation with Peking, 1949–1950,” *Diplomatic History* 10 (Winter 1986): 40

117. Elsey Notes, 26 June 1950, Elsey Papers, box 71.

plans and equipment for North Korea. But the invasion was the brainchild of its leader, Kim Il-Sung, who spent a year persuading Stalin, and then Mao, that victory would come swiftly and without American intercession.¹¹⁸

Truman's immediate intervention on 25 June to preserve South Korea's UN-recognized independence was logical, although it surprised the Communist leaders. He and other officials immediately analogized North Korea's attack to German and Japanese action in the 1930s and determined that this new aggression could not go unchecked.¹¹⁹ But it is also true that Truman long subscribed to the overblown conclusion of his special emissary to Seoul in 1946, Ed Pauley, that Korea was the "ideological battleground" of the world, and during 1947–1950 approved more military aid for South Korea than for Greece.¹²⁰ In December 1949 he signed NSC-48/2, which extended containment to Asia and exaggerated the link between America's success in Korea and its global security.¹²¹ Truman's movement of the Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Straits augured intent to deny Taiwan to the PRC and further involvement in China's civil war. He also had to be dissuaded from using Chiang's troops in Korea.¹²² Further, Truman set a bad precedent and opened himself to charges of "Truman's war" by not pausing to gain congressional approval to act in June 1950, especially after he committed two divisions on 30 June. But as a White House aide said, he was not of a mind to do it.¹²³

Even more unfortunately, the president's 19 July 1950 speech escalated a U.S./UN "police action" against a "bunch of bandits" – or "pagan wolves" – into an issue of American security and world peace.¹²⁴ He now called for a major military buildup and soon signed NSC-68, which proposed to spend 20 percent of GNP on the military and wage global cold war.¹²⁵ The president also quickly acceded in August to hard-line views proposing to send U.S./UN forces across

118. Goncharov, Lewis, Xue, *Uncertain Partners*, 130–54. See also Kathryn Weathersby, "Soviet Aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945–1950: New Evidence from the Soviet Archives," Working Paper # 8, CWIHP (November 1993); Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 1, *The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947–1950* (Princeton, 1990), 568–621; and William Whitney Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, 1995), 10–46.

119. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 332–33.

120. Pauley to Truman, 22 June 1946, and Truman to Pauley, 16 July 1946, *FRUS, 1946* (Washington, 1971), 8:706–9, 713–14.

121. Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York, 1985), 195–211.

122. Jessup memorandum, 26 June 1950, *FRUS, 1950* (Washington, 1976), 7:178–84; Truman notes, 30 June 1950, Truman Papers, PSF, box 229; Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 423–24.

123. Elsey memorandum, 16 July 1951, Elsey Papers, box 76. See also Burton I. Kaufman, *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command* (New York, 1986), 68–70.

124. "Police action" was a reporter's term to which Truman acceded to avoid saying that America was at war, Truman news conference, 29 June 1950, *PPHST, 1950* (Washington, 1965), 502–6; Truman, "Special Message to the Congress Reporting on the Situation in Korea," 19 July 1950, *ibid.*, 527–37; "bunch of bandits," in entry for 29 June 1950, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 26; "pagan wolves" quoted in Donovan, *Tumultuous Years*, 256.

125. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress," 19 July 1950, *PPHST, 1950*, 531–37; NSC-68 in "A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary," 14 April 1950, *FRUS, 1950* (Washington, 1977), 1:234–92.

the 38th parallel to vanquish North Korea and to unify the Korean peninsula militarily. From Truman's perspective, this would demonstrate his biblical conviction that "punishment always followed transgression." Truman also approved Acheson's more imperial view that Korea would be used as "a stage to show the world what Western Democracy can do to help the underprivileged countries of the world."¹²⁶ In sum, containment would become "liberation" or "rollback" and, as Leffler has argued, America would establish its preponderant world power.¹²⁷

Truman ignored early warnings that the PRC would view as a security threat MacArthur's unconstrained northward march, or establishment of an anti-Communist regime in North Korea. He also dismissed PRC worry that the United States would build a rival Chinese regime on Taiwan, which MacArthur had proclaimed vital to America's defense perimeter during the summer.¹²⁸ Truman disregarded PRC warnings of entry into the war in early October as "blackmail" and never believed that it would fight.¹²⁹ He was "highly pleased" with his Wake Island talks with MacArthur, which focused not on PRC actions but on how soon the war would be won. Truman's political myopia precluded his grasping PRC determination to define and defend its vital interests, or its likely fear that U.S. conquest of North Korea would allow it to dominate Asia, where America, the British complained, acted like "a law unto itself."¹³⁰

Major PRC attacks in late November 1950 forced America's bitter retreat. Truman's ill-considered comment, or half-veiled threat, that use of the atomic bomb was always under consideration caused British leaders to fly to Washington intent to preclude wider war.¹³¹ In fact, atomic attack against Russia was first hinted at on 26 June and Truman had sent nuclear-configured bombers (without atomic cores) to England and Guam in July, but they had returned.¹³² The issue of atomic strikes arose again in a cabinet meeting on 1 December and

126. Lay memorandum, 1 September 1950, *FRUS, 1950* 7:681-96; Ferrell, ed., *Truman Autobiography*, 33; Acheson quoted in Connelly Cabinet Notes, 29 September 1950, Connelly Papers, box 2. See also James I. Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory: National Self-Determination and the Thirty Eighth Parallel in Korea," *Journal of American History* 66 (September 1979): 314-33.

127. Leffler, *Preponderance of Power*, 396-97.

128. Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford, 1960), 47-67, 79-91; Truman, "Letter to Ambassador Warren Austin Relating to the U.S. Position on Formosa," 27 August 1950, and Truman, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Situation in Korea," 1 September 1950, *PPSIT, 1950*, 599-600, 609-14.

129. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 462-64; Acheson memorandum, 9 October 1950, Acheson Papers, box 65.

130. "Highly pleased" in Acheson memorandum, 10 October 1950, Acheson Papers, box 19. See also Truman to Claude Bowers, 18 October 1950, PSF, Truman Papers, box 172; Michael Hunt, "Beijing and the Korean Crisis, June 1950-June 1951," *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (Fall 1992): 453-78, esp. 459-65; and Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War*, 159-233. On America's policy in Asia see Ernest Bevin memorandum, 30 August 1950, Records of the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Papers, File 129, Piece 41, PRO (hereafter CAB, File/Piece).

131. Truman news conference, and White House statement, 30 November 1950, *PPHST, 1950*, 724-28; entry for 30 November 1950, Ayers Papers, Ayers Diary, box 26.

132. Jessup Memorandum, 26 June 1950, *FRUS, 1950* 7:159; Roger Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy During the Korean War," *International Security* 13 (Winter 1988/89): 55-65.

several times thereafter. But they were resisted chiefly because they were seen to be ineffective, would alienate NATO allies and Asian nations, and perhaps incur Soviet retaliation.¹³³ Still, at his December summit with Prime Minister Clement Attlee, the president would give only his “man’s word” that he would consult before using atomic weapons. And despite Attlee’s view that PRC leaders could be both Marxist and nationalist and “not bow to Stalin,” Truman clung to his view that China’s new leaders were “complete satellites” of Russia who sought to conquer Korea and Southeast Asia.¹³⁴

The Americans soon sought to halt the costly Korean conflict if only because, as Acheson said, they did not want to fight the “second team,” the PRC, when the “real enemy” was the Soviet Union.¹³⁵ But the president stubbornly refused compromise in early 1951: no negotiations with the PRC before a cease-fire; no recognition of the PRC, or a UN seat; and no halt of American aid to the GMD. Further, if the PRC drove America from Korea, the United States would mobilize the GMD, blockade China, and attack by air.¹³⁶ Truman also pressed the UN to brand the PRC an “aggressor” in February 1951, hampering prospects for an early settlement.¹³⁷

Truman then faced MacArthur’s apparent intent to “sabotage” the administration’s cease-fire efforts when the general publicly demanded on 24 March that the PRC capitulate to him or face destruction.¹³⁸ Then on 5 April House Minority Leader Joseph Martin released a deliberately nonconfidential letter from MacArthur stating that there was “no substitute for victory.”¹³⁹ Truman displayed courage in firing his larger-than-life field commander on 11 April. But MacArthur’s insubordination was not the sole cause of the crisis. The administration had shied from rebuking him for provocative public comments and battlefield tactics since August 1950, and Truman’s 6 December 1950 directive to all military commanders to clear statements with the Defense Department was not pointed enough at MacArthur.¹⁴⁰ Further, the president’s view of the PRC

133. Elsey Notes, 1 December 1950, Elsey Papers, box 73; memorandum of Acheson-Lovett conversation, 2 December 1950, Acheson Papers, box 65; Dingman, “Atomic Diplomacy,” 69–91.

134. “Man’s word” in Jessup memorandum for the files, 7 December 1950, *FRUS, 1950* 7:1462; U.S. delegation minutes of first and second meetings of President Truman and Prime Minister Attlee, 4 and 5 December 1950, *ibid.*, 1361–74, 1394–1408. See also Attlee’s report in Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 12 December 1950, CAB 127/18.

135. Jessup memorandum, 3 December 1950, *FRUS, 1950* 7:1332–34.

136. Connelly Cabinet Notes, 15 December 1950 and 12, 15, and 26 January, and 2 February 1951, Connelly Papers, box 2; Rosemary J. Foot, “Anglo-American Relations in the Korean Crisis: The British Effort to Avert an Expanded War, December 1950–January 1951,” *Diplomatic History* 10 (Winter 1986): 51–57.

137. Kaufman, *The Korean War*, 136–38.

138. David Lloyd to Elsey, 16 April 1951, Elsey Papers, box 74.

139. Martin to MacArthur, 8 March 1951, and MacArthur to Martin, 20 March 1951, *FRUS, 1951* (Washington, 1983), 7:298–99; Truman also called MacArthur’s behavior “rank insubordination,” diary entry for 6 April 1951, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 210–11.

140. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, rev. ed. (New York, 1990), 12–13, 18–20; Kaufman, *The Korean War*, 157–62. MacArthur’s well-known earlier conflicts with the administration included his speech of 28 August

and North Korea, and his early war aims, were not dissimilar from MacArthur's; their basic disagreement derived from Truman's political realization that he had to quit the war. Nor were MacArthur's proposals to strike at the PRC too different from recent JCS ideas.¹⁴¹

Further, to gain JCS support while firing MacArthur, as well as to respond to a PRC buildup, Truman again deployed atomic bombers and nuclear weapons to Guam and approved a directive for retaliation against air attacks from outside Korea. He then sent another nuclear deployment to Asia and gave his new military commander, General Matthew B. Ridgway, qualified authority for atomic strikes in the event of a major attack from the PRC.¹⁴² MacArthur meantime electrified Congress and the nation with speeches stating that the purpose of war was victory.¹⁴³

Finally, the president's personal diplomacy obstructed armistice talks. In October 1951 he overrode standard military practice, and U.S. commitment to the 1949 Geneva Convention provisions, and rejected "all for all" compulsory exchange of prisoners of war (POW) unless the PRC made a "major concession."¹⁴⁴ Then in February 1952 he insisted on simply voluntary repatriation of POWs. He did so partly for moral reasons but equally to embarrass and to coerce the PRC. He believed that he could gain his way either by promising to permit repair of North Korea's airfields or by brutal conventional bombing. Seven months later he agreed with Lovett's contention that "we can tear them [the Chinese and Koreans] up by air."¹⁴⁵ But the president's narrow view succeeded only in transforming the POW issue from one that could have been resolved in a few months of hard bargaining to one that produced indefinite

1950 to the Veterans of Foreign Wars that proclaimed Taiwan the center of America's Pacific defense perimeter and declared Jiang a vital ally; the general also skirted his military orders not to send non-Korean forces close to Russian and Chinese borders in October 1950 and pressed the administration to allow him to bomb closer to the PRC borders than it desired; his public criticism of Washington's refusal to allow him to bomb Manchuria led to the December directive to clear public statements with the Defense Department, as well as Truman's later reflection that he should have fired MacArthur "then and there," see Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 384; Truman and his aides wished to fire MacArthur after he demanded that the PRC surrender to him, but feared to act until they had no choice in April.

141. Barton J. Bernstein, "The Truman Administration and the Korean War," in *The Truman Administration*, ed. Michael J. Lacey (New York, 1989), 434-35.

142. Entries for 5, 6, 9, and 10 April 1951, in *Forging the Atomic Shield: Excerpts from the Office Diary of Gordon E. Dean*, ed. Roger M. Anders (Chapel Hill, 1981), 134-35, 137-38, 139-40, 141-42. See also Dingman, "Atomic Diplomacy," 72-77.

143. John W. Spanier, *The Truman-MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War*, rev. ed. (New York, 1965), 211-38; William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas MacArthur, 1880-1964* (New York, 1978), 775-809.

144. Acheson memorandum (meeting with the president), 29 October 1951, *FRUS, 1951* 7:1073; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Struggle over the Korean Armistice: Prisoners of Repatriation?" in *Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1945-1953*, ed. Bruce Cumings (Seattle, 1983), 273-75.

145. Acheson memorandum, 27 February 1952, Acheson Papers, box 67; Lovett quoted in Connelly Cabinet Notes, 12 September 1952, Connelly Papers, box 2; Acheson memorandum, 16 September 1952, Acheson Papers, box 67. See also Bernstein, "Struggle over the Korean Armistice," 288-307.

stalemate.¹⁴⁶ Fighting would continue until President Dwight Eisenhower’s administration gained a compromise in July 1953 that turned nonrepatriated POWs over to a neutral commission.¹⁴⁷

In the meantime, beneath the facade of calm crisis management in 1952, Truman fantasized about giving Russia and China ten days to quit Korea or face “all out war” in which he would destroy their major cities from “St. Petersburg” to Moscow to Vladivostok, and from Peking to Shanghai. “This is the final chance for the Soviet Government to decide whether it wants to survive or not,” he fumed. Truman may not have intended atomic war, but he had created a dangerous situation, especially for a heated election year.¹⁴⁸

Korean War costs were staggering: 54,000 Americans dead and 100,000 casualties; combined dead and wounded for the PRC and Korea exceeded 2.5 million. The United States spent \$70 billion on the war, and Truman’s military budget for fiscal Year 1953 was \$53 billion, almost quadruple that of Fiscal Year 1950, and nearly equal to NSC-68’s proposals. The stage was also set for a long-term political-military commitment to South Korea, the GMD on Taiwan, and the French in Indochina, while U.S.-PRC relations were embittered for a generation to come. Meantime, the Fair Deal was dead, McCarthyism was rampant, and Truman departed the presidency with low public regard and with America on a Cold War footing at home and abroad.¹⁴⁹

IV

No one leader or nation caused the Cold War. The Second World War generated inevitable Soviet-American conflict as two nations with entirely different political-economic systems confronted each other on two war-torn continents. The Truman administration would seek to fashion a world order friendly to American political and economic interests, to achieve maximum national security by preventing any nation from severing U.S. ties to its traditional allies and vital areas of trade and resources, and to avoid 1930s-style “appeasement.” Truman creditably favored creation of the UN, fostered foreign aid and reconstruction, and wished to avert war, and, after he recognized his “overreach” in Korea, he sought to return to the status quo ante.¹⁵⁰

Nonetheless, from the Potsdam Conference through the Korean War, the president contributed significantly to the growing Cold War and militarization

146. Stueck, *Korean War*, 359.

147. *Ibid.*, 320–30; Kaufman, *Korean War*, 316–17, 320–21.

148. Entries for 27 January and 18 May 1952, Truman Papers, PSF, Truman Diary, box 333. During the Berlin crisis in 1948 Truman spoke movingly about the horrors of atomic warfare and was adamant about presidential (not military) control of atomic weapons; see entries for 15 and 21 July 1948, Millis, ed., *Forrestal Diaries*, 458, 460–61, and entry for 21 July 1948, Lilienthal, *Atomic Energy Years*, 388–92. Truman also wrote to Mary Jane Truman, 26 July 1948, that “Two wars are enough for anybody, and I’ve had two,” in M. Truman, *Truman*, 17.

149. Paterson, *On Every Front*, 193; Bernstein, “Truman Administration and Korean War,” 442–44.

150. “Overreach” adapted from diary entry for 16 July 1945, Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record*, 50–52.

of American foreign policy. He assumed that America's economic-military-moral superiority assured that he could order the world on its terms, and he ascribed only dark motives to nations or leaders who resisted America's will. Monopoly control of the atomic bomb heightened this sense of righteous power and impelled his use of atomic bombs partly to outmaneuver the Russians in China and over Japan. Truman also drew confidence from the bombs that he could deny the Soviets any fixed sum of German reparations despite their feasibility, the Yalta accords, and the apparent disregard of Russia's claim to compensation for its wartime suffering. American-imposed zonal reparations policy only increased the East-West divide and diminished prospects to reunite Germany, although Stalin evidently remained open to the idea of a united and neutralized Germany until 1949 and conceivably as late as 1952. But Truman, as Marshall learned in the spring of 1947, had little interest in negotiating such an arrangement, and his administration's decision that year to make western Germany the cornerstone of the Marshall Plan and Western Europe's reconstruction virtually precluded German unification except by melding East into West. Formation of NATO and insistence that a unified Germany be free to join a Western military alliance reinforced division of Germany and Europe.

It is clear that Truman's insecurity with regard to diplomacy and world politics led him to seek to give the appearance of acting decisively and reinforced his penchant to view conflict in black and white terms and to divide nations into free or totalitarian societies. He shied from weighing the complexities of historic national conflicts and local or regional politics. Instead, he attributed nearly every diplomatic crisis or civil war – in Germany, Iran, Turkey, Greece, and Czechoslovakia – to Soviet machination and insisted that the Russians had broken every agreement and were bent on “world conquest.” To determine his response he was quick to reach for an analogy, usually the failure of the Western powers to resist Germany and Japan in the 1930s, and to conclude that henceforth he would speak to the Russians in the only language that he thought they understood: “divisions.” This style of leadership and diplomacy closed off both advocates and prospects for more patiently negotiated and more nuanced or creative courses of action.

Truman also viscerally loathed the Chinese Communists, could not comprehend Asian nationalism, demonized Asian opponents, and caused the United States to align itself with corrupt regimes. He was unable to view China's civil war apart from Soviet-American conflict. He brushed off criticism of America's intervention in behalf of the frightful GMD, refused to open channels of communication with the emergent PRC, and permitted the American-armed, Taiwan-based GMD to wage counterrevolutionary war against China's new government, whose sovereignty or legitimacy he never accepted. The Korean War then overtook his administration. The president decided to preserve South Korea's independence but set an unfortunate if not tragic precedent by refusing to seek formal congressional sanction for war. His decision to punish North Korea and implement “rollback,” and his disdain for the PRC and its

concerns before and after it entered the war, brought unnecessary, untold destruction and suffering to Asians and Americans and proved fatal to his presidency. Still, in his undelivered farewell address Truman insisted that “Russia was at the root” of every problem from Europe to Asia, and that “Trumanism” had saved countless countries from Soviet invasion and “knocked the socks off the communists” in Korea.¹⁵¹

In conclusion, it seems clear that despite Truman’s pride in his knowledge of the past, he lacked insight into the history unfolding around him. He often could not see beyond his immediate decision or visualize alternatives, and he seemed oblivious to the implications of his words or actions. More often than not he narrowed rather than broadened the options that he presented to the American citizenry, the environment of American politics, and the channels through which Cold War politics flowed. Throughout his presidency, Truman remained a parochial nationalist who lacked the leadership to move America away from conflict and toward détente. Instead, he promoted an ideology and politics of Cold War confrontation that became the modus operandi of successor administrations and the United States for the next two generations.

151. “Farewell Address” in Ferrell, ed., *Truman Autobiography*, 99–105, and entry for 15 May 1952, Truman Papers, PSE, Truman Diary, box 333.