

## Four Post-WWII Acts

### 1) The Truman Doctrine, 1947

With the Truman Doctrine, President Harry S. Truman established that the United States would provide political, military, and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces. The Truman Doctrine effectively reoriented U.S. foreign policy, away from its usual stance of withdrawal from regional conflicts not directly involving the United States, to one of possible intervention in far-away conflicts.

The Truman Doctrine arose from a speech delivered by President Truman before a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947. The need for the speech arose after the announcement by the British Government that, as of March 31, it would no longer provide military and economic assistance to the Greek Government in its civil war against the Greek Communist Party. Truman asked Congress to support the Greek Government against the Communists. He also asked Congress to provide assistance for Turkey, since that nation, too, had previously been dependent on British aid.

In light of the deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union and the appearance of Soviet meddling in Greek and Turkish affairs, the withdrawal of British assistance to Greece provided the necessary catalyst for the Truman Administration to reorient American foreign policy. Accordingly, in his speech, President Truman requested that Congress provide \$400,000,000 worth of aid to both the Greek and Turkish Governments and support the dispatch of American civilian and military personnel and equipment to the region.

Truman justified his request on two grounds. He argued that a Communist victory in the Greek Civil War would endanger the political stability of Turkey, which would undermine the political stability of the Middle East. This could not be allowed in light of the region's immense strategic importance to U.S. national security. Truman also argued that the United States was compelled to assist "free peoples" in their struggles against "totalitarian regimes," because the spread of authoritarianism would "undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States." In the words of the Truman Doctrine, it became "the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

Truman argued that the United States could no longer stand by and allow the forcible expansion of Soviet totalitarianism into free, independent nations, because American national security now depended upon more than just the physical security of American territory. Rather, in a sharp break with its traditional avoidance of extensive foreign commitments beyond the Western Hemisphere during peacetime, the Truman Doctrine committed the United States to actively offering assistance to preserve the political integrity of democratic nations when such an offer was deemed to be in the best interest of the United States.



## 2) The Marshall Plan

Europe was devastated by years of conflict during World War II. Millions of people had been killed or wounded. Industrial and residential centers in England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Belgium and elsewhere lay in ruins. Much of Europe was on the brink of famine as agricultural production had been disrupted by war. Transportation infrastructure was in shambles. The only major power in the world that was not significantly damaged was the United States.

From 1945 through 1947, the United States was already assisting European economic recovery with direct financial aid. Military assistance to Greece and Turkey was being given. The newly formed United Nations was providing humanitarian assistance. In January 1947, U. S. President Harry Truman appointed George Marshall, the architect of victory during WWII, to be Secretary of State. Writing in his diary on January 8, 1947, Truman said, "Marshall is the greatest man of World War II. He managed to get along with Roosevelt, the Congress, Churchill, the Navy and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and he made a grand record in China. When I asked him to [be] my special envoy to China, he merely said, 'Yes, Mr. President I'll go.' No argument only patriotic action. And if any man was entitled to balk and ask for a rest, he was. We'll have a real State Department now."

In just a few months, State Department leadership under Marshall with expertise provided by George Kennan, William Clayton and others crafted the Marshall Plan concept, which George Marshall shared with the world in a speech on June 5, 1947 at Harvard. Officially known as the European Recovery Program (ERP), the Marshall Plan was intended to rebuild the economies and spirits of western Europe, primarily. Marshall was convinced the key to restoration of political stability lay in the revitalization of national economies. Further he saw political stability in Western Europe as a key to blunting the advances of communism in that region.

Sixteen nations, including Germany, became part of the program and shaped the assistance they required, state by state, with administrative and technical assistance provided through the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) of the United States. European nations received nearly \$13 billion in aid, which initially resulted in shipments of food, staples, fuel and machinery from the United States and later resulted in investment in industrial capacity in Europe. Marshall Plan funding ended in 1951.

Marshall Plan nations were assisted greatly in their economic recovery. From 1948 through 1952 European economies grew at an unprecedented rate. Trade relations led to the formation of the North Atlantic alliance. Economic prosperity led by coal and steel industries helped to shape what we know now as the European Union.



### 3) Berlin Airlift

Who controlled Germany's wartime capital of Berlin was the prickliest of all issues that separated the United States and Soviet Union during the late 1940's. The city of Berlin was divided into four zones of occupation like the rest of Germany, however, the entire city lay within the Soviet zone of occupation. Once the nation of East Germany was established, the Allied sections of the capital known as West Berlin became an island of democracy and capitalism behind the Iron Curtain.

In June 1948, tensions within Berlin touched off a crisis. The Soviets decided to seal all land routes going into West Berlin. Stalin gambled that the Western powers were not willing to risk another war to protect half of Berlin. The Allies were tired, and their populations were unlikely to support a new war. A withdrawal by the United States would eliminate this democratic enclave in the Soviet zone.

President Truman was faced with tough choices. Relinquishing Berlin to the Soviets would seriously undermine the new doctrine of containment. Any negotiated settlement would suggest that the USSR could engineer a crisis at any time to exact concessions. If Berlin were compromised, the whole of West Germany might question the American commitment to German democracy. To Harry Truman, there was no question. "We are going to stay, period," he declared. Together, with Britain, the United States began moving massive amounts of food and supplies into West Berlin by the only path still open — the air.

Flying over occupied Germany and landing a supply plane in Berlin at the rate of one every 3 minutes, the Berlin Airlift managed to supply the city with the materials needed for survival. President Truman had thrown the gauntlet at Stalin's feet. The USSR had to now choose between war and peace. Stalin refused to give the order to shoot down the American planes. Over the next eleven months, British and American planes flew over 4,000 tons of supplies daily into West Berlin.

As the American public cheered "Operation Vittles," Stalin began to look bad in the eyes of the world. He was clearly willing to use innocent civilians as pawns to quench his expansionist thirst. In May 1949, the Soviets ended the blockade. The United States and Britain had flown over 250,000 supply missions. In short, for nearly a year, supplies from American planes sustained the over two million people in West Berlin. This laid the groundwork for positive West German-American relations for years to come.



## 4) Displaced Persons Act

The Displaced Persons Act was signed into law by President Harry Truman on June 25, 1948. The law authorized the admission of select European refugees as permanent residents of the United States. The law's provisions were temporary, taking effect in 1948 and ending in 1952.

World War II ended in 1945, leaving several million individuals displaced from their countries of origin. According to CQ Press, the United States and other Allied nations were responsible for the lives of approximately eight million people who had been displaced from their homes in Germany, Austria, and Italy. About seven million of these persons returned safely to their countries of origin. However, the remaining displaced persons could not return to their home countries because of the possibility of racial or political persecution. The stated purpose of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 was to provide for the permanent resettlement of some of these refugees.

President Harry Truman (D) signed the Displaced Persons Act into law on June 25, 1948. Although Truman opted to sign the bill into law, he argued that some provisions of the bill discriminated against individuals on the basis of religious preference. In his signing statement, Truman said the following:

"I have analyzed closely the bill which was sent to me for signature. Its good points can be stated all too briefly: At long last, the principle is recognized that displaced persons should be admitted to the United States. Two hundred thousand displaced persons may be admitted in the next 2 years, as well as 2,000 recent Czech refugees and 3,000 orphans."

"The bad points of the bill are numerous. Together they form a pattern of discrimination and intolerance wholly inconsistent with the American sense of justice" —President Harry Truman

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 provided for the admission of refugees who met the following conditions between September 1, 1939, and December 22, 1945:

- Entered Germany, Austria, or Italy
- Resided in the American sector of Italy
- Resided in the British or French sector of Berlin or Vienna
- Resided in the American, British, or French zone of Germany or Austria
- Individuals persecuted by the Nazi government who were "detained in, or were obliged to flee from such persecution and were subsequently returned to" one of the aforementioned countries as a result of enemy action or war circumstances
- Czechoslovakian natives who fled from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, or Italy after January 1, 1948

The act provided for the resettlement of approximately 400,000 European refugees.

