

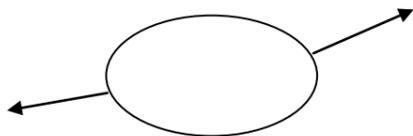


A Little History of the United States—Chapter 34—Superpower

'Out of the flames of the war, an ashen world appeared, one hugely different from the pre-war world of 1939. To begin with, there were ruins... Strange sights and sounds—sad, horrifying, or just plain odd. That was the human tragedy and the physical wreckage. But the world of politics and nations was wrecked too. The big powers that had once completed the Empire is now faced broken economies and uncertain futures.'

'What of the United States? The war had killed some 400,000 Americans, but that number looks more when next to the 60 million deaths worldwide. Also, the United States had no room in cities or bond that factories to rebuild. The country had been in the midst of an depression when the war began; but the end economy was booming. The American Navy was the worlds biggest, the air force the largest, the army the best equipped. Winston Churchill put the matter simply: The United States mastered "at the summit of the world ". It had become not just a big power but a superpower. No of the nation to challenge it. Except perhaps one.'

Q. The USSR/Russia, Soviet Union was the only country close to competing with America. How was it different?



Most Americans condemned Stalin's acts. But when Hitler launched his surprise invasion of Russia, the Soviet Union immediately became an ally of Britain and the United States:

'Indeed the Soviets were essential to victory, and their country paid dearly.'

'Yet the Soviet Union remained the other nation strong enough to become a superpower. In the eastern European countries where it had driven Germany out, Stalin took power, doing away with free elections and setting up governments friendly to the Soviets.'

Stalin's actions, though fully justified from his countries historical perspective and ideology, ran contrary to decisions that the American and British governments believed had been agreed with the USSR and relations rapidly began to sour.

Globally, the former allies now found their former brothers in arms as enemies in some of the most important locations in the world.

Task— On your map of the world use the information on page 257 to mark the key 'flashpoints' of the Cold War and identify the two power blocs of countries that emerged to contest the Cold War. Please provide a key.



Key Location	Dates	Strategic Significance
Germany		
Korea		
Vietnam		
Cuba		

'The American president who faced this changed world was Harry Truman.'

'Who the hell is Harry Truman?'

Q. Why was that an appropriate question from one American Admiral?

Q. How did Truman and Marshall help to re-build the European economy?

May people regard the actions of George Marshall as one of the most generous acts in human history, others however, regard American policy as pragmatic and strategic.

Task—What is the evidence for both of these conflicting motivations?

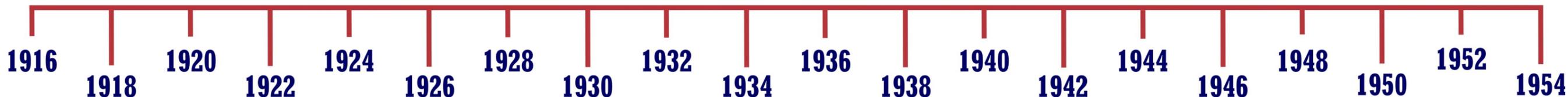
Generous / Altruistic	Pragmatic

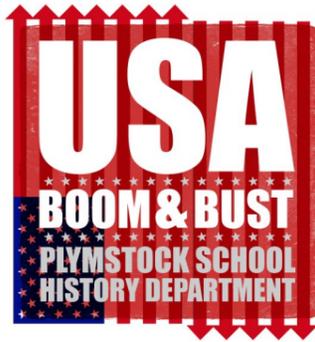
Q. What was the policy of 'Containment'?

Ambitious to have a successful domestic programme as well, Truman also had the G.I. Bill passed into law.

Q. What was the G.I. Bill?

Domestically however, Truman would find opposition at all levels as America drifted back to its traditional right-wing conservatism. Though he reinvented the USA with an international role, he still had to fight the introspective and inward looking nature of many Americans who desired isolationism and resented change (as best illustrated in Truman's failure to address the problems and discrimination against minority groups) . Representing these views were the Republican Party, out of power for almost two decades, and determined to obstruct Truman at every opportunity.





A Little History of the United States—Chapter 34—Superpower

As the Soviets became less cooperative even Truman's mother contributed advice:

'Tell Harry to be good, be honest, and behave himself, but I think it is now the time for him to get tough with someone'

Having a monopoly on the nuclear bomb and having already used it twice in Japan, Truman had a military advantage over the USSR. America additionally had an economy that was booming whilst the USSR's was virtually destroyed. Stalin however, had dictatorial powers and a total focus on obtaining the bomb for himself. As the Cold War went on, the perception by many of Truman's critics was that the USA was always reactive, rather than proactive, despite its power and that Stalin was driving the agenda and undermining the USA's power.

Q. What happened in Berlin in 1948?

Q. What was Truman's response?

Q. Which organisation was formed in 1949 to defend its members from Soviet aggression?

As the Cold War settled down into a stand-off between the two sides along the 'Iron Curtain' both sides struggled for an advantage by expanding the borders of the Cold War globally. Both the Far-East and the Caribbean would take their turn as being the centre ground of the Cold War.

Q. Where did war break out in 1950?

'With international tension is high, politics at home also heated up. Americans learn that a few scientists had passed atomic secrets to the Russians, helping them build their own bombs more quickly. Estate department official who had worked for Franklin was about was also accused of spine. With the other Communist hiding in the government? Republicans are queuing Truman-a Democrat-of not doing enough to reach out officials who was soft on Communism.'

As the world became increasingly threatening and dangerous, American society reacted by becoming more conservative. How did Truman and Congress respond to the growing threat of Communism at home:

Reaction	Dates	Significance
The Loyalty Programme		
House Un-American Activities Committee		
Blacklisting		
The Hiss Trial		

The Cold War was an international event that affected America domestically. The best illustration of this is the rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the Second Red Scare.

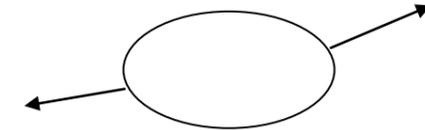
Q. What did McCarthy claim to possess?

Q. Why did many Americans believe him?

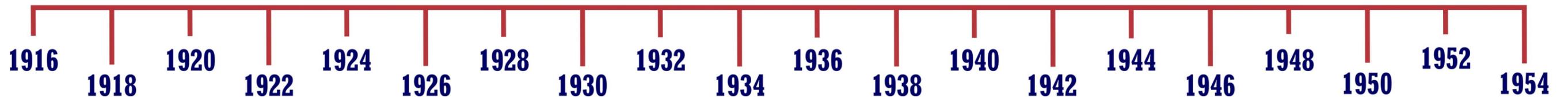
Q. What evidence did he point to in order to prove that America had been infiltrated by Communists?

Q. Why did the Republican Party support him?

Q. Why did the Red Scare eventually wind down?



Truman was replaced by Republican Eisenhower, whose 'politics of tranquillity' reflected America's wealth at home but threatened position in the world.



A Little History of the United States—Chapter 34—Superpower



Event	Date	Significance
End of WWII		
Eastern Europe Dominated by USSR		
Bad Winter in Europe		
Marshall Plan		
Truman Doctrine		
Hiss Trial		
Berlin Blockade and Airlift		
NATO Founded		
USSR detonates Bomb		
PRC Established		
Korean War		
Rosenberg Trial		

