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Insert Insert Was the Balance the United States and Its Western European Allies Struck between Punitive Measures and Geopolitical Pragmatism In Dealing with Occupied Germany In the Aftermath of World War II Essential to Ensure Future Regional Stability?

The United States and its western allies had to strike a balance between punitive measures and geopolitical pragmatism in reconstruction of the occupied Germany. This balance was achieved through instituting Nuremberg trials against war criminals and also instituting proceedings geared towards removal of oppressive Nazi elements from Germany. These proceedings were instituted in a way that allowed the rapid use of Germany's industrial potential to stimulate Western Europe economic recovery and growth in the years between 1945 and 1957. The punitive measures went hand in hand with reconciliatory measures in order to avoid resistance in the future. The United States provided Western Europe the necessary resources for economic reconstruction under the aid plan known as the Marshall plan (Dobbins et al, 2003). This was done in exchange for cooperation. Additionally, the United States maintained their military presence in Germany and other occupied Western Europe Countries to prevent the resurfacing of German power and also prevent Soviet expansion. In a nutshell, there was a mix between military weapons and economic weapons (Lecture notes, 2007).

The Marshall plan led to transformation of the perception the German's had towards the United States as colonialist occupants to perceiving them as economic partners. Western Europe recorded the highest growth in economy during the first quarter of the century after 1948. This rapid progress was <https://assignbuster.com/s5w4dqs/>

branded as *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) in Germany. The economic growth led to reduction of communist influence in Germany (Kunz, 1997; Reynolds 2004). Financial recovery spurred political stability in the region because financial assistance and the consequent economic growth led to cooperation among the citizens of Germany. The military security also followed as the Americans empowered the Europeans to contribute to their own defense.

General Aspects of the Models Used In the Post-War Reconstruction of Western Europe Broadly and Germany In Particular That Remains Applicable In the Twenty-First Century

The Marshall plan was adopted as an Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in Western Europe and particularly Germany. This has become a model for future reconstruction programs. There are several aspects in the program that are applicable in the 21st century.

The Marshall plan provided financial aid to spur economic growth in Western Europe, the result of this led the Western Europe to Shift their allegiance from the previous communist bloc to capitalist bloc. This clearly shows that economic incentive can go a long way into solving diplomatic problems (Kunz, 1997).

In Western Europe, the government structure, skilled labor force and infrastructure was already available, what lacked were the finances. This was provided by the Marshall plan. Reconstruction programs should endeavor to provide financial assistance to the concerned countries in order to empower the existing systems. Military assistance is also necessary but it should be implemented with economic assistance.

By adopting the Marshall plan, United States and Western Europe became

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economic partners. United States provided aid and also invested in Germany and other countries of Western Europe. This paid off by benefiting both the United States and the countries being reconstructed. This partnership is vital in the modern day reconstruction process as it reduces the economic strain on both sides.

In the Marshall plan, the United States invested in the occupied countries in order to spur prosperity without exploiting the occupied countries. This generated economic growth and peace in Western Europe. The American expenditure on the Germany's reconstruction process could be justified because it had no negative effects on the economy.

The 21st century reconstruction process should borrow the aspects of the Marshall plan, which was successful in ensuring both economic and political stability in Western Europe and Germany in particular.

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