

Leadership qualities of harry s. truman

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Harry S. Truman became President of the United States with the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt on April 12, 1945. During his nearly eight years in office, Truman confronted enormous challenges in both foreign and domestic affairs. The leadership paradigm of the Truman years represented a blend of 19th century principles and postwar austerity. He was admired for his ability to maintain his Midwestern demure while being one of the world's most prominent leaders as President of the United States.

Truman was a compromise candidate for vice president, almost an accidental president after Roosevelt's death 12 weeks into his second term. Truman's stunning come-from-behind victory in the 1948 election showed how ordinary Americans, perhaps, appreciated his personal qualities of integrity and straightforwardness as McCullough notes, because he was one himself. Most Americans in the 1950s did not expect that Harry Truman would become one of their most highly regarded presidents.

Truman's assets were his firm personal principles, his honesty, humility, intellectual integrity, and homespun character, and his ability to speak plain truths. Regardless of his lack of preparation, these qualities enabled him to face the challenges of the cold war, make portentous decisions, and retain the respect of the electorate, who accepted him as one of them. He could be magnanimous, as in his gesture of consulting with former President Herbert Hoover, long barred from the Roosevelt White House.

He could be intrepid, as in his determination to remove General Douglas MacArthur from command in Korea, in order to preserve the superiority of the civilian government over the military. In 1948 Truman won the most

unexpected election upset of the century. He ultimately prevailed. Truman succeeded Franklin D. Roosevelt as president before the end of World War II. He responded quickly to new challenges. Impulsive, he proved willing to make quick decisions when necessary.

Additionally, he took responsibility for his decisions. His slogan, “The Buck Stops Here”, is famous in American politics. Intellectual integrity is another area in which Truman’s values are evident. A chief strength of his was the ability to admit the need for help. By incorporating the strengths of his staff, Truman was able to make educated and well thought out decisions. He attempted to galvanize himself as a knowledgeable and effective leader. Acheson never ceased to be impressed that Truman had no trace of imperiousness about him and never let his ego to come between him and his job.

Truman’s handling of Palestine is another example of his effective leadership. The issue of whether or not to create a unified Jewish state was divisive and risky. Although he left the presidency in 1953 at low ebb in his popularity, his standing rose again over the years. After his death on December 26, 1972, he achieved the status of folk hero. Songs proclaimed: “America Needs You Harry Truman.” A Broadway play, “Give ‘Em Hell, Harry” was based on his life story, and biographies of him became best sellers.

Truman’s legacy has become clearer and more impressive in the years since he left office. Most scholars admit that the President faced enormous challenges domestically, internationally, and politically. While he occasionally

failed to measure accurately the nation's political tenor and committed some significant policy blunders, Truman achieved notable successes.

Domestically, he took important first steps in civil rights, protected many of the New Deal's gains, and presided over an economy that would enjoy nearly two decades of unprecedented growth. In foreign affairs, the President and his advisers established many of the basic foundations of America foreign policy, especially in American-Soviet relations, that would guide the nation in the decades ahead. On the whole, Truman is currently celebrated by the public, politicians, and scholars alike.

REFERENCE

McCullough, D. (1992). Truman. New York: Simon & Schuster.