

Marshall plan assignment

[History](#)



The solidification of Cold War tensions in Europe is, for the sake of this essay, the point at which it was clear that relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were unworkable as their ideological differences became increasingly polarized. Although the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall plan were considered by the American administration as ‘two halves of the same walnut’ to fully explore the consequences of the American policies one must look at them separately.

The Truman Doctrine heralded a new era for the US foreign policy through the definition of containment and the introduction of formal institutions such as the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense. This showed a move towards a more assertive foreign policy, arguably provoking the Soviet Union and escalating tensions between the two powers. Similarly the Marshall Plan’s encroachment on what the USSR saw as their sphere of influence through their offer of financial aid triggered a threatened Soviet Russia to intensify their authority over satellite states.

Their dramatic actions in Czechoslovakia can be seen as evidence of the importance of the role the Marshall Plan played in escalating tensions in Europe as these events can be viewed as a direct consequence of changing US foreign policy. However to fully appreciate the complexities of the issues covered when looking at the development of Cold War tensions in Europe one must place these events in a wider contextual framework. To ignore the political, social or economic issues which form the background of this timespan would be to oversimplify the issue.

It is therefore imperative to look at the situation from both US and Soviet viewpoints whilst considering the issues the nations were dealing with domestically. By 1951 Europe was undeniably divided, with two power blocs emerging, east and west. Whilst the formulation of these tensions had originated from a shared history dating back to before the war, the culmination of these tensions is undeniably linked to both the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall plan as they ‘solidified divisions of Europe’.

The Truman Doctrine, through the role it played in outlining the Soviet Union as the enemy and defining the American policy of containment, was a hugely significant step towards the crystallization of Cold War Tensions in Europe.

The Truman Doctrine argued that, after Britain’s deed to reduce its participation in aiding Greece, congress must ‘immediately extend financial aid’ because of the threat of ‘communist domination’. However, far from solely asking for economic and military aid for Greece and Turkey the doctrine took on the role of calling for the ‘global containment of communism’.

The combination of a definition of the United States’ foreign policy towards communism and the demonstration of their commitment through action did help the move towards a divided Europe. Furthermore it solidified and defined the ideology upon which US foreign policy was made. A key consequence of the Truman Doctrine was the changes it caused in the United States’ decision-making process. As Painter explains, the support elicited for the strategy of containment meant that American administrations were ‘able to act on their beliefs about the relationship between politics, economics and IIS security.’

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This signaled an era in which the US would base their foreign policy around their capitalist ideology, one completely at odds with the Soviet Union. These beliefs were strengthened by the introduction of new governmental institutions such as the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence agency and the Department of Defense arguably moving towards a more ‘ activist foreign policy’ presenting a clear threat to the USSR. Keenan, seen as the father of containment was a crucial figure in the emergence of Cold War tensions in Europe through his writings that inspired the Truman doctrine.

Whilst looking at the effects of the Truman Doctrine it is imperative that we look at the role Keenan took in not only promoting containment as a strategy of foreign policy but also defining the Soviet Union. From Moscow Keenan sent the ‘ Long Telegram’ suggesting that the USSR was an aggressive nation and that the only successful form of American foreign policy would be a long term strategy of containment. Keenan encouraged the US to view the Soviet Union as ‘ inherently expansionist and aggressive’, in effect suggesting that the USSR should be seen as the enemy.

While Keenan explained his actions as not ‘ directed at combating communism but restoration of economic health’ in Europe it is clear that his constant rhetoric describing the Soviet Union as a threat that needed to be contained did much to not only encouraging domestic fear and anti communist views but also to revoke the Soviet Union into changing its foreign policy. Keenan would further influence the escalation of tensions through the role he played in the Marshall Plan.

The Marshall Plan, like the Truman Doctrine, may not have intended to divide Europe, for a number of reasons this was the final outcome. Based around the ideas that 'The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want' the Marshall Plan was seen as necessary to avoid the spread of communism. The Marshall Plan was seen by the American administration as the 'next important step against the perceived Russian threat' as it was imperative to remove the misery and want which was rife in an economically ruined Europe.

However, to the USSR the Marshall plan was perceived quite differently, it was a western attempt to encroach on their sphere of influence. The Marshall Plan had far wider reaching consequences than simply supporting a recovering Europe economically. Through looking at the Soviet reaction to the Marshall Plan we see that it played a key role in the crystallization of Cold War tensions in Europe. The reaction to the Marshall plan by the Soviet Union marked a turning point in relations between east and west Europe as they served to split countries whose ideologies were drifting further apart.

As the Marshall Plan was arguably the spark set off the chain of events it can be seen as hugely important in the crystallization of Cold War tensions in Europe. Whilst the Truman doctrine may have put a strain on relations between America and the Soviet Union the Marshall Plan as Myriad, who guided the Economic Commission for Europe saw it, it would 'secure the iron curtain and bring on war'. The Marshall plan therefore seems to have been the point at which Europe was split as it presented to the nations of Europe the choice between the two great powers and their ideologies.

To revisionist historians such as Kola the Marshall plan served the purpose of bringing Soviet fears to the fore and thus increasing tensions. It is clear that the Marshall plan 'forced Stalin to reassess his stance towards East and West Europe' which escalated Cold War tensions. Many revisionist historians will argue that the Soviet reaction to the Marshall Plan was one natural for a country that felt weak and under attack. It could be argued that the Marshall Plan in the eyes of the USSR was a concerted attempt by the United States to undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe.

To Tabular and Kola it is therefore clear that it was the Marshall Plan that sparked the escalation of tensions. Whilst it could be argued that this was not the case as the Marshall Plan was open to Soviet participation Crockett shows that the US administration took steps to avoid communist participation in the plan. Keenan, who as aforementioned had been clear about his views on containment and the Soviet Union made sure that the plan 'be done in such a form that Russian satellites would either exclude themselves... R agree to abandon the exclusive orientation Of their economies'. This therefore encouraged divisions within Europe, as now there was a clear indication of whether or not the country subscribed to East or West ideologies. Furthermore many argue that the inclusion of Soviet states was due to a 'desire not to invite the charge that the ERP was an anti-communist measure' rather than a genuine offer of financial aid. One could therefore argue that it was not surprising that the plan caused tensions, as soviet inclusion was highly unlikely.

The extent to which the Soviet Union felt heartened can be seen through actions taken as a result of the Marshall plan, seen by historians such as <https://assignbuster.com/marshall-plan-assignment-essay-samples-2/>

Caddis as a turning point in the development of the Cold War. The Soviet Union now seemed to act on a wish to unite the communist parties around Eastern Europe through the introduction of organizations such as Comform. The Communist information Bureau can be seen as an attempt by Stalin to bring the communist parties around Europe under more soviet control.

Furthermore the Molotov Plan, seen by many as a Soviet version of the Marshall plan, aimed to provide financial aid for trundling economies that fell under soviet influence. The influence the Marshall Plan can be seen clearly through the introduction of the Molotov plan as it suggests that either Eastern European countries were so affected by their rejection of the Marshall Plan they needed a similar proposal or Stalin felt so threatened he felt the need to create his own version. However perhaps the most striking Soviet reaction to the Marshall plan was the events that took place in Czechoslovakia in 1948.

The impact can be illustrated in the fact that the only remaining non-communist leader in Eastern Europe was moved, shocking the United States and heightening the divisions between east and west, popularizing both powers. The Czech coup, in which the communist part, with strong Soviet support assumed total control over the Czech government and purged any non communist political figures. Furthermore the ‘Stabilization’ of both Czechoslovakia and Hungary societies due to fears brought about by the Marshall plan further intensified the differences between east and west.

Through the introduction of the acclimatization of farming, an emphasis on manufacturing and a suppression of opposition eastern European countries

Were forced to become more extreme in their politics, separating Europe and increasing Cold War tensions. The reaction by the US illustrated the impact of events in Czechoslovakia as they it aided the swift implementation of the Marshall Plan, the creation of West Germany and in under a year the creation of NATO. It is clear to see therefore that the Marshall Plan played a key role in escalating tensions between the east and west in Europe.

However, these views have been challenged. Although the impact of the combination of the Marshall Plan and he Truman Doctrine was undeniable in moving Europe towards a period of Cold War tensions the extent of their impact is a source of debate. The importance of the Marshall Plan is undermined by a number of issues that show that although it may have played an important role in the crystallization of Cold war tensions in Europe it was by no means the only influence.

Historians such as Crockett will point out the fact that one needs to consider the fact that both nations had hugely differing political styles and circumstances. The Soviet Union entered this period with ‘ enhanced prestige after playing a key role in defeating the Nazi’s possessed, through ruling communist parties, tight control over their sphere of influence. The united States however placed a much greater emphasis on the justification of their actions abroad through official documents and formal organizations, as they did not, as the communists did, have puppet rulers in foreign governments.

Therefore it could be argued that these differences in political style were the truly important factors in the consolidation of Cold War tensions rather than

particular events or policies. However, whilst the differing political styles may have been important these were long term issues that had a constant role in the diplomacy between the USSR and the US. It would be difficult therefore to argue that these played any decisive part in the crystallization of the tensions these differences helped to create.

Therefore it could be argued that actions such as the announcement of the Marshall Plan and documents such as the Truman doctrine were the real cause of the solidification of these tensions. One must look at this period of time not just as a chronological series of vents but place these events within the framework of the political, social and economic features also prominent at the time. Much of the post-revisionist historiography, with the benefit of hindsight, takes into account these complexities and sees the causes of Cold War tensions in Europe as far more diverse.

When these issues are taken into account we see that there was a host of issues at the time all culminating to solidify Cold War tensions in Europe. As aforementioned the Soviet Union entered the period with a new identity, that of a great power of the world. Both the LIST and the Soviet Union had to react to this change of order and historians such as David Reynolds will even argue that the Cold War was inevitable given the shared history between the two powers.

However although tensions may have been inevitable, as mentioned earlier, the solidification of these strains seems to revolve around the implementation of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan as they popularized the nations ideologies and pulled them further apart. As Crockett

explains revisionist historians view American economic expansionism for capitalist profits as at the heart of tensions between the United States and the USSR and it was the differences in the two nations ideologies that solidified divisions.

American determination to keep ' western Europe (as a) safe arena for international capitalism' was the fundamental force of strains between the US and the Soviet Union. The wording of President Truman's message to congress on March 12 1947 regarding US involvement in Greece and Turkey arguably shows the intertwined nature between American foreign policy and capitalist gains. In his address resurging congress to assist Greece and Turkey Truman refers to capital spent on the Second World War as an ' investment' in world freedom.

The document makes it clear that, to the US administration economic stability and freedom from communism are inextricably linked. The Marshall Plan can therefore be seen as the manifestation of these ideologies and therefore this argument suggests the Marshall Plan had an even greater influence. Furthermore the importance of the Truman Doctrine in heightening Cold War tensions in Europe is called into question as Painter points out Stalin did little or significantly support the efforts of the Greek communists.

Whilst some may argue that this because of the success of US aid, others would see it as undermining the significance of the Truman doctrine as Stalin only showed slight concern for the success of communist rebels in Greece. However this could be because of strains in Soviet relations with Yugoslavia

being a greater priority than the potential of a Greek communist uprising. Furthermore, although Soviet reaction to the Truman Doctrine may have shown reluctance to act on Stalin's part, US actions in Greece, Turkey and Iran showed their determination to maintain Western access to overseas trade zones.

The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan played an undeniable role in escalating Cold War tensions between 1945 and 1951. Although they may not have formed the basis of these tensions, which had built up in the post-war years, they seem to act as the nail in the coffin for US/Soviet relations. One could argue that as a result of the definition of not only their differences, but also the definition of the Soviet Union as aggressive and expansionist, the Truman Doctrine was issued in an era of hostility. The Marshall Plan further polarized European states as one either subscribed to Marshall aid, or didn't, in effect the Iron Curtain was drawn.

One must never overlook the issues that formed the basis of tensions between the US and the USSR as these similarly contributed to the crystallization of cold war tensions. At the crux of strains between the US and the USSR were the disparate ideologies the two nations held at the heart of their foreign policy and as a result the contrasting ways of looking at events and actions. This period sees the popularization of these ideologies and therefore the solidification between the two nations can be seen as inevitable.