



## Cabinet of the United States of America (1950)

### Introduction

In the face of rising Cold War tensions, the Cabinet of the United States under President Harry Truman must grapple with the new international order: the bipolar distribution of influence in which the world is dominated by two superpowers, the communist Soviet Union and the capitalist, democratic United States. Within this context, Truman's Cabinet must react to several pressing foreign policy crises, including rising tensions between North and South Korea and the remains of the Chinese Civil War. Furthermore, in their decision-making, Truman's Cabinet must consider domestic political ramifications and secure the Democratic Party's victory in November's midterm elections.

### Background Information

The Cabinet of the United States is composed of the highest-ranking officials in the executive branch of the U.S. government, each of whom administer their individual departments and act as general advisors to the current President, Harry Truman. The Cabinet was institutionalized based on an inference of Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. constitution, which states that the President may make appointments of "in the heads of Departments...as they think proper."<sup>1</sup> All members of the Cabinet thus serve at the pleasure of the President, who can dismiss them at-will. The President can appoint anybody he deems fit as a Cabinet-level official, though their appointments must also be confirmed by the Senate.<sup>2</sup>

The executive branch, which the Cabinet leads, is one of three branches of the U.S. government, whose role is to carry out laws. It serves in tandem with the legislative branch (Congress), which writes laws, and the judicial branch (the courts), which adjudicates disputes over laws.<sup>3</sup> The President does not have sole control over the actions of the U.S. government, and each branch has a series of checks and balances limiting the power of the others.<sup>4</sup>

Though the first Cabinet under President George Washington only contained four members—the Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of War and the Attorney General<sup>5</sup>—the Great Depression and New Deal era in the 1930s led to an expansion of the power of the federal government.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the Cabinet was expanded to encompass the new departments that had been created.<sup>7</sup> The growth of the United States involvement in foreign conflict has also caused an increase in the quantity and importance of high-level military positions. As the United States adjusts to its role as an international superpower, its executive branch, military, and bureaucracy will need to adapt to meet new, greater challenges. The most recent example of this was the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1947, which has the mandate of coordinating U.S. intelligence activities.<sup>8</sup>

The powers and responsibilities of the United States Cabinet are:

- To offer advice and counsel to the President on potential courses of action in response to short-term crises, taking into account both the domestic political and international consequences;
- To support and shape the agenda and goals of the administration in the long term;
- To carry out the orders assigned to its members by the President, including administering the various departments and bureaus of the United States government.

As a Cabinet leader, President Truman has been known to be bullish and antagonistic.<sup>9</sup> When he was elevated from Vice President to President after the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1945, he fired all but four of Roosevelt's department heads within four months of taking office.<sup>10</sup> Truman also made changes to the composition of the Presidential Cabinet, consolidating the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force under the Secretary of Defense Position.<sup>11</sup> He values personal loyalty and evaluates cabinet members' performance based not only on their competence, but their adherence to his needs and demands.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Truman has of the historically highest levels of turnover of any Presidential administration on a cabinet level.<sup>13</sup>

This specific meeting of officials will function as a Cabinet-level meeting, though non-Cabinet members will be present. Each official involved will serve as a member of an advisory committee essential to guiding President Truman's decisions as the year's events unfold.

### *World War II*

The significance of World War II to the United States in 1950 is mostly determined by the changing nature of mid-war and post-war alliances, and how the war reshaped the geopolitical order.<sup>14</sup>

World War II was caused in part by aggression from Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, which both sought to use military conquest to establish dominance over Europe and East Asia.<sup>15</sup> The site of this aggression, which catalyzed the beginning of the war, took place on September 1, 1939, when the Nazis invaded Poland after securing a pact of non-aggression from the Soviet Union and its General Secretary, Josef Stalin.<sup>16</sup> In response, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later.<sup>17</sup>

Germany's ideology and practice were based on its policy of racial superiority and, consequently, racial elimination and genocide. The Nazis and their leader, Führer Adolf Hitler, were driven by the concept of *lebensraum* ("living space"), which signified their desire to expand and purify all lands they encountered until eventually they "Germanized" the entire European continent, believing they were racially superior to all others.<sup>18</sup> As such, Nazi Germany systematically purged people they found inferior, including Jewish people, the Romani, homosexuals, and the disabled. Jewish people were especially targeted, with an estimated six million of them dying in a genocide known as the Holocaust.<sup>19</sup> The horrors of the

Holocaust and the Nazi regime would define World War II as one of moral and military proportions.

There were two opposing alliances in the war. The first was the Axis Powers, made up of Germany, Italy, and Japan, who formally allied by signing the Tripartite Pact in 1940. The second was the Allied Powers, composed of a “Big Three” of Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, aided by China and France (until it was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1940).<sup>20</sup> The United States, led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, joined the war in December of 1941, after the Japanese empire attacked Pearl Harbor, a naval base near Honolulu, Hawaii.<sup>21</sup> The Soviet Union was pushed to join the war on June 22, 1941, after being subject to a surprise invasion by Nazi Germany.<sup>23</sup>



FIGURE 1<sup>24</sup>

The entrance of the United States and the Soviet Union would prove pivotal to the outcome of World War II. The Nazi and Japanese empires found themselves spread thin, unable to deal with the superior force of the new entrants.<sup>25</sup> Nazi Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945, after losing the Battle of Normandy to the Allied invasion and liberation of northern France.<sup>26</sup> The fate of the Japanese empire was sealed in August 1945 after the United States ended the war by dropping two atomic bombs on Japan in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>27</sup> Imperial Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945.<sup>28</sup>

Despite their military alliance, the “Big Three” shared differing political aims and visions of the postwar order; these differences would lead to the rising tensions and eventual divide between the United States and the Soviet Union, the centerpiece of the Cold War. Throughout World War

II, Stalin was suspicious of Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, fearing that they would quash any of his attempts to expand Soviet influence in Eastern Europe once the war was over.<sup>29</sup> These suspicions would lead to disagreements between the leaders and would define the newly antagonistic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

The second of these meetings was the Yalta Conference, which took place from February 4 to 11, 1945. Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt agreed upon the terms of their occupation of Germany, where both Germany and Berlin, the capital city, would be divided into four zones of control under the United Kingdom, United States, Soviet Union, and France (FIGURE 2). Furthermore, the United States was able to secure the Soviet Union's commitment against Japan and an agreement between the three powers to see through the creation of the United Nations.<sup>31</sup>



FIGURE 2

This sense of potential cooperation fell apart at the Potsdam Conference, which was held from July 17 to August 2, 1945. By this time, Roosevelt had died and was succeeded by President Harry Truman. Churchill's Conservative government also lost its election to the Labour Party and new Prime Minister Clement Attlee halfway through the conference. The conditions on the ground had also changed; Germany's surrender was secured, creating a lack of a common enemy and urgent need for cooperation. Several disagreements arose at Potsdam.<sup>32</sup> Stalin wanted to extract extreme economic reparations from Germany. Truman did not want to demand a dramatic amount of reparations because he feared a repeat of the Treaty of Versailles, after which Germany's post-World War I economic destruction led to the rise of Hitler.

The future of Poland was also a significant point of contention throughout Potsdam and Yalta. Stalin insisted that the government he installed in Poland during the war — which the USSR occupied — remain in control of the territory. He also pushed for each of the Soviet Union's satellite republics to each receive their own votes at the United Nations. The Western powers complied with Stalin's demands, under the condition that elections were held in Poland. The West's capitulation to Soviet demands in Poland would further increase fear of communist expansion in Eastern Europe.

The end of the war, consequently, created two spheres of influence on the European continent

and the rest of the world, each led by one of the victors of World War II. On one side, the United States emerged from the war as an economic and military superpower.<sup>33</sup> On the other side, the USSR emerged from the war with an aura of prestige, having expanded its territory and number of satellites under its control. It also had one of the world's most powerful conventional land militaries. Each superpower was afraid of the other, leading to the formation of opposing international ideological and military blocs.<sup>34</sup>

### *The Cold War*

After the end of World War II, the U.S. and USSR's transition from allies to enemies was quick. On February 9, 1946, Josef Stalin made his first radio address since the war had ended in a speech known as his "Election Speech." Stalin argued that the First and Second World Wars were a result of the crises of capitalism, claiming that the communist social and economic system emerged victorious in World War II. A few weeks later, George Kennan, an American diplomat in the Soviet Union, sent his "long telegram" to the U.S. State Department, in which he wrote that "world communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue."<sup>35</sup> The telegram became the basis for the State Department's policy of containment, which supposed that the United States must prevent the spread of communism.<sup>36</sup> This tension was exacerbated in 1947, when President Harry Truman delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress in which he established the Truman Doctrine: the United States would provide political, military, and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from internal and external military opposition. The Truman Doctrine marked a foreign policy shift for the U.S. in which it committed directly to intervention, rather than isolation, in global affairs.

The symbolic divide between capitalist and communist states would eventually manifest. Winston Churchill articulated in his 1946 speech, "The Sinews of Peace," that "an iron curtain has descended across [Europe]."<sup>37</sup> Churchill rhetorically split Europe in two. To the West, there were the capitalist, democratic countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and France. Countries falling under this categorization would eventually form a military alliance in 1949 called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), in which each member committed themselves to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."<sup>38</sup> To the East, there was the Soviet Union and its satellite states, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary (the "Eastern Bloc"). These countries were united under a communist ideology and the central control of the USSR.

Eventually, the tensions between these two blocs would come to be known as the Cold War. This idea of a Cold War is significant because it underscores the multifaceted nature of the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup> This war was not only fought by each superpowers' respective militaries. Instead, it was characterized by a variety of tensions—like diplomatic hostility, espionage, propaganda—which fell short of open warfare. The tensions of the Cold War characterize the world's geopolitical power structure at this time. There is a bipolar

order, a situation in international relations in which two states—The U.S. and Soviet Union—are dominant in military, economic, and cultural capabilities.



FIGURE 3<sup>40</sup>

The Cold War was fought on several fronts around the world. The first significant one was Europe, specifically Germany, in the remains of World War II. The occupation configuration agreed upon at the Yalta Conference split Germany into four zones controlled by the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. On January 1, 1947, the United States and the United Kingdom decided to merge their zones of occupation, creating the Bizone.<sup>41</sup> The British and Americans sought to economically revitalize their zone of occupation, with a plan to eventually consolidate West Germany into its own independent state.<sup>42</sup> The Soviet Union was fearful of these plans, as they had twice been invaded by a German state and feared the ascent of a new one, especially one allied with the rival Western bloc.<sup>43</sup>

These tensions eventually erupted into the Berlin blockade, referred to by some historians as the first battle of the Cold War.<sup>44</sup> Only hours before the United States and the United Kingdom were set to release a new currency for West Germany, on June 24, 1948, Soviet authorities ordered their military to impose a blockade around the Western-occupied sectors of Berlin. This meant that West Berlin, situated in Soviet-controlled East Germany, was cut off from food, electricity, and supplies by road, water, and rail.<sup>45</sup> The United States and the United Kingdom would counter this with the Berlin Airlift. Thousands of aircraft brought thousands of tons of food and supplies to West Berlin until the blockade was lifted on May 12, 1949. The effects of this series of events were significant: the airlift was a defeat for the Soviets, as it hastened the independence plans for West Germany and the creation of NATO. Furthermore, the blockade laid down the iron curtain alluded to by Winston Churchill. The Cold War had finally boiled over.

## Current Situation

## *The Conflict in Korea*

The Korean peninsula is currently host to burgeoning tensions between North and South, plus the Eastern and Western blocs. These tensions have the potential to escalate into a larger conflict as disagreements become increasingly irreconcilable.



FIGURE 4<sup>46</sup>

Korea has long been a contested territory due to its strategically significant location. Situated as a peninsula separating the Yellow Sea from the Sea of Japan, it shares a border with the Manchuria region of mainland China and the Soviet Union, connecting these two powerful countries with islands in the Pacific Ocean and the rest of Southeast Asia.

The Korean peninsula had been subject to decades of occupation and exploitation prior to the Cold War, the Second World War, and the First World War. The Japanese empire defeated the Russian Empire in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and proved themselves to be the most dominant power in East Asia. As part of its victory, written in the Treaty of Portsmouth, the Empire pushed back the Russians from Korea and secured control of the territory as a protectorate. This protectorate status expanded to full settler colonization in 1910.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, from 1910 to 1945, Korea was a territory of the Japanese empire. As a colonizing power, Japanese rule over Korea was often brutal. The Japanese empire ruled directly through its military, crushing all signs of Korean dissent. During World War II, Koreans were forced to<sup>48</sup> work in Japanese factories and fight as soldiers for the Japanese army.<sup>49</sup>

The end of World War II saw the defeat of the Japanese empire and the Axis Powers in the Pacific theater. After the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, Korea was divided into two zones of occupation, one controlled by the Soviet Union to the north of the 38th parallel, and one controlled by the United States to the south.<sup>50</sup> The northern region of Korea was more industrialized than the south, because it had served as a base for the Japanese empire's war preparations.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, the south had a more developed agricultural sector, giving leftist causes more influence due to continuous debates between Japanese landlords and Korean



tenants.<sup>52</sup> This was a cause of concern for the U.S. planners, as they worried the Soviet Union's communist ideology would hold sway over the Koreans.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the USSR's favorable political situation, the U.S. government still attempted to assume control over Korea and the establishment of its independent government. It developed two different plans to maintain U.S. authority over Korea: one was to make Korea a trustee of the United States, headed by the State Department; the other was to create a U.S.-led governmental and administrative agency in Korea, headed by the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea.<sup>54</sup> Both these plans were considered unfeasible and unable to be carried out due to Soviet and Korean disapproval of them.<sup>55</sup>

Consequently, the United States went to the United Nations to achieve their aims. On November 14, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 112. It called for a general election in Korea under the supervision of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), a new body created to oversee the elections.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet Union opposed this plan and would not allow the UNTCOK to access the zone of Korea it occupied. In spite of this development, the UN still chose to hold elections in the parts of Korea where the UNTCOK was allowed access, south of the 38th parallel.

The lead-up to these elections was tumultuous. The United States chose to support Syngman Rhee for President, the leader of the Korean Provisional Government-in-exile during Japanese imperial control. He was a right-wing politician who supported many of the same values as the U.S. government, including free-market capitalism, anti-communism, and a strong federal government. He lived in the United States for many years, which made communication with Western officials easier.<sup>57</sup> Many Koreans opposed Rhee, who was viewed as another puppet of foreign control. Some also feared that Rhee's anti-communist stance would make reconciliation of the Korean peninsula under one government impossible and would further inflame tensions with the Soviet Union. Non-communist nationalists to the left of Rhee were also excluded from government, further diminishing the legitimacy of Rhee to the Korean populace at-large.<sup>58</sup>

These elections occurred on May 10, 1948. Rhee's National Association (NAARKI) party only won 55 out of 200 available seats in the Korean Constitutional Assembly, with independents winning 85 of the seats. And in July, the Assembly ratified a new constitution deeply influenced by the U.S. Constitution and elected Syngman Rhee as the President of the Republic of Korea. This signaled the end of the American Military Government's occupation of South Korea.<sup>59</sup>

On the other side of the 38th parallel, the Provisional People's Committee of North Korea controlled political life, centralizing power in North Korea. The Committee was led by its Soviet-appointed chairperson, Kim Il-sung.<sup>60</sup> On March 23, 1946, Kim issued a 20-Point Platform specifying the desired economic, political, and cultural reforms for North Korea, including centralized price and market management, collectivized land reform, and state-controlled art and education.<sup>61</sup> This was followed by a series of land



reforms which confiscated land from Japanese organizations, landowners, and religious institutions and redistributed it to hundreds of thousands of households.<sup>62</sup>

In response to the declaration of the Republic of Korea, a “national election” was held and the Communist Party of Korea formally established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) on September 9, 1948. Kim il-Sung was made premier.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, the Korean peninsula hosted two governments, each of whom desired unification of the territory under their sole control.

Though both the RoK and DPRK exist, from the United States’ perspective, there is a concerning lack of balance between the two. At the time of the U.S. military exit, the North remained more politically stable, with Rhee facing opposition from the Korean Democratic Party.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, North Korean troops sent to China to fight on behalf of the communists had returned, and North Korea and the Soviet Union signed a major arms pact in 1949.<sup>65</sup> Domestic politics in the United States had thus far prevented Truman and his Cabinet from responding, due to Congress’ recently-passed tax cuts and smaller defense budget.

Tensions between the RoK and the DPRK have already begun to manifest in violent conflict. Beginning in 1948, DPRK-backed communist insurgencies and uprisings occurred in South Korea; these uprisings have led to tens of thousands of deaths and brutal RoK-based government suppression.<sup>66</sup> Border conflicts have also broken out along the 38th parallel, including one incident on August 4, 1949, when South Korean troops occupying territory to the north of the border were routed by the DPRK’s army.<sup>67</sup> There is debate in the United States intelligence community as to whether an invasion will or will not take place.<sup>68</sup> A report from the Central Intelligence Agency dated to March 10, 1950 even suggests that the North Koreans are planning to invade the South as soon as the month of June.<sup>69</sup>

This intelligence is uncertain and many executive branch officials are reluctant to trust it. Regardless, there are reasons to believe that the DPRK and its communist allies in the Soviet Union and China may see the RoK as a ripe target for invasion. On January 12, 1950, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson gave a speech to the Press Club in which he outlined the American “defensive perimeter” in Asia as running through Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Philippines, leaving Korea out of the stated range of U.S. defense. American resources are also spread thin. Post World War II, the United States significantly downsized its army, with defense spending as a percentage of GDP shrinking from 41% to 10% between the years of 1945 and 1949.<sup>70</sup> The United States has many reasons to be skeptical of increasing its presence, including the extent of U.S. commitment in Europe through the Marshall Plan, its need to deter further Soviet expansion in Europe, the diplomatic battle over whether or not to recognize the People’s Republic of China, and Syngman Rhee’s unpopularity among U.S. officials.<sup>71</sup>

Even still, without U.S. involvement, if the DPRK was to invade tomorrow, its victory would be all but certain. The Cabinet of the United States must choose whether communist Korea is

a fate worth preventing, as it didn't provide South Korea with heavy armor or artillery for the strict purpose of preventing South Korea from launching its own invasion.

### *The Situation in China*

While World War II was raging in Europe, China was fighting a war of its own against the Japanese empire. And once World War II ended, China began fighting a different war against itself. The results of this Chinese Civil War, which placed the communist People's Republic of China in power, have markedly shifted the geopolitical landscape in the context of the Cold War, consequences that the United States must adapt to.

The origins of the Chinese Civil War date back to the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the Chinese empire in 1912.<sup>72</sup> There were a variety of reasons that led to the Qing decline, notably Great Britain's victories over China in the Opium Wars that took place in the mid-1800s. The Qing dynasty was forced to cede its territory of Hong Kong to Great Britain and open its ports to foreign traders, which led to the domestic unrest and foreign exploitation of resources that marked the Qing's slow decline.<sup>73</sup> The collapse of the monarchical system left a power vacuum, and warlords and local leaders vied for regional control.<sup>74</sup>

The first phase of the Chinese Civil War began as a reaction to this instability. The looming threat of the Japanese empire convinced certain Chinese intellectuals of the country's relative weakness, leading to a period of self-scrutiny and political re-evaluation.<sup>75</sup> Two visions for the future of China were formed. The first of these was the nationalist viewpoint propagated by Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang (KMT) party. The KMT had originally been formed out of a Revolutionary Alliance of Chinese expatriates who opposed the Qing dynasty.<sup>76</sup> It was organized around the principles of nationalism, democracy, and economy, specifically, a socialist and anti-feudal economic system.<sup>77</sup> The second was the communist direction, anchored by the formation of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1920, whose members were drawn to the works of Karl Marx.<sup>78</sup>

The CPC merged into the KMT in 1923 under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen to form the First United Front. This was because the Soviet Union pledged assistance in Chinese unification under the condition that the KMT, the larger and more popular party at the time, would allow communists to join. This period of cooperation came to an end after the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925, after which Chiang Kai Shek rose to prominence as the leader of the KMT's left wing. He feared being usurped by the party's communist members, and began purging communists from the KMT through arrests and executions.<sup>79</sup> The communists who escaped to the south of China consolidated under the leadership of Mao Zedong and began a campaign of uprisings against Chiang Kai Shek and the KMT in the first phase of the Chinese Civil War.

The infighting was put on hold in 1937 when the Japanese empire invaded Manchuria, beginning the Second Sino-Japanese War and commencing World War II in Asia. A nominal alliance was created between the National and Communist forces while both were fighting the

Japanese. During the war, the KMT was considered the official government of China and thus the leadership of a “great power” state by U.S. officials, receiving resources from the United States government to help push back the Japanese.<sup>80</sup> However, the fighting left the Republic of China (ROC) splintered and demoralized, vulnerable to the Communist Party forces, which had grown considerably since the beginning of the war. Relying on Soviet aid and weapons left behind by the Japanese, the CPC was able to defeat the Republic of China’s army. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) with Beijing as its capital.<sup>81</sup> The Nationalist forces and KMT retreated to the island of Taiwan.<sup>82</sup>



FIGURE 5<sup>83</sup>

The declaration of the PRC was a shift in the geopolitical landscape, important in both the context of the development of East Asia in the absence of the Japanese empire and the spread of communism into new regions of the world. China had long been considered one of the world’s great powers, and for its government to fall under communist hands presents a significant threat to U.S. control and influence in the region. In signing the Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1945, the PRC and Soviet Union signaled their intentions to work together to proliferate the spread of communism, giving the USSR a key new ally in the Cold War.<sup>84</sup> Notably, the PRC could provide support for new communist governments hoping to gain control of Asian states, which in turn could determine the fate of Korea.

It has not been decided whether or not the United States is even willing to recognize the existence of the People’s Republic of China. The recognition of the PRC has been a significant battle in international diplomacy since it was first declared. According to official policy, the United States still supports Chiang Kai-shek’s government-in-exile of the Republic of China, currently located in Taipei, Taiwan.<sup>85</sup> In August 1949, the State Department leadership published a white paper on United States relations with China (called the “China White Paper”) which predicted the Communist victory and blamed the Nationalist defeat on Chiang and an ineffective military.<sup>86</sup> This white paper, and Truman’s China policy as a whole, was widely panned by critics of the administration. Truman has been blamed domestically for the “loss of China,” despite pouring \$2 billion of aid into the ROC since 1946.<sup>87</sup> The United States’ recognition of

the PRC would prove the critics correct and be a public admission that China is, in fact, “lost.”

The decision to continue supporting the ROC, however, has massive implications for international foreign policy and institutions of global governance. In the United Nations Security Council, the seat of China is currently occupied by the government of the Republic of China, rather than the PRC. This decision is controversial, and the Soviet government even staged a walkout at the United Nations Security Council after the UNSC refused to give China’s seat from the ROC government to the PRC.<sup>88</sup> Not all Western powers have followed the lead of the United States and agreed not to recognize the PRC. On January 5, 1950, the United Kingdom officially recognized the PRC; as a result, the ROC cut all diplomatic ties with the UK, leaving two of the most prominent Western states opposed on a key issue.<sup>89</sup>

It is important to recognize that the fighting between the PRC and the remains of the ROC has not yet subsided. Thousands of KMT soldiers have retreated to Burma and are continuing to launch attacks on Southern China, supported by the ROC government. Even so, on January 5, 1950, President Truman released a statement saying that the United States would not interfere in any territorial dispute regarding control of islands in the Taiwan Strait, nor would it intervene if the PRC were to attack the remains of the ROC in Taiwan. As the Nationalists make their final stand, the United States must decide whether or not it is willing to lose China for good.<sup>90</sup>

### *The Red Scare*

The citizens of the United States are gripped by a fear of communism. American political leaders are using their power to promulgate these fears, telling their constituents that there are subversive communist influences in their lives.<sup>91</sup> There are conspiracy theories stating that communists could be lurking everywhere, hiding in secret, spying on Americans and attempting to convince ordinary people to also become communists. This paranoia is called the Red Scare.

Much of the provocation surrounding the Red Scare is based on the expanding Soviet espionage movement, causing Americans to fear that their neighbors are foreign spies working on behalf of the Committee for State Security (KGB), the USSR’s central security agency. Both the United States and Soviet Union are using their intelligence agencies to gain information on the other’s plans and actions, hoping to secure an advantage in the Cold War. This information can be gathered by using surveillance techniques, like paying informers, using double-agents, stealing documents, intercepting communications, and using secretly-placed recording devices known as ‘bugs.’<sup>92</sup> Agents on both sides of the Cold War are also assigned to different disruptive missions, like assassinating important political figures, conducting sabotage operations, and spreading disinformation and propaganda on behalf of their governments.

The Red Scare is a significant force in public life and, consequently, political life. Politicians such as Senator Joseph McCarthy, a right-wing Republican from Wisconsin, have mobilized around this issue. Senator McCarthy claimed in a speech to the Ohio County Women’s Republican Club in West Virginia that 205 members of Truman’s State Department are “known

communists.”<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, in this speech, entitled “Enemies From Within,” McCarthy insinuated that the presence of these communists is known to the Truman administration, and Truman and the State Department have refused to do anything about it.<sup>94</sup>

Despite McCarthy’s inability to provide evidence backing his claims, his statements incited the fears that many Americans already held. The rise of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Republic of China, and the lurking potential for communism to spread to Korea and the rest of East Asia have made communism a potent threat in the American mind.

“McCarthyism,” as this trend is called, has the potential to grow into an even more potent political force. The House of Representatives has already instituted the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), whose job is to investigate and remove subversive communist influences within the United States.<sup>96</sup> HUAC was made a standing committee of the United States Congress in 1945. Its responsibilities include recommending legislation to the House, investigating areas of concern, and trying and sentencing subjects they deem worthy of taking to court.<sup>97</sup>

HUAC has mostly been focused on communist influence in Hollywood and the media through its famous Hollywood blacklist, but it has the potential to grow its influence to the political sphere. Moreover, it is rumored McCarthy is looking to expand anti-communist operations to the Senate by forming a HUAC-equivalent Senate subcommittee he controls.<sup>98</sup> Though both the House and Senate are controlled by the Democratic Party, politicians looking to capitalize on the Red Scare to increase their power could easily point fingers and turn on Truman’s administration.

### *The Midterm Elections*

The issues plaguing the Truman administration all could have a significant influence on the midterm election, which is scheduled to take place on November 7, 1950.<sup>99</sup> At the beginning of his term, Truman announced an ambitious domestic policy agenda, which he coined the “Fair Deal.” The initial Fair Deal encompassed a variety of liberal proposals, such as expanding social security access, increasing the minimum wage, developing a national health insurance program, and passing a housing rights bill.<sup>100</sup> However, conservatives in both the Republican and Democratic parties have severely limited what Truman has been able to pass, preventing the expansion of the welfare program. Alongside his foreign policy failings, such as the “loss” of China and expansion of the Soviet Union’s power, the Democratic party could lose a significant number of seats in both the House and the Senate this coming fall.

If the Republicans were to gain a majority in either house of Congress, Truman’s ability to act independently in the foreign and domestic policy realms would be stifled, giving Republicans the means to block congressional legislation supporting Truman’s agenda. The Democrats have not lost a chamber of Congress since 1934. A loss of a majority or even a few seats would lessen Truman’s power as the leader of his own party and could spell his eventual defeat in the 1952

Presidential election. Members of Truman's Cabinet must consider that every action they take will have ramifications for the upcoming election and they must protect Democratic congressional seats at all costs.

### **Possible Solutions**

The Cabinet of the United States has a variety of approaches to the political issues it faces. Until this point, the Truman administration has largely encouraged a non-militaristic approach to Cold War politics. It has opted to stay out of the fighting in Asia, adopting statements that leave Korea out of the U.S. defensive perimeter and claim non-intervention in the Taiwan Straits and Chinese Civil War. Instead, the United States has opted to use their diplomatic power to place Syngman Rhee as President in South Korea through UN elections and economic power to monetarily support their allies such as Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang.

This approach may soon be changing. National Security Council Paper NSC-68 ("United States Objectives and Programs for National Security") is a top-secret report that has just been completed by the State Department's Policy Planning Staff on April 7, 1950.<sup>101</sup> This report holds that the most pressing threat of the Soviet Union is drawn from its "hostile design," as the Soviet Union will be looking to expand its atomic capabilities, its military power, its sphere of influence, and the territories it controls.<sup>102</sup> The communist doctrine holds that the USSR will not be victorious until communism has captured the world, causing a global revolution. Because of this, the United States must react in-kind.

The paper calls for a complete re-evaluation of the United States' entire strategic approach to the Cold War. The United States is the only remaining international superpower with the ability to combat the Soviet Union's influence in the Cold War's geopolitical order. Consequently, NSC-68 advocates the policy of "containment," in which the United States should act to prevent Soviet and communist expansion as much as possible. NSC-68 also recommends increased U.S. military expansion to combat the USSR's rising forces, increasing defense spending from \$13 billion USD to \$50 billion USD. The United States should rapidly expand its conventional military forces and atomic stockpile, including developing the first hydrogen bomb. In total, this State Department report finds that military intervention and growth will be necessary to halt the spread of communism, as the Soviet Union will not be amenable to curbing its expansion by diplomatic means.

This policy recommendation marks an extreme departure from previous foreign policy initiatives, and Truman's Cabinet must decide whether or not to adopt NSC-68's suggestions and engage in military intervention. The U.S. Cabinet faces a variety of crises directly relating to NSC-68, especially the tense and violent situation on the Korean peninsula, and may find themselves pushed into military action regardless of their initial intentions. Truman's administration must decide whether de-escalation of the Korean conflict is possible and worth attempting, or if the military solution must be accepted and prepared for.

Members of Truman's Cabinet must also consider the expanding influence of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations when deciding upon foreign policy strategy. The United Nations was initially created to prevent inter-state wars such as World War II. However, the UN is currently dominated by the United States and its allies, as China's Security Council seat is occupied by the Kuomintang's representatives and the Soviet Union is boycotting the organ altogether. If the United States seeks international support for its actions, it may be able to rely upon its allies in the UNSC and NATO and should seek to protect its influence in these organizations at all costs.

Overall, the most prominent question facing the Cabinet of the United States is related to its strategic approach to the Cold War. Should the United States continue its less-involved, but more peaceful program of espionage, outside funding and aid, and diplomatic pressure? Or should it shift to military intervention? The choice could determine whether or not the United States wins the Cold War and whether or not Truman's administration stands to serve another term.

### **Bloc Positions**

#### *Hawk*

Hawks are the U.S. Cabinet's most fervent anti-communists. Their policy positions revolve around supporting both internal and external measures the Cabinet can take to quash the spread of communism, including domestic security and loyalty initiatives and military mobilization against the Soviet Union. They are not afraid of being antagonistic towards communist states and the Soviet Union and even hope to use this antagonism to gain support from constituents, using Red Scare public fears to increase governmental power and support for Truman's administration.

However, hawks must consider the potential negative ramifications to their strategy. Direct refusal to recognize communist governments, such as the People's Republic of China, could have long-term diplomatic consequences that prevent the two countries from ever reaching reconciliation. Furthermore, military intervention poses serious risks. Committing troops to Korea could cause backlash from American pacifists and states hoping to maintain post-war peace. War is also a significant investment of money and resources for a fight the United States may not be able to win, and a loss may look worse for the Truman administration than not intervening at all.

#### *Dove*

Doves are members of the U.S. Cabinet hoping to preserve post-war peace and will only revert to military measures as a last resort, in response to the security of the United States being directly violated. Their policy positions include using U.S. allies through intergovernmental organizations such as the UN to pressure and outnumber communist opponents, alongside using espionage and funding for communist military opponents without the United States' direct intervention. They also seek to assuage public fears of communist propaganda and espionage,



rather than propagate and take advantage of them.

Doves must also consider the potential consequences of their foreign policy and anti-communist outlook. The dove perspective is in direct contradiction to the conclusions of NSC-68 and the State Department's proposed approach to the Cold War. Diplomatic or covert actions may not be able to stop the advances of the Soviet Union and communism, and refusing military involvement would show weakness on the part of the United States and the Truman organization. Additionally, the dove approach may fall prey to Truman's Republican political opponents, who could criticize the administration for not taking a hard enough stance on communism and continuing failed policies that "lost" China.

### Questions to Consider

- What actions should the U.S. government take to assuage the situation in Korea? Is military intervention on the Korean peninsula inevitable? Should the United States be willing to stoop to military measures to advance the spread of communism in Korea?
- Should the United States continue its policy of recognizing the Republic of China instead of the People's Republic of China? Is China "lost"?
- What actions and policies should the U.S. Cabinet adopt to ensure a Democratic victory in the midterm elections? What are the greatest risks facing Truman and the Democratic party?
- Should the United States take preemptive measures to prevent a North Korean invasion of the South, such as bolstering the South Korean Army? Should it seek to maintain its position of control over the South Korean government through its superior military resources or attempt to make South Korea's army more self-sustainable?

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