But Allied pressures did not motivate U.S. actions. Fear and opportunity lay behind American actions: fear that the Soviets might otherwise gain control of much of Eurasia without war unless the United States went on the offensive, and opportunity in knowing that the United States still had the power and wealth to defeat communism, contain Soviet power, and revive democratic capitalism. Once these beliefs prevailed in Washington policymaking circles, prospective allies were able to exert leverage in Europe and beyond.[204] Very soon thereafter, Truman and his advisers decided to support France in its war against communist-led insurgents in Indochina. The struggle for the soul of mankind was already assuming global dimensions.

Ideology, Personality, and the International System

Truman and Stalin became locked in a worldwide struggle, yet the shape of the struggle was not predetermined. Initially, both men saw reason to collaborate with their ideological adversaries. Both men grasped that national self-interest could be served through cooperative arrangements. As much as each leader preferred a world ordered along lines of either democratic capitalism or communism, neither initially believed that postwar reconversion, reconstruction, or security necessitated confrontation. Indeed, both men had reason to believe and did think that immediate goals could be served by containing competition and modulating conflict.

But the Cold War came, and it engulfed the world. Why?

Truman and Stalin could and did articulate the reasons for national self-restraint. They could and did warn friends and potential allies not to fuel the suspicions of sensitive and powerful adversaries. But they could not control their own fears and instincts, their passions and aspirations. The structure of the international system and their ideological mind-sets overcame their initial desire to sustain their nations' collaboration.

The condition of the international system engendered fears and opportunities. At the end of the war, international society was astir with demoralized peoples yearning for a better future after decades of depression, war, genocide, and forced migration. In the center of Europe and in northeast Asia the defeat of Germany and Japan left huge vacuums of power. In time—and not a very long time, contemporaries assumed—the occupations would end and

the Germans and Japanese would reconstitute their governments and political economies. They would then decide how they would configure themselves in the international system, but their future trajectory was a huge, unsettling question mark. Elsewhere in the world—in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East—local leaders and indigenous elites felt emboldened to seek independence as they witnessed their colonial masters' strength erode. They were inspired by the rhetoric of freedom and the affirmations of the principle of national self-determination. They wanted to modernize their countries, overcome the humiliations of dependency, and extinguish the misery that came with poverty. Would they choose free enterprise and liberal democracy, or planned economies and the dictatorship of the proletariat?

Stalin and Truman had to make sense of these realities, to integrate them into belief systems that comported with their rational calculations of national self-interest, the exigencies of domestic politics, and the aspirations and sensibilities of potential friends and clients. They were agents of change and shapers of international history. But they were enveloped by structure and belief.

Stalin had an immense task of reconstruction ahead within the Soviet Union and confronted huge uncertainties abroad. Germany and Japan were defeated, but they would recover, as they had before, and they would have to be dealt with. Britain and America had been partners in the war, but they were also potential rivals and they could not be trusted. If there were challenges, there were also opportunities. Soviet armies were spread across Eastern Europe and parts of northeast Asia. Stalin had a unique opportunity to secure his borders and control Russia's periphery for the indefinite future. Free elections in many of the nations occupied by the Red Army would, he knew, bring in anti-Soviet governments. Why permit them? Yet free elections in Western Europe and self-determination in the colonial world offered considerable advantages.

Stalin had to balance incentives to cooperate and temptations to compete. More than anything else Stalin wanted to protect Soviet Russia against the revival of German and, secondarily, Japanese power, goals mandated by tradition and experience, by strategic necessity and national revenge. After World War II, no Russian or Soviet leader could forsake the opportunity to control the periphery and to shape developments in Germany and Japan. The international landscape was permissive. No nation existed that could

contain Russian expansion; the vacuums could be filled to secure long-term ambitions.

Marxist-Leninist thinking lurked in Stalin's actions. Cooperation with capitalist countries might be possible, indeed desirable, at least in the short term, but it was not likely to endure. Capitalist wars might engulf the U.S.S.R., as had just occurred, or, more likely, capitalists might again seek to crush the Bolshevik experiment. Even while he confided to Polish communists that he was not ruling out agreement with the United States, Stalin believed, not without cause, that Washington was seeking to use its atomic monopoly "to intimidate us and force us to yield in contentious issues concerning Japan, the Balkans, and reparations." Likewise, he thought the United States was trying to maneuver its way into Eastern Europe and was hoping to divide Russia from its newfound allies in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. Beware of this, he told Polish leaders.[205]

Suspicion pulsated through all his transactions. Capitalists would trick, deceive, and try to crush communists. Don't accept the invitation to go to London, he warned his Polish comrades in 1945. "I assure you they are not inviting you for a good purpose. . . . There is a group of complete rascals and ruthless murderers in the Intelligence service who would fulfill any order given to them."[206] Marxist-Leninist thinking about the world inclined Stalin to exaggerate the dangers both of American atomic diplomacy and of Anglo-American espionage, which was occurring in the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and even within Soviet Russia's western borderlands. Knowing the magnitude of discontent and the possibilities for widespread unrest, Stalin let his Bolshevik mentality and personal paranoia take over. He accepted the division of Europe into two camps as soon as he was convinced that the Americans were on the offensive, as they seemed to be when they announced the Truman Doctrine, articulated a program for European recovery, and orchestrated plans for the revival of the economies of Germany and Japan. Marxist-Leninist theory provided Stalin with no blueprint for a cold war, but it did give an explanation for the actions of capitalist adversaries and did outline a vision of endless possibilities for communist advancement in the third world.

Truman could not but fear, and he, too, had to act, although he did not seek a cold war. Stalin might not be seizing every opportunity to expand, as intelligence analysts repeatedly pointed out, and might be smart enough to

back down when resisted, but he made enough aggressive moves to intensify Truman's anxieties. Just a few years before, other totalitarian foes had made menacing signs and then, unchecked, had declared war on the United States and dared to conquer much of the world. Why wait to take action, Truman thought, when America's wealth and power enabled it to act wisely and swiftly, if provocatively, to promote Europe's recovery, coopt western Germany and Japan, lift morale among dispirited peoples, and ignite hope in free-enterprise democracy?

Truman was a straightforward man and saw things in black and white. What he saw now was the incipient rise of another totalitarian power with an expansionist ideology. He was motivated not by Stalin's brutality—indeed he rarely talked about it—but by the challenge he saw to America's way of life. Our foreign policy, he said, "is the outward expression of the democratic faith we profess."[207]

Inaction or retreat meant that the American way of life would be endangered not simply abroad, but also at home. It meant that prospective allies would be abandoned and their resources and manpower relinquished to a potential adversary. Should this happen, Truman warned, "it would impose upon us a much higher level of mobilization than we have today. It would require a stringent and comprehensive system of allocation and rationing in order to husband our smaller resources. It would require us to become a garrison state, and to impose upon ourselves a system of centralized regimentation unlike anything we have ever known."[208] The president understood that the distribution of power in the international system had immense ramifications for democratic capitalism in the United States.

The structure of the international system intersected with the beliefs of human agents to produce the Cold War. Truman wanted to be sure that power centers such as Western Europe, West Germany, and Japan were kept out of Stalin's grasp. But these efforts had to be supplemented with additional initiatives. As Stalin turned eastward and southward in accord with Marxist-Leninist thinking about opportunities for communist advancement, Truman and his advisers realized that the sources of raw materials, investment earnings, and markets of the industrialized democracies in the third world had to be preserved. "Curiously enough," Kennan wrote to Secretary of State Marshall in December 1948, "the most crucial issue of the moment in our struggle with the Kremlin is probably the problem of Indonesia."[209]

A world in turmoil, where decolonization and revolutionary nationalism were embedded realities, meant that the Cold War could not be contained in Europe and northeast Asia. The lure of future victories in distant lands tempted Stalin; the fear of losses there agonized U.S. officials. In their very first national security strategy statement, approved by the president in December 1948, Truman's advisers explained their thinking: Soviet domination of Eurasia, they said, "whether achieved by armed aggression or by political and subversive means, would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States."[210]

Believing that "Communist ideology and Soviet behavior clearly demonstrate that the ultimate objective of the USSR is the domination of the world," Truman and his aides agreed that containment would not suffice. Their first objective, they said, was "to reduce the power and influence of the USSR to limits which no longer constitute a threat to the peace, national independence and stability of the world family of nations." Their second goal was "to bring about a basic change in the conduct of international relations by the government in power in Russia."[211]

In 1948, Stalin and Truman set forth the visions and the ambitions that would drive their nations for the next forty years. They could not do otherwise in an international order that engendered so much fear and so much opportunity.