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The Motivations Behind the Diplomacy of the Marshall Plan: An Analysis on U.S. Foreign Policy in a Post-War Economy

Abstract:

The European Recovery Program, most commonly known as the Marshall Plan, implemented an American relief initiative to aid Western Europe economically in the aftermath of World War II. Through the European Recovery Program, the United States donated over \$13 billion in economic assistance to help rebuild war-torn regions. The Marshall Plan has been called one of America's finest moments in foreign policy. Many credit the Marshall Plan with Europe's speedy post-war recovery and even argue that Europe's success would not have happened without its initial aid from the United States. However, in some cases, America's involvement in Europe was critically analyzed not as humanitarian relief, but as harmful involvement. Some countries were skeptical of U.S. involvement believing that the United States was establishing a monopoly by making European countries dependent on their aid. Furthermore, the economic and political motivations behind the Marshall Plan also contributed to increased doubt in America's generosity. By examining the primary sources of George C. Marshall and Harry S. Truman, the ulterior motives behind the Marshall Plan shall be revealed. Additionally, by consulting with scholarly secondary sources, varied perspectives and analyses on the underlying reasons for the generosity of the Marshall plan will provide clarity and add a modern perspective to this discussion. Numerous factors contributed to the American policy known as the Marshall Plan; however, American intervention in Europe stemmed from three core motivating factors: the economic ramifications on America as a result of a war-torn Europe, the humanitarian conviction to offer assistance to those in need, and the desire to pursue policies of containment in order to prevent the spread of Communism and restore peace.