

“culture” itself, which since the New Deal had become linked in the minds of conservatives to all manner of unsavory leftists, drew resistance from some quarters.⁴⁶ Resounding Republican victories in the mid-term congressional elections of 1946, in which the G.O.P. gained control of the Senate and House of Representatives for the first time in more than a decade, placed the future of American cultural diplomacy in limbo.

The escalation of the Cold War the following year, however, changed the underlying political calculus. Increasingly, American policymakers fretted about growing Soviet influence around the globe and questioned the lack of a coordinated U.S. effort to challenge and correct Soviet lies or effectively counter criticism of U.S. racial discrimination. The martial rhetoric used by Truman in his address to Congress on the crisis in Greece and Turkey cast the emerging U.S.-Soviet rivalry as a battle of ideals and prompted supporters of cultural diplomacy to pitch their programs as “psychological warfare” to former skeptics. Nevertheless, opposition persisted.

Representative Forest Harness, an Indiana Republican, remained concerned that the State Department’s “Government propaganda” techniques, originally developed for foreign audiences, might be directed at the American people, a prospect “not only disapproved by the conscience of representative government, but [also] positively unlawful.”⁴⁷ Fully aware of the anti-democratic overtones of the word “propaganda” and eager for congressional appropriations, supporters within the State Department, at least publicly, continued to apply the neutral term “information” to both overt and covert U.S. campaigns to influence global public opinion. In this politically charged atmosphere, U.S. cultural diplomacy survived by emphasizing its utility as a weapon to match Soviet propaganda efforts.

Truman first endorsed the new direction in U.S. foreign policy when he signed the United States Information and Education Exchange Act, better known as the **Smith-Mundt Act**, into law on January 27, 1948. In the next administration, the newly created **United States Information Agency (USIA)** would serve as “a national foreign information program in time of peace and as the essential nucleus for psychological warfare in periods of national emergency or the initial stages of war.”⁴⁸ As the Cold War intensified, defense and foreign policy experts stressed the size, sophistication,

and reach of the Soviet propaganda machine, and it was consistently cited—and later exaggerated—to press for the expansion and consolidation of America’s information program.⁴⁹

Spurred by the Korean crisis amid mounting domestic pressure to counter Soviet propaganda, Truman called for a “campaign of truth” to “promote the cause of freedom against the propaganda of slavery” in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 20, 1950.⁵⁰ For some conservative critics of the Truman administration, the president’s assertive message was a welcome departure from the policy of containment, which one Republican Senator had derided as “pantywaist diplomacy.”⁵¹ The USIA stocked American embassies with magazines and pamphlets, produced a number of documentary films, and sponsored goodwill tours by notable Americans, including a number of jazz musicians. Truman’s “Campaign of Truth” demonstrated America’s resolve to address the cultural dimensions of the Cold War.

The Early Cold War in Asia

Decolonization and Independence

The focus of American and Soviet leaders on Europe in the immediate postwar period should not obscure the global dimensions of the early Cold War. World War II fundamentally undermined European colonialism in Africa and Asia by straining or removing foreign regimes and bolstering nationalist movements. While the colonial regimes of Britain and France remained intact at the conclusion of the war, both had begun to crumble. Revolutionary leaders in Indonesia and Vietnam declared independence shortly after Japan’s surrender in August 1945, inaugurating bloody wars against their former European colonial masters that would drag on for years to come. India and Pakistan, partitioned from the former British Raj, achieved full independence in 1947.

Over the next three decades, hundreds of new nations followed suit as colonized peoples in Asia and Africa continued to gain independence at a rapid pace. From 1957 to 1962 alone, twenty-five new states formed.⁵² **Decolonization** made the newly formed nations of the so-called “**Third World**,” also called the **Global South**, a major force in international affairs and a battleground for the Cold War. Indeed, almost all the actual fighting of the Cold War took place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These areas suffered environmental