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possibles.⁵⁴ Proving Ground for U.S. Development Programs: Many of the operational methods and programs devised and tested under the Marshall Plan became regular practices of later development efforts. For example, the ECA was established as an independent agency with a mission in each participating country to ensure close interaction with governments and the private sector, a model later adopted by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Unlike previous aid efforts, the Plan promoted policy reform and used commodity import programs and counterpart funds to ease adoption of those reforms and undertake development programs, a practice of USAID programs in later decades. The Marshall Plan also launched the first participant training programs bringing Europeans to the United States for training and leveraged private sector investment in recipient countries through the use of U.S. government guarantees. Hundreds of American economists and other specialists who implemented the Marshall Plan gained invaluable experience that many later applied to their work in developing countries for the ECA's successor foreign aid agencies. Critiques of the Marshall Plan Not everyone agrees that the Marshall Plan was a success. One such appraisal was that Marshall Plan assistance was unnecessary. It is, for example, difficult to demonstrate that ERP aid was directly responsible for the increase in production and other quantitative achievements noted above. Critics have argued that assistance was never more than 5% of the GNP of recipient nations and therefore could have little effect. European economies, in this view, were already on the way to recovery before the Marshall Plan was implemented.⁵⁵ Some analysts, pointing out the experimental nature of the Plan, agree that the method of aid allocation and the program of economic reforms promoted under it were not derived with scientific precision. Some claim that the dollar gap was not a problem and that lack of economic growth was the result of bad economic policy, resolved when economic controls established during the Nazi era were eventually lifted.⁵⁶ Even at the time of the Marshall Plan, there were those who found the program lacking. If Marshall Plan aid was going to combat communism, they felt, it would have to provide benefits to the working class in Europe. Many believed that the increased production sought by the Plan would have little effect on those most inclined to support communism. In congressional hearings, some Members repeatedly sought assurances that the aid was benefiting the working class. Would loans to French factory owners, they asked, lead to higher salaries for employees?⁵⁷ Journalist Theodore H. White was another who questioned this "trickle" (now called the "trickle down") approach to recovery. "The trickle theory had, thus far," White wrote in 1953, "resulted in a brilliant recovery of European production. But it had yielded no love for America and little diminution of Communist loyalty where it was entrenched in the misery of the continental workers."⁵⁸ In addition, many did not want the United States to appear to be assisting colonial rule. Considerable concern was expressed that the aid provided to Europe would allow these countries to maintain their colonies in Africa and Asia. The switch in emphasis from economic development to military development that began in the third year of the Plan was also the subject of criticism, especially in view of the limited time frame originally allowed for the aid program. A staff member of the Senate Appropriations Committee's Special Subcommittee on Foreign Economic Cooperation believed that the original intent of the Marshall Plan could not be accomplished under these conditions.⁵⁹ The tactics employed to achieve Marshall Plan objectives were often questioned as well. "Much of our effort in France has been contradictory," reported the committee staffer. "On the one hand we have been working toward the abolition of trade barriers between European countries and on the other we have been fostering, or rebuilding, uneconomic industries which cannot survive unhampered international competition."⁶⁰ Another concern was the proportion of funding that went to the public rather than private sector. One contemporary writer noted that public investments from the Italian counterpart fund obtained twice the amount of assistance as did the private sector in that country. Another analyst has argued that the ECA promoted government intervention in the economy.⁶¹ In the 1950 authorization hearings, U.S. businessmen urged that assistance be provided directly to foreign business rather than through European governments. Only in this way, they said, could free enterprise be promoted in Europe.⁶² From its inception, some Members of Congress voiced fears that the ERP would have a negative effect on U.S. business. Some noted that the effort to close the trade gap by encouraging Europeans to export and limit their imports would diminish U.S. exports to the region. Amendments, most defeated, were offered to ERP legislation to ensure that certain segments of the private sector would benefit from Marshall Plan aid. That strengthening Europe economically meant increased competition for U.S. business also was not lost on legislators. The ECA, for example, helped Europeans rebuild their merchant marine fleets and, by the end of 1949, had authorized over \$167 million in European steel mill projects, most using the more advanced continuous rolling mill process that had previously been little used in Europe. As the congressional "watchdog" committee staff noted, "The ECA program involves economic sacrifice either in direct expenditure of Federal funds or in readjustments of agriculture and industry to allow for foreign competition."⁶³ In the end, the United States seemed to be willing to make both sacrifices. Lessons of the Marshall Plan The Marshall Plan was viewed by Congress, as well as others, as a "new and far-reaching experiment in foreign relations."⁶⁴ Although in many ways unique to the requirements of its time, analysts have attempted over the years to draw from it various lessons that might possibly be applied to present or future foreign aid initiatives. These lessons represent what observers believe were some of the primary strengths of the Plan:⁶⁵Strong leadership and well-developed argument overcame opposition. Despite growing national isolationism, polls showing little support for the Marshall Plan, a Congress dominated by budget cutters, and an election looming whose outlook was unfavorable to the President, the Administration decided it was the right thing to do and led a campaign—with national commissions set up and Cabinet members travelling the country—to sell the Plan to the American people. Congress was included at the beginning to formulate the program. Because he faced a Congress controlled by the opposition party, Truman made the European Recovery Program a cooperative bipartisan creation, which helped garner support and prevented it from becoming bogged down with private-interest earmarks. Congress maintained its active role by conducting detailed hearings and studies on ERP implementation. Country ownership made reforms sustainable. The beneficiaries were required to put together the proposal. Because the Plan targeted changes in the nature of the European economic system, the United States was sensitive to European national sovereignty. European cooperation was critical to establishing an active commitment from participants on a wide range of delicate issues. The collective approach facilitated success. Recovery efforts were framed as a joint endeavor, with the Europeans joining together in the CEEC to propose the program and the OEEC to implement key features, including collaborating to make grant allocation decisions and cooperating to lower trade barriers. The Marshall Plan had specific goals. Resources were dedicated to meeting the goals of increased production, trade, and stability. The Marshall Plan fit the objective. In the main, the Plan was not a short-term humanitarian relief program. It was a multiyear plan designed specifically to bring about the economic recovery of Europe and avoid the repeated need for relief programs that had characterized U.S. assistance to Europe since the War. The countries to be assisted, for the most part, had the capacity to recover. They, in fact, were recovering, not developing from scratch. The human and natural resources necessary for economic growth were largely available; the chief thing missing was capital. Trade supplemented aid. Aid alone was insufficient to assist Europe economically. A report in October 1949 by the ECA and Department of Commerce found that the United States should purchase as much as \$2 billion annually in additional goods if Europe was to balance its trade by the close of the recovery program. Efforts to increase intra-European trade, such as funding the European Payments Union, were meant to bolster bilateral efforts. Parochial congressional tendencies to put restrictions on the program on behalf of U.S. business were kept under control for the good of the program. American businessmen, for example, were not happy that the ECA insisted Europeans purchase what was available first in Europe using soft currency before turning to the United States. Technical assistance, including exchanges, while inexpensive relative to capital block grants, may have a significant impact on economic growth. Under the Marshall Plan, technical assistance helped draw attention to the management and labor factors hindering productivity. It demonstrated American know-how and helped develop in Europe a positive feeling regarding America. The long-term foreign policy value of foreign assistance cannot be adequately measured in terms of short-term consequences. The Marshall Plan continues to have an impact: in NATO, the OEEC, the European Community, the German Marshall Fund, in European bilateral aid donor programs, and in the stability and prosperity of modern Europe.⁶⁶ The Marshall Plan as Precedent Although many disparate elements of Marshall Plan assistance speak to the present, the circumstances faced now by most other parts of the world are so different and more complex than those encountered by Western Europe in the period 1948-1952 that the solution posed for one is not entirely applicable to the other. As noted earlier, calls for new Marshall Plans have continued ever since the first, but the first was unique, and today's proposals share little detail with their predecessor apart from the suggestion that a problem should be solved with the same concentrated energies, if not funds, applied decades ago. Even if there exist countries whose needs are similar in nature to what the Marshall Plan provided, the position of the United States has changed since the late 1940s as well. The roughly \$13.3 billion provided by the United States to 16 nations over a period of less than four years equals an estimated \$143 billion in 2017 currency. That sum surpasses the amount of development and humanitarian assistance the United States provided from all sources to 212 countries and numerous international development organizations and banks in the four-year period 2013-2016 (\$138 billion in 2017 dollars).⁶⁷ In 1948, when the United States appropriated \$4 billion for the first year of the Marshall Plan, outlays for the entire federal budget equaled slightly less than \$30 billion.⁶⁸ For the United States to be willing to expend 13% of its budget on any one program (versus 0.8% in FY2016 for foreign assistance), Congress and the President would have to agree that the activity was a major national priority. Nevertheless, in pondering the difficulties of new Marshall Plans, it is perhaps worth considering the views of the ECA Administrator, Paul Hoffman, who noted 20 years after Secretary Marshall's historic speech that even though the Plan was "one of the most truly generous impulses that has ever motivated any nation anywhere at any time," the United States "derived enormous benefits from the bread it figuratively cast upon the international waters." In Hoffman's view: Today, the United States, its former partners in the Marshall Plan and—in fact—all other advanced industrialized countries ... are being offered an even bigger bargain: the chance to form an effective partnership for world-wide economic and social progress with the earth's hundred and more low-income nations. The potential profits in terms of expanded prosperity and a more secure peace could dwarf those won through the European Recovery Program. Yet the danger that this bargain will be rejected out of apathy, indifference, and discouragement over the relatively slow progress toward self-sufficiency made by the developing countries thus far is perhaps even greater than was the case with the Marshall Plan. For the whole broadscale effort of development assistance to the world's poorer nations—an effort that is generally, but I think quite misleadingly, called "foreign aid"—has never received the full support it merits and is now showing signs of further slippage in both popular and governmental backing. Under these circumstances, the study of the Marshall Plan's brief but brilliantly successful history is much more than an academic exercise.⁶⁹ Appendix. References Arkes, Hadley. Bureaucracy, the Marshall Plan, and the National Interest. Princeton University Press, 1972. 395 p. Behrman, Greg. The Most Noble Adventure: the Marshall Plan and How America Helped Rebuild Europe. New York, Simon and Shuster, 2007. 448 p. 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