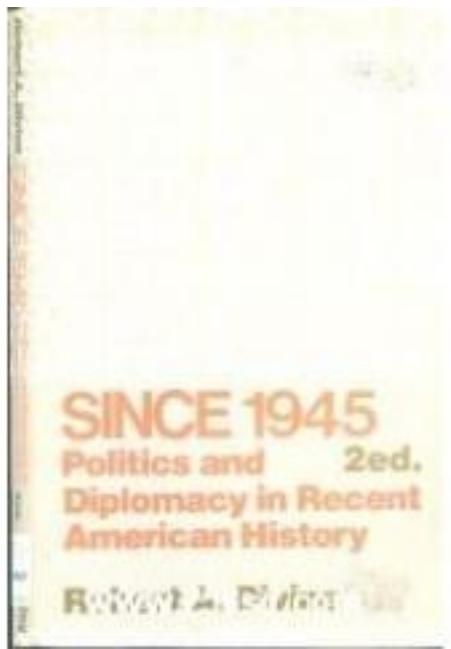


Since 1945



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The bright flash that lit up the sky over Hiroshima on the morning of August 6th 1945 signaled both the end of World War II and the dawn of the nuclear age. A week later Japan surrendered and the world was at peace after six years of fighting in Europe and eight in Asia. Yet Americans were never able to enjoy the peace they had looked forward to so fervently; the rapid onset of the Cold War with the Soviet Union kept international tensions at a dangerously high level and prevented any return to normalcy. Soon both superpowers possessed nuclear weapons and became locked in an escalating arms race that cast a long shadow over every aspect of postwar American life. The man who made the decision to drop the atomic bomb had been in office only three months. Harry S. Truman became President on April 12th 1945 with the sudden death of Franklin D.

Roosevelt and he took up his duties with a staggering number of handicaps. Despite his declining health FDR had failed to prepare his successor keeping Truman in ignorance about vital military and diplomatic policies and refusing even to inform him of the atomic bomb project. In contrast to Roosevelt Truman was a relatively obscure senator from Missouri who had built a modest reputation through his Congressional investigations of defense and war industries; he had won the respect of his fellow senators but had made only a slight impact on the public at large. Powerful groups within the Democratic party particularly southern leaders and big city bosses had forced Roosevelt to dump Henry Wallace his wartime Vice-President who leaned to the left and Truman had emerged with the nom-

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