

Nina Prouty

Period 2

A Level US History

“The presidencies of Truman and Eisenhower were more alike than different.” How valid is the statement?

Planning

YES:

-Both continued the New Deal: Truman tried the Fair Deal and the Employment Act of 1946, Eisenhower passed the Federal Unemployment Tax Act, built Interstate Highway

-Civil rights were advanced marginally, though without the support of the presidents: executive ordered civil rights, Brown v. Board of Edu and Little Rock National Guard being sent

NO:

-Truman and Eisenhower were very different in demeanor

-Economic situation was very different: Truman encountered economic difficulties after WWII, after Korean War; Eisenhower had 3 of 8 budgets in the black, inflation generally stayed under 2%

The presidencies of Truman and Eisenhower were not more alike than different because, while Eisenhower and Truman both continued New Deal policies and their advancements to civil rights were there but not prominent, the executives themselves and the economies behind them were fundamentally different.

Initially, Truman and Eisenhower were both very different men. Harry S. Truman was born and raised in Independence, Missouri, and entered politics under the wing of political boss Tom Pendergast. His political style was very no-nonsense and explosively irritated, and there were many times he was seen as being unpresidential; notably, he wrote a searing and vehement letter to a critic of his daughter's singing performance. He was also very disliked, ending his second term with only a 23% approval rating. Eisenhower, on the other hand, was quite easygoing. He was apolitical and moderate, having been handed the Republican nomination and the presidency after winning 55% of the popular vote in 1952. He loved to golf and took many vacation days, and was so well liked that when he had several heart attacks prior to his reelection in 1956, he was told to "take it easy" and won with an even wider margin than before. This shows that their attitudes were very different, which made for much different manners of governance while in office: Truman's hard anti-Communism stance and want to make a name for himself while in office directly contrasted with Eisenhower's preference of letting other people brief him on what to do and to take a generally acceptable, non-controversial stance. Notably, Eisenhower was much less harsh than Truman in his views on the Cold War, which illustrates that the general mood of his presidency was much less tense than his predecessor's. This also illustrates the effect on the general mood of constituents outside the White House: the '50s under Eisenhower were a happy-go-lucky, booming era, while the mid-'40s under Truman were widely regarded as a dark time for America. One can draw from this that the styles of each president and their demeanors made for very different presidencies, inside and outside of the White House.

On the other hand, many policies were similar in the Truman and Eisenhower administrations. Truman and Eisenhower both made efforts to protect social welfare and advance or protect Roosevelt's New Deal: while Truman's Employment Act of 1946 was torn to pieces by a Republican-majority Congress, it still advanced the minimum wage, a policy which was instituted first in the late '30s by the Roosevelt administration. Additionally, his Fair Deal Act was meant to expand the New Deal with sweeping liberal proposals; while this was also torn apart easily by the conservative Democrats and Northern Republicans, it still got more advances to the minimum wage, expansion of social security, and affordable housing measures passed, all policies Roosevelt would have tipped his hat at. On Eisenhower's side, he implemented the Federal Unemployment Tax Act and the construction of interstate highways; while the latter was actually marketed as a defense measure, it was became largest public works project in America's history. FDR's New Deal also created many public works in the midst of the Depression, and this growth in jobs and in resources for everyday Americans was very characteristic of New Deal policies. The Federal Unemployment Tax Act was another policy that expanded social security and unemployment benefits to aid those who could not work due to forcible unemployment or age. This demonstrates that both Truman and Eisenhower were dedicated to protecting the welfare of those less fortunate through government policy. Americans did not want the New Deal to be stripped down when it had helped them so much, and both of these presidents, despite

Eisenhower being a Republican, carried on the liberal policies of the New Deal. As such, it can be seen that the presidencies of Truman and Eisenhower were very similar due to the lack of difference between social policies that would change the everyday life of Americans. E

However, their presidencies were very different due to the opposite economies during their presidencies. Truman was elected after WWII, and was faced with rebuilding a consumer economy out of the war economy America had been in. He struggled to put consumer goods back on the shelves since the transition from "gun" to "butter" was very difficult, and prices hiked for many products. Additionally, during the Korean War, Truman encountered an economic recession that ballooned prices further as he again switched the economy style from "butter" back into "gun". Not only did these events harm his popularity, but created an unstable and inefficient economy that made it difficult for Americans to get back to daily life after WWII. A ✓
Eisenhower, on the other hand, as a Republican, had much different views for the economy. He was a budget balancer: 3 of his 8 budgets were in the black, showing that his allocation of money was more efficient and thought out than Truman's may have been. While his presidency encountered 2 economic recessions due to Eisenhower's reluctance to mess with tax flow and other fiscal policy aids of the president, this was generally ignored due to the free consumer attitude of the '50s. Inflation also stayed under 2%, so prices were low and stable during his terms. A
This demonstrates that Truman and Eisenhower both had very different attitudes towards the economy: while Truman seemed to fumble with it, advancing economic policies that went nowhere and clumsily navigating between butter and gun economies, Eisenhower kept the economy steady, which led to the boom of the '50s. A
One can see from this that the different presidency styles of Truman and Eisenhower directly correlated to the success of the American economy. E
Additionally, their economic priorities were different: even though Eisenhower did pass many pieces of social welfare legislation, he didn't much care for the impoverished; over 40 million Americans lived under the poverty line and unemployment reached 7.5% at one time. ✓
As FDR's heir, Truman continued to pass liberal policies aiding economically marginalized groups. ✓
It is apparent from this that there was likely a growth in unemployment and the poverty rate under Eisenhower's presidency, and one can draw from this that life for them must have been very different under the two. J

Finally, these two presidencies were similar due to the similarly lackluster civil rights advancements of both presidents. ✓
Truman passed an executive order to desegregate the military in the late '40s. ✓
Even though he decided not to go through Congress to get this done, he was raised in the South and even contemplated joining the KKK at one point, so it was not due to his own personal beliefs, but what was right for the country. ✓
Additionally, Eisenhower was not fond of civil rights either: when Brown v. Board of Education decided that racial segregation in schools was not constitutional, he barely even acknowledged the decision until, in 1957, a school in Little Rock, Arkansas was not complying with the required integration. ✓
Eisenhower then sent the National Guard to enforce integration, which was the first time the military had been sent to enforce state protocols since Reconstruction. ✓
He said himself that this was not because of any belief in civil rights, but that America looked bad by not complying with legislation, which could make the Soviets think that it was weaker. A
This demonstrates that both presidents did not really want to support civil rights but did so either out of morality or out of a view that whatever the

law was, it should be protected. One can draw from this that, even though they got to integrate into white facilities under Eisenhower and into white battalions under Truman, minorities likely didn't feel like they were any more valued under one or the other, making each presidency similar under this lens. EJ

Ultimately, the presidencies of Eisenhower and Truman did have similar policies regarding civil rights and liberal, social welfare legislation. However, their opposite demeanors pervaded the general mood of America in their respective times, and their different economic styles sweepingly changed the country. The moderate Eisenhower was certainly less different than if Robert Taft had secured the Republican nomination, in which case New Deal reforms would have likely been stripped back, but the fundamental differences between himself and Truman can't be ignored, especially when analyzing the nation's views of them. Additionally, the world events were very different under Truman's presidency than Eisenhower's; if he hadn't been faced with two wars and economic issues from the previous presidency, he may have been more successful and therefore more like Eisenhower. However, what happened happened, and the two reigns of the presidents were overall more different than alike.

Excellent

Beautifully done
- masterfully
the right
choice
100%