



THE COLD WAR: STRATEGIES OF CONTAINMENT

CONTAINMENT BEGINS: THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

Our Class Session Topics

1. Prelude to Containment: A Tense Partnership
2. **Containment Begins: The Truman Administration**
3. Containment Implemented: Korea
4. Containment: Eisenhower and Nuclear Strategy
5. Containment Challenged: Khrushchev and Cuba
6. Containment Punctured: Vietnam
7. Containment Revised and Victorious: Détente and Dissolution

We will discuss today:

The origin and meaning of “strategies of containment”

The events that led to the adoption of these strategies

- Potsdam Conference (1945)
- Iran, Greece and Turkey (1946-1947)
- Moscow Conference (1947)
- Marshall Plan (1947-1948)
- Berlin blockade (1948-1949)
- NATO (1949)



Strategies of Containment

First: definitions

What is a “strategy?”

- A plan of action matching resources with aspirations
- A “Grand Strategy” is a politically driven coordination of military, economic and political capabilities (total resources) to reach a country’s goals (aspirations)
- A “Military Strategy” coordinates military capabilities to reach military goals; subservient to Grand Strategy (in theory)

What is the supreme goal or interest of a country or nation?

Survival (existential interest)

What is a strategic interest of a country?

- Strategic interests arise from matters and developments that do not bear immediately on a state's security, well-being and domestic tranquility; a sometimes "remote" interest (in place and in time)
- do have the potential, if left unattended, to directly affect vital interests or the state's capacity to advance or defend them



What are a country's vital interests?

- Vital interests of a country are security, well-being, and domestic tranquility
 - These touch on the very purposes for which a state is established and maintained
- States will sacrifice many lesser interests and risk suffering heavy damage and war to secure vital interests if can do so without unduly jeopardizing its supreme interest



What are a state's peripheral interests?

Interests that are important but not as vital as vital interests. A scale. Can lead to affecting a vital interest.

What is hard? Identifying vital interests and peripheral interests and the resources that should be allocated to them



Post WW2 Strategies of Containment (as part of US Grand Strategy)

Set forth in George F. Kennan's "Long Telegram" and Article X "The Sources of Soviet Conduct"

1. Soviet Union is structurally hostile to the capitalistic West under Marxist doctrine
2. Marxist doctrine held that Capitalist West would come to war with itself due to economic inequity (a disappointment for Stalin but don't let the facts change your opinion)
3. However, Soviet Union is now (1946) weaker than West due to:
 - WWII devastation
 - Over development of military and heavy industry; few consumer products
 - Products and machinery subpar in quality
 - Overly controls its population, stifling creativity
 - Lacks institutional succession in government



4. United States cannot totally overcome Soviet Union but can exploit its weakness and contain its expansion. Containment means denying Soviets resources. Key was which geographic areas were of most strategic interest to US. Basic answer: Europe

5. Policy toward Soviet Union must be a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian/Soviet expansive tendencies. Requires a patient public.

6. Time will give rise to victory. Soviet Union was bound to fail due to economic inefficiencies, failure to keep up internal suppression, and unrealistic view of the world and itself.



Kennan's Solution: A Strategy of "Containment"

"In the light of the above, it will be clearly seen that the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, . . . the Russians look forward to a duel of infinite duration, and they see that already they have scored great successes."

Containment considered again at:

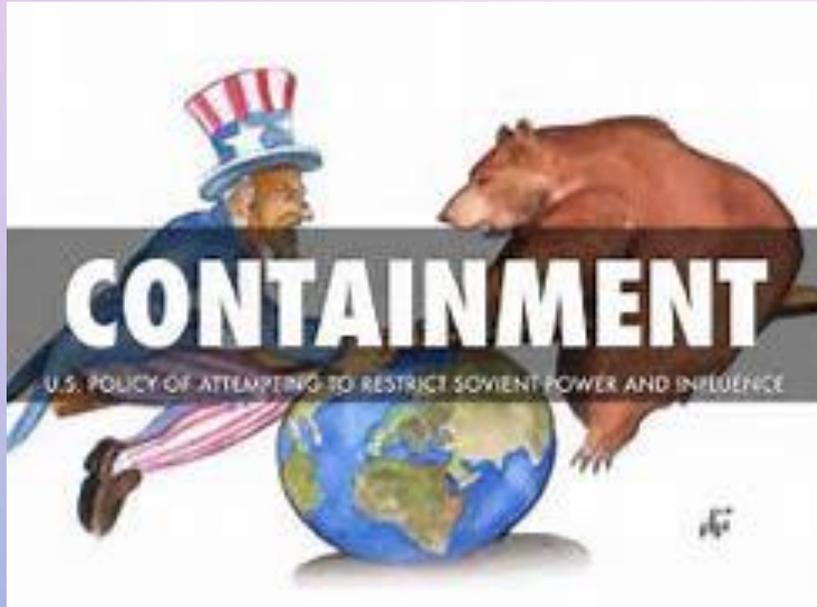
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/18/cold-war-containment-isolation-russia/>

What Containment was not

- Change USSR internally
- Push USSR out of Eastern Europe or where it already was
- Attack USSR militarily



Problems with Containment Strategy



- The public's patience with containment
- Identifying strategic interests – what and where?
- Identifying the resources (military, cultural, political) needed to achieve the aspiration of a contained Soviet empire
- Applying containment strategy to other countries;
- Identifying threats: is political communism monolithic?
- Soviets have the initiative.

Above all:

“Every statesman must attempt to reconcile what is considered just with what is considered possible. What is considered just depends on the domestic structure of his state; what is possible depends on its resources, geographic position and determination, and on the resources, determination and domestic structure of other states.”



- Henry Kissinger

- Questions so far?



Potsdam Conference of July/August 1945



- Allies agreed to joint occupation of a demilitarized and disarmed Germany and Berlin
- German society was to be remade along democratic lines
- German-Soviet-Polish borders revised
- Formation of a Council of Foreign Ministers
- Permanent agreement would be made sometime in near future
- Changes in Germany division must be made by consent of all parties
- Reparations procedure established
- Parties agree to agree eventually on establishment of an unitary German government

And: Truman told Stalin of US atomic bomb but Stalin know more than Truman

Tensions rise: Iran (1946), Turkey and Greece (1947)

Iran

- Soviet troops in northern Iran to pressure Iran on a favorable oil supply agreement from Iranian government
- Under Potsdam Agreement these troops were to be withdrawn by April 1946
- Soviets threatened to assist Northern Iran rebellion for leverage against Iran in negotiations
- Soviets withdraw troops at last minute to avoid confrontation with West

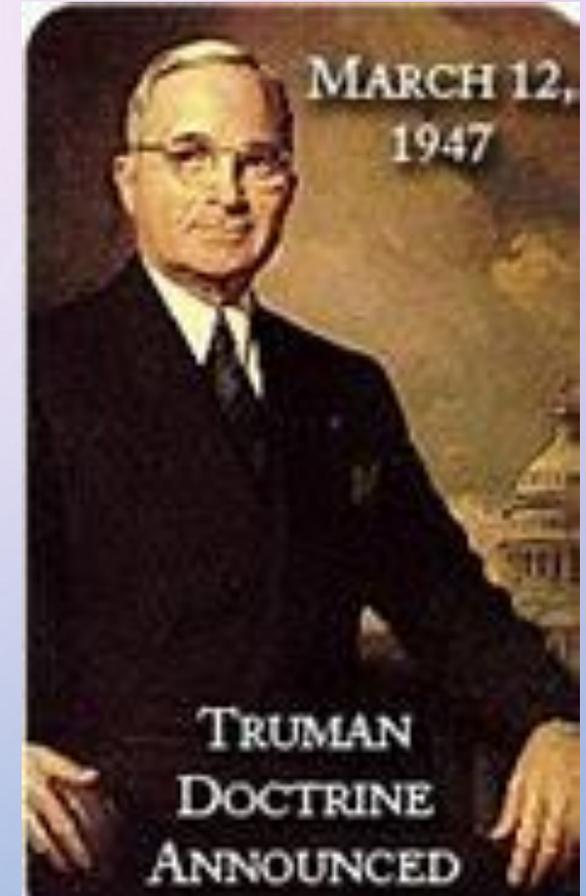


Turkey and Greece (1947)

- Soviet Troops on northern Turkey border, putting pressure on Turkey to change 1936 convention regarding access to Bosphorus Straits
- Soviets supporting Greek communists during Greek Civil War to obtain a satellite to secure Straits
- Britain advises US it can no longer support Greece



- **US Response: The Truman Doctrine (March 12, 1947)**
 - Truman told Congress that "it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."
 - \$400 mm sent to Turkey and Greece
 - USS Roosevelt (aircraft carrier) and USS Missouri (battleship) sent to Mediterranean
 - Results in withdraw by Soviets



The Marshall Plan – 1947-1948

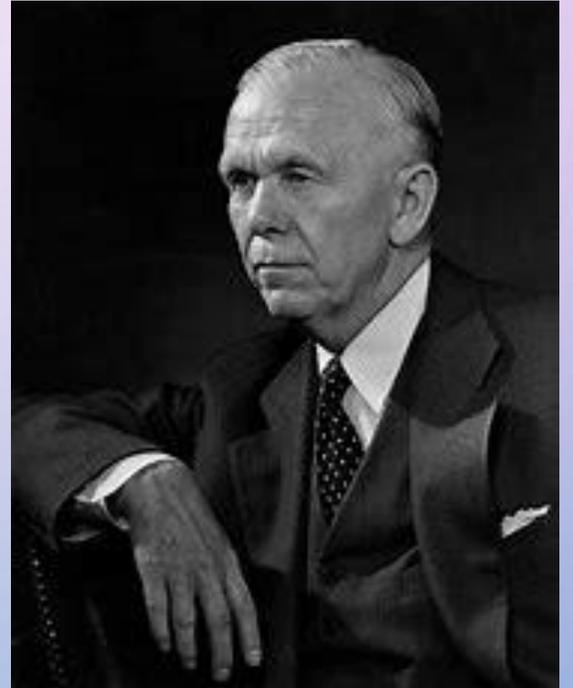
The Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference

- Held pursuant to Potsdam Agreement in March 1947
 - 44 meetings over 6 weeks to resolve open questions about Germany, Eastern Europe, etc.
 - Attendees: Foreign Ministers from Britain, France, Soviet Union and United States (George Marshall)
 - Germany and Europe starving and in economic trouble
 - No agreement; Marshall sees the Soviets as purposely non cooperative



European Recovery Program (April 1948–December 1951)

- U.S.-sponsored program designed to rehabilitate the economies of 17 western and southern European countries to create stable conditions in which democratic institutions could survive and keep from going Communist
- Offer of \$ to all of Europe and Soviet Union
- \$13 billion worth of economic aid over 5 years eventually given
- Conditions of aid – each country comes up with a budget approved by US
- The Soviets and their satellites refuse to take part
 - o Soviets see it as imperialism in a different dress
 - o Soviets make a mistake though



Then . . . the 1st Berlin Crisis

The US and Western Europe – 1948 London Conference

- Decided to unite the US, British and French occupation zones despite Potsdam Agreement
- Decided to issue new German currency to stabilize inflated German Deutschemark



Stalin Reacts to London Conference: the Berlin Airlift

- Blockades food and other shipments into West Berlin to force West to reconsider its plans (Stalin has limited resources)
- West begins airlift which is unexpectedly successful for the West
- US signals possibility of atomic war with B-29s flown to England; Stalin does not go beyond blockade



Soviet blockade lifted in fall 1948

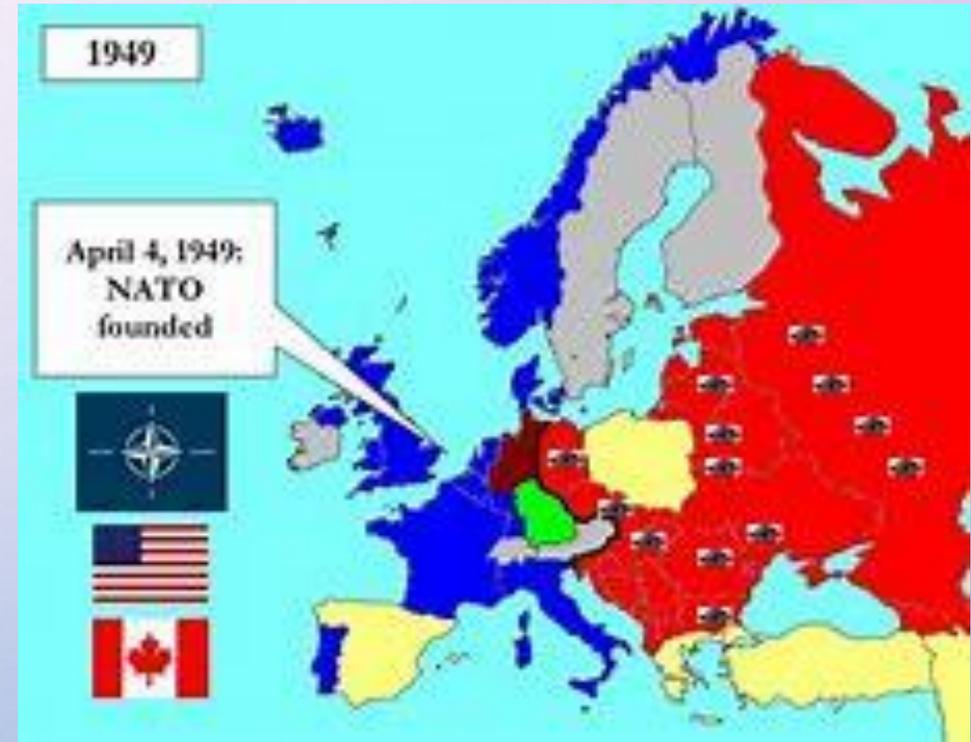
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Britain and the Belux countries entered into a security treaty in 1947

- Security against Germany and Soviet Union

France expressing reservations about relieving and rearming West Germany

- US believes relief needed to strengthen Germany against Soviets
- US proposes NATO to reassure France and West Europe against Germany and Soviet Union
- NATO formed 1949



What the US learned by 1950

- Nuclear weapon signaling may be a deterrence
- Soviets would nibble at the edges of West's sphere of influence
- Soviets will attempt to divide Western Europe and conquer (as they should)
- Soviets were not giving up E. Europe satellites anytime soon
- Alliances are important and are fully part of Containment strategy (creating a resource)



What the US did not know

- Would nuclear signaling always deter?
- Would deterrence work?
 - Note, no deterrence before Berlin crisis
 - What were the West/US's vital interests?
 - How weak Soviets were
 - Vital interests outside Europe?
 - Would Stalin give up on Germany?



Any questions?



Next Week: Containment Implemented: Korea

