

Example of the importance of the cold war research paper

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



In 1947, George F. Kennan, an analyst with the State Department, wrote an essay about the Soviet Union that took fear of this new country into the basis for American foreign policy. The Soviet Union had only existed as a country since 1919, as the Communist Revolution took the old tsarist regime down at the end of World War I. The struggle for leadership was a bloody one, as the idealistic visions of Lenin and Trotsky fell to the greedily pragmatic ones of Stalin. The fact that Stalin allied himself with both Hitler and, later, the Allies, was a sign that he was only focused on maintaining his own power and expanding the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. The fact that President Wilson had refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Communist government after the resolution, and the fact that the United States had refused to share its nuclear weapons research with the Soviet Union, all had made Stalin hostile. The fact that the United States had offered loans for postwar relief to Great Britain but not to the Soviet Union was another point of contention. Kennan's analysis asserted that the Russians would do everything in their power to spread Communism all over the globe, either through military conquest or the support of Communist rebels in countries that were already politically shaky. Kennan wrote that the United States could use a policy of "containment" to keep Communism from spreading around the globe. His suggestion was to keep Communism from spreading abroad, and to maintain the status quo, which was an uneasy coexistence between governments operating with radically different philosophies after World War II.

The idea of "containment" became the foundation for the main U. S. method for combating Communism during the entire Cold War. While different

presidents took a different tack on the doctrine and tried different stratagems to achieve their goals, the general strategy for containing Communism remained basically unchanged until the end of the Cold War under President George H. W. Bush. The first iteration of this strategy was the Truman Doctrine. President Truman announced in March 1947 that the American military would give support to foreign governments that were resisting “ outside pressures” or “ armed minorities,” which were code words for the Soviet Union or Communist rebels. He then asked Congress to authorize \$400 million to keep Turkey and Greece from collapsing at the hands of Communist rebels inside their borders. There are some who viewed this idea as creating an unnecessary polarization between the United States and the Soviet Union. They assert that, if Truman had looked for a diplomatic solution instead, the next five decades of mutual suspicion and competition might not have happened. However, those thinkers are generally countered by those who argue that the U. S. S. R. had already started the Cold War by rebuffing attempts by the Allies to stabilize a reunified Germany. In other words, they argue that President Truman simply responded in kind to the Soviet position. Still other Truman supporters argue that he was using the language he did to keep isolationists in the United States from urging an abandonment of the recovery of Europe. No matter what his motivation was, though, Truman’s interpretation of the containment doctrine and his perspective on the Communist threat formed American foreign policy up through the two terms of President Reagan.

One of the first official actions that Congress took after the expression of the Truman Doctrine was the passage of the National Security Act. This moved

the military under a new cabinet secretary - the Secretary of Defense. Civilians would serve as the Secretary of Defense as well as secretaries of each of the various military branches. The officers with the highest rank in each branch formed the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving coordination to military efforts. The National Security Act also established the civilian post of national security adviser to give the president counsel and manage the National Security Council. Finally, this legislation established the Central Intelligence Agency, which became the main service for espionage and intelligence. In one fell swoop, the entire focus of the American military and efforts toward maintaining security had taken a gargantuan shift. Before World War II, the actions of the U. S. military were primarily responsive in nature. While the War of 1812 was fought in defense, all of the other external wars in American history to that point in time (the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I) had featured a lengthy period of preparation, so that the United States could enter in offensively and emerge with a relatively swift victory, at least from the time of its own intervention. World War II did last longer, but the United States had not had as much time to prepare all of the necessary materiel, thus the need for considerable amounts of rationing for the government to be able to produce everything from ammunition to parachutes. With the advent of the security age, the country became constantly vigilant, which added a tinge of fear to life in American society. This fear would reach a climax during the Cuban missile crisis. The Soviet Union had placed missiles in Cuba, capable of striking most of the contiguous 48 states before the United States would have much of a chance to respond

in kind. The American military response was immediate, and the embargo created tensions that looked like they were going to lead to war. While that crisis ended, the fact remains that, from 1945 until 1993, the threat of the Cold War meant that nuclear holocaust could break out at virtually any time. This was the first period of American history that required that much vigilance for that long. National security went from being a periodic phenomenon to a topic in every nationwide election. Instead of focusing on economic matters, like the dusty tariff, the focus was on the military and national security. The whole nature of political campaigns and discourse within the United States changed, and even with the passing of the Soviet Union, the emergence of terrorist capabilities has only served to make the surveillance of the nation even greater. It is difficult to imagine returning to an era of such innocence as the years before World War II.

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