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CHAPTER 2

America's Global Involvement and the Emergence of the Cold War

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the economic, political, and ideological factors contributing to the abandonment of isolationism and adoption of globalism post-World War II.
2. Understand the definition and origins of the “Cold War consensus.”
3. Define the Yalta and Riga Axioms and identify their significance to Soviet-American relations.
4. Identify the various components of the policy of “containment” and evaluate its level of effectiveness.
5. Identify Roosevelt and Truman’s foreign policy doctrines and evaluate the global context in which these doctrines were formulated.
6. Determine the various foreign and domestic challenges to the Cold War consensus.



SUMMARY OVERVIEW

The chapter describes the political, economic, and ideological conditions that led the United States to abandon its traditional isolationist principles in favor of a globalist philosophy post-World War II. The chapter notes the major changes within the postwar international structure, including a weakening of traditional European powers and the relative resilience of the Soviet

Union and prosperity of the United States. The lessons of the post-World War I era were fresh in the minds of many leading political figures, including President Roosevelt, who believed the complete disarming of adversaries, revitalization of the European economy, and the establishment of a global security organization were necessary to prevent yet another war from occurring. Roosevelt's perception that the Soviet Union was motivated by the Yalta Axiom, in which a state rationally defines and pursues its interests, rather than the Riga Axiom, in which a state's actions are determined by ideology, allowed Roosevelt to foster cooperation with the Soviets. The Yalta Conference of 1945 reached agreements on the divisions of postwar Europe, marking the beginning of American commitment to global involvement beyond the war. During the Potsdam Conference, Roosevelt's successor Truman was urged to deal more firmly with the perceived Soviet threat; the conference resulted in increasing uneasiness between the two major powers. Tensions were reflected and compounded by Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, George Kennan's "**long telegram**," and Nikolai Novikov's telegram. The Truman Doctrine argued that the United States was committed to protecting free peoples of the world, while the containment strategy of the United States was intended to counter expansionist activities of the Soviets. Regional security pacts, economic and military assistance to friendly countries, and "domestication" were all major components of this strategy.

The Korean War served as the first major test of containment, as America acted decisively to counter the threat of communism. The use of armed forces as a political instrument spiked during the height of the Cold War (1945–1975). The Cold War consensus was cultivated during this era; Americans overwhelmingly believed that stopping the threat of communism was “very important,” and the expectation that the United States could unilaterally “solve” the world’s problems and serve as a paragon of democratic virtue was widely accepted. However, the Sino-Soviet Split, disunity in Eastern and Western Europe, and the nonaligned movement all posed challenges to the Cold War consensus. The rift between China and the Soviets demonstrated that not all communist governments were identical, while the tensions between members of the Warsaw Pact as well as the efforts of Western Europeans to separate themselves from the shadow of American dominance demonstrated significant changes in the international structure. Members of colonial territories, particularly in Asia and Africa, sought independence, further enhancing the evolving nature of the international order. Ultimately, the United States moved towards a globalist mentality while retaining its hegemonic self-identity and sense of moral duty to lesser states. However, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam War challenged the Cold War consensus and led to a shift in American foreign policy attitudes and actions.



CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE POSTWAR WORLD AND AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

A. The Global Vacuum: A Challenge to American Isolationism

First important factor contributing to the move from isolationism: **Global political and economic conditions.** European territory destroyed or confiscated; industrial sectors weakened; economies weak, in debt, and inflated.

Germany and Italy both defeated: Germany divided and occupied, while Italy experienced a serious deficit and inflation.

United States retains industrial capacity and thriving economy, in addition to preeminent military might.

B. American Leadership and Global Involvement

1. Roosevelt’s Plan.

- Defeat and disarming of adversaries, with no leniency towards aggressors
- Commitment by major powers to prevent future global economic depressions and to foster self-determination for states
- Establishment of global collective security organization with American involvement
- Core of Roosevelt’s blueprint: Maintenance of alliances to foster peace. He envisioned the United States, Great Britain, the USSR, and China to act as the “**Four Policemen**” to enforce global order (similarity to balance of power politics).

2. Strategy: Building Wartime Cooperation.

Roosevelt believed that the Soviet Union would be a cooperative partner; Roosevelt considered the USSR to be motivated by the “**Yalta Axiom**” (states define interests and foster goals on basis of power realities) rather than the “**Riga Axiom**” (states driven by ideology).

Power of personal diplomacy: Roosevelt believed by acknowledging Soviet interests, he could work with Russian leadership.

Attempts to foster cooperation with Soviets: (1) extension of **Lend-Lease assistance** and agreement to open up second front against the Germans to relieve intensity from Soviet troops; (2) Roosevelt's acknowledgement of Soviet concerns regarding western borders.

3. Strategy: A Role in Postwar International Politics.

Yalta Conference of 1945: Reached agreement on victory strategy and achieved commitments on the division and operation of postwar Europe.

- Determined zones of occupation in Germany
- Conceded some Polish territory to the Soviets
- Expanded Lublin Committee to include exiled Polish government officials

Declaration of Liberated Europe: Specified free elections.

Agreed on Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan and on veto mechanism with Security Council of the UN

C. The Rise of the Soviet Challenge

1. Wilsonian Idealism.

Truman agreed with Wilson that America should participate in a global organization affecting world affairs: Worked to gain support for the United Nations.

Truman was cautious about the Four Policemen plan but upheld Roosevelt's primary foreign policy objectives.

2. The Wartime Situation.

3. The Views of Truman's Advisors.

4. Truman's Early Position.

5. A Changing Environment.

Potsdam Conference (July 1945): Truman was urged to get tough with Soviets. Conference resulted in American uneasiness about Soviet intentions.

End of 1945 and beginning of 1946: Watershed in Soviet-American relations. American public, Congress, and the president's advisors sought action against the Soviet Union for noncompliance with Yalta agreements and for attempting to undermine governments of Eastern Europe.

6. Stalin Attacks Capitalism.

In 1946 speech, Stalin suggested inevitability of war among capitalist states and argued for economic growth to combat capitalist challenge.

7. Churchill's Response.

Iron Curtain speech suggested the impossibility of continued Soviet-American cooperation in the postwar world.

8. Kennan's Perception from Moscow.

George Kennan's "long telegram" outlined his perception of the premises of the Soviet worldview, which came to be known as the **Riga Axioms**: Ideology constituted the primary determinant of Soviet actions.

Nikolai Novikov, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, argued the United States foreign policy was imperialistic. His telegram is considered to reflect the official view of the Kremlin in 1946.

III. AMERICA'S GLOBALISM: THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE AND BEYOND

American response to pressure concerning Soviet relations:

○ Tripartite Treaty of Alliance

- Signed by Iran, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain, this treaty insisted that Allied forces withdraw from Iranian territory within six months after the end of hostilities. However, while American and British troops had left, the Soviets sent in more troops.
- The United States insisted Soviets honor agreement, and ensuing negotiations determined that Soviets would vacate Iran within two months.

○ Aid to Greece and Turkey: Change in American-Soviet Policy

- Departure from previous form, rationale, and purpose: Truman delivered formal speech committing the United States to a global strategy against the threat of communism by preventing expansion of communist ideology.
- **Truman Doctrine:** Argues totalitarian regimes threaten security of United States; United States has a responsibility to protect free peoples against oppressive regimes.
- **Containment:** Policy utilized by United States against Soviet Union intended to counter geographical and political expansion by Soviets.

IV. ELEMENTS OF CONTAINMENT: REGIONAL SECURITY PACTS

Establishment of regional political-military alliances (**Rio Pact**, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, **ANZUS Treaty**, the *Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)*, and the *Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)*) and defense pacts

- NATO is considered the most important because of (1) its strong commitment by parties to respond to an attack on another member (2) its well-developed organizational structure and (3) its involvement in the area of greatest concern for American interests.
- Bilateral defense pacts were established in Asia to combat Soviet and Chinese aggression.
- **Eisenhower Doctrine:** Congress complied with Eisenhower's request for authority to extend military and economic assistance to Middle Eastern states facing a Communist threat. Africa and the Middle East were not directly covered by security arrangements.

V. ELEMENTS OF CONTAINMENT: ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE

A. The Marshall Plan

The United States allocated 17 billion dollars in assistance from 1948 to 1952 to revitalize Western Europe.

Economic rationale: Europe was a main trading partner for the United States. Political rationale: Political instability in Europe could lead to susceptibility to Communism (containment policy).

B. Point Four

Truman's plan was to provide industrial, technological, and economic assistance to underdeveloped nations (more unilateral plan).

C. The Mutual Security Concept

Replaced the Point Four program: Emphasized military, rather than economic or political, aid to nations combating communism
Shift in policy influenced by rising tensions amidst the outbreak of the Korean War

The **Mutual Security Act of 1951** marked the beginning of growth in military assistance funding.

VI. ELEMENTS OF CONTAINMENT: THE DOMESTIC COLD WAR

A. NSC-68: Defense

Outlined four policy options for dealing with Soviet threat: (1) continue current policies (2) return to isolationism (3) resort to war and (4) "rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength in the "Free World"
Option 4 (increase in American and allied strength) considered the only highly effective course.

Program distinguished from other elements of containment by emphasis on domestic response to Soviet threat; also called for development and stockpiling of thermonuclear weapons

Made defense spending the number-one priority in the federal budget

B. NSC-68: Internal Security

Internal security and civilian defense programs were deemed necessary to prevent subversion.

Policies were sparked by American involvement in the **Korean War**; defense expenditures increased significantly.

House Un-American Activities Committee: Led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, the committee investigated those suspected of Communist sympathies and reflected the fears of Soviet societal penetration.

VII. KOREA: THE FIRST MAJOR TEST OF CONTAINMENT

A. American Involvement in Korea

Korea had been annexed by the Japanese in 1910 and was liberated at the end of World War II.

The **Republic of Korea** in the south and **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** emerged after the war. Divisions erupted into violence when North Korea attacked South Korea in the mid-1950s. The attack was seen as Soviet-inspired and Soviet-directed.

Chinese People's Volunteers aided North Korea, and General MacArthur proposed that the United States bring the war into China. Truman had ordered him to limit the conflict and MacArthur was consequently fired for insubordination; the American public was outraged, insisting that war should not be limited by political constraints. Truce talks arranged in 1951 resulted in a demilitarized zone between the two states.

B. Korea and Implications for the Cold War

Robert Jervis argued that American involvement in Korea resolved incoherence in U. S. foreign policy.

Increase in the American defense budget and militarization of NATO following perceived confirmation of the Soviet threat Solidification of American view that a Sino-Soviet bloc promoting communist expansion existed, confirming a need to confront the threat Principal importance of the Korean War (John Lewis Gaddis): Led to the real commitment to contain communism everywhere.

VIII. THE COLD WAR CONSENSUS

A. America's Dichotomous View of the World

"Free World" (adherence to principles of anticommunism, rather than democracy and capitalism) versus totalitarianism and socialism

B. U. S. Attitudes toward Change

Stability preferred over **change**: Change was thought to lead to enhanced influence for the Soviet Union.

Skepticism of new states following the **"nonaligned" movement** as well as nationalist movements

C. American Intervention to Stall Communism

1950s: Korean War, toppling of Prime Minister **Mohammed Mossadegh** of Iran, overthrow of **Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán** in Guatemala, and support of a pro-Western government in Lebanon
 1960s: **Bay of Pigs** invasion of Cuba to topple Fidel Castro organized and attempted without success, Johnson ordered marines to the **Dominican Republic** to protect Americans from regime change, and the Vietnam War began as a means of preventing the fall of **South Vietnam** to Communists.

Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan examine **"armed forces as a political instrument"**—the use of armed forces to further one state's policy goals toward another country.

- Of 215 incidents from 1946 to 1975, 181 incidents, which served to illustrate the use of armed force for political goals, occurred during the height of the Cold War (1946–1968).
- Results of these actions by the United States were often favorable, at least in the short term.
- While use of force in the last two decades of the Cold War declined in most areas of the world, the use of force rose by 60 percent in the Middle East and North Africa (*Examples: The Yom Kippur War* of 1973, the **Egyptian–Israeli and Syrian–Israeli disengagement agreements**, the **Camp David Accords**, and the **Lebanon intervention** in 1982).
- Bottom line: Displays of force and occasional violence perceived as justified in order to defend American interests. This consensus was influenced by **Munich syndrome**, the fear of appeasing an aggressor (term derived from Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler).

D. The United States as Model

Emerging from the postwar consensus was the United States' belief that it could unilaterally "solve" the problems of poor and developing nations and provide a model for the achievement of democracy.

IX. THE PUBLIC AND THE COLD WAR CONSENSUS

X. CHALLENGES TO THE COLD WAR CONSENSUS

A. The Sino-Soviet Split

Challenged Cold War assumption about the unity of international communism

Historical rivalries and *social-cultural differences* precipitated divisions in the 1950s and early 1960s. Mutual self-interest united the China of **Mao Tse-tung** and the Soviets, but economic and ideological divisions emerged: China felt the Soviets provided insufficient aid for self-sufficiency and an independent nuclear capability, and the two brands of communism differed.

B. Disunity in the East and West

Differences emerged within the **Warsaw Pact**, the military alliance between the Soviet Union and its Eastern European neighbors.

Uprisings in East Germany and Poland, a revolt in Hungary, and dissatisfaction in Czechoslovakia indicated changes in Eastern Europe. In the early 1960s, Western States began to diverge from the United States foreign policy lead following the creation of the **European Common Market** and increasing economic recovery.

○ Best example of readjustment in Western Europe: **Charles de Gaulle**, leader of France.

- Proposed a **three-power directorate** for NATO
- Planned to develop an independent French nuclear capability, the *force de frappe*
- Most significantly, announced France would withdraw from the military structure of NATO in 1966
- Created the Fouchet Plan, a broadening of the Common Market arrangements to include political, cultural, and defense activities (plan was rejected)
- Vetoed British entry into the Common Market—twice
- Established **German-French Treaty of Friendship**.

C. Bridges Across East and West

De Gaulle sought to increase social, cultural, and economic ties in Eastern Europe and then continue to political accommodation.

De Gaulle's visit to Eastern Europe was highly significant given that Western policy was not to offer official diplomatic recognition to Eastern European governments because of their failure to recognize West Germany.

Efforts succeeded in part in West and East Germany, where the policy of *Ostpolitik* improved relations.

Increasingly multipolar world

D. The Nonaligned Movement

Desire for independence by colonial territories, particularly throughout Asia and Africa

By the end of the 1960s, 66 new nations were part of the international system.

Founder of movement: **Jawaharlal Nehru** of India, who sought to avoid power politics of bloc states. Nehru organized the **Conference of Afro-Asian States**, sometimes cited as the initial step in the development of the nonaligned movement since it was the first time the colonial territories met with European powers in attendance.

Belgrade Conference (September 1961): Formal institutionalization of the movement. It offered a “third way” in politics.

XI. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Describe the policy of “containment” (because the definition is ambiguous, encourage students to identify the various elements of this policy). Evaluate the effectiveness of the U.S. “containment” policy against the Soviet Union.
2. In what ways did Truman further the foreign policy approach of his predecessor, and in what ways did his resulting doctrine diverge from that of Roosevelt?
3. What challenges emerged against the Cold War consensus? What constitutes evidence of the world’s increasing multipolarity beginning in the 1950s and 1960s?

LECTURE LAUNCHERS

1. Watch a film clip of Winston Churchill’s “Sinews of Peace” speech. Ask students to point out the “Iron Curtain” on a map and discuss the diplomatic and foreign policy implications of Churchill’s message.
2. Instruct students to find examples of anti-Soviet propaganda posters from the Cold War era by searching the Internet prior to class. Students should provide a brief overview of the predominant tensions of the Cold War as noted in the text, a short description of the image they selected, and an explanation of how the image represents prevailing attitudes of the period. Randomly selected students may present their findings at the beginning of class to open discussion.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

1. Watch *Good Night and Good Luck*, a 2005 film that depicts the domestic impacts of the Cold War consensus, specifically Joseph McCarthy’s efforts to suppress supposed Communist activity through the House Un-American Activities Committee. Encourage students to discuss the effects of the Cold War consensus on the American public, as well as the role of the media in providing dissenting political opinions. After reading the succeeding chapter, students should be able to address how the prevailing attitude of this era foretold the shift in mentality during the War in Vietnam.

2. Ask one student to represent **George Kennan** and rephrase, in his or her own words, the content of the “long telegram” (students should read the full text prior to class). A second student should represent **Nikolai Novikov** and elucidate the Kremlin’s view of U. S. foreign policy objectives. Other students may be selected to provide supporting evidence of each view based upon the historical context of the period described in Chapter 2 of the text.



WEB LINKS

A&E Television Network, History (<http://www.history.com/topics/korean-war>) provides an overview of the Korean War and the significance of the war within the greater context of the Cold War.

The Avalon Project, Yale Law School (<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/yalta.asp>). Actual protocol from the Yalta Conference of 1945.

Encyclopedia Britannica (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/181513/Eisenhower-Doctrine>) gives a more detailed explanation of the Eisenhower doctrine.

NATO Online Library (http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1946/s460305a_e.htm). Full text of Winston Churchill’s “Sinews of Peace” (“Iron Curtain”) speech.

U. S. Department of State, Office of the Historian (<http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/containmentandcoldwar>) provides additional information about Truman’s doctrine concerning the Soviets, as well as George Kennan’s philosophy of containment.



INSTRUCTOR RESOURCES

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy 1938–1976*. New York: Penguin Books, 1976.

Gaddis, John Lewis. *The Cold War: A New History*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2005. “Profile: Non-Aligned Movement” (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2798187.stm>). A description of the movement’s history and current status.

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