From the end of World War II in 1945 until the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, the world was polarized by a global rivalry between two wartime allies, the Soviet Union and the United States. The Cold War's impact was global in scope and created political divisions based on free world orientation, socialist orientation, or nonalignment. The legacy of this conflict continues to shape the geopolitics at work in our world today.

Cold War History: A to Z is meant to provide a quick, easy to read, introduction to the complex Cold War concepts which dominated the last half of the 20th century.

The legacy of the Cold War is still with us as we confront the problems of today's world: the complex relationship between Russia and the United States; the residue from wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the continuing American embargo and travel restrictions in place regarding Cuba; the nuclear stalemate with Iran; the drain of military expenditures on strained economies; the sway of the defense establishment on public policy decision-making. Whether you want to shine at a cocktail party or pass an exam, A to Z is the illustrated primer you need to achieve your goal.

First in a series of Cold War A to Z e-books, Cold War History: A to Z is written by Dr. Lisa Reynolds Wolfe. Widely published, Lisa holds a Ph.D. in Politics from New York University and a Master of Science in Policy Analysis and Public Management from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Areas of particular interest and expertise include Cold War Studies, sustainable development, heritage, and the environment.
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The first A-bomb — code named *Trinity* — was tested at Alamogordo (New Mexico) on July 16, 1945. On his way home from Potsdam less than a month later, President Harry Truman received news that the atomic bomb had obliterated Hiroshima (Japan).

Initially, Truman thought that he could figure out how to use the bomb to gain concessions from the Soviet Union. But he was never able to do this. Instead, Stalin immediately pushed forward the Soviet effort to acquire atomic weaponry. THE ARMS RACE WAS ON.

Over the course of the Cold War there were many attempts to control nuclear weapons and curb the arms race. Here are a few:
August 1963: Limited Test Ban Treaty — Prohibits nuclear testing or any other nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, in outer space, and underwater.

January 1967: Outer Space Treaty — Prohibits sending nuclear weapons into earth's orbit or stationing them in outer space.

July 1968: Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty — Prohibits the transfer of nuclear weapons to other countries and prohibits helping countries without nuclear weapons make or obtain them.

May 1972: Antballistic Missile Treaty — Bans space-based defensive missile systems and limits the United States and the Soviet Union to one ground-based defensive missile site each.

June 1979: Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty — The first formal strategic arms treaty sets an initial overall limit of 2,400 intercontinental ballistic missile launchers, submarine-launched missiles, heavy bombers, and air-to-surface missiles.


The *Start Treaties* came in the 1990s, after the Cold War had ended.
Many scholars argue that there were two distinct phases of the Cold War. The first was bipolar brinkmanship. The second was multilateral permanent truce.

During the first part of the Cold War, brinkmanship was a policy tool used by the United States to coerce the Soviet Union into backing down militarily. This phase of the Cold War began in Berlin in 1948 and ended with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959, defined brinkmanship as follows:

*The ability to get to the verge without getting into the war.*

In other words, brinkmanship meant going to the brink of war.
The idea of containment came to the fore with the publication of George Kennan’s “Long Telegram” in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Kennan, writing as Mr. X, was Washington’s most respected expert on Soviet affairs. Throughout the early 1940s, he’d warned against any hope of close postwar cooperation with Stalin. Kennan suggested that “the traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity” was at the bottom of the Kremlin’s neurotic view of world affairs.

The Truman administration, on the other hand, thought that Stalin’s policy was shaped by a combination of Marxist-Leninist ideology. The administration was convinced that Stalin believed that revolution was necessary to defeat capitalist forces in the outside world. Truman’s advisers felt that the dictator would consolidate his own political power by using ‘capitalist encirclement’ as a rationale to regiment the Soviet masses. (For more on encirclement, see letter E.)

Kennan believed that any softening of the Russian line would just be a diversionary tactic, and that Soviet aggression could be contained only when met with force. He went on to say that the United States would have to contain the Soviets alone and unilaterally. But if the US could do so without weakening its prosperity and political stability, the Soviet party structure would undergo a period of immense strain climaxing in either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.

Soon the idea of containment became a driving force in US foreign policy.
**Detente** characterizes the American strategy toward the Soviet Union in the Nixon-Kissinger period. It involves a general easing of geopolitical tensions -- a 'thawing out' or 'unfreezing' of US-Soviet relations during a period roughly in the middle of the Cold War.

**Detente** was a strategy to “tame the bear,” to shape the environment in which the Soviet superpower would have to operate. Kissinger said:

*In the nuclear era . . . it is our responsibility to contain Soviet power without global war . . .*

*The policies pursued by this administration have been designed to prevent Soviet expansion but also to build a pattern of relations in which the Soviet Union will always confront penalties for aggression and also acquire growing incentives for restraint. . . .*

In other words, the Nixon administration thought that a firm and patient resistance to Soviet encroachment, a policy known as *containment*, coupled with a willingness to cooperate when Soviet behavior warranted, might protect the free world, and, over time, compel Soviet leaders to face up to their system’s internal contradictions. (For more on containment, see letter C.)
The Soviets held a different view. Neither detente nor peaceful coexistence meant any Soviet renunciation of their global ideological mission. Brezhnev argued:

*It could not be clearer, after all, that detente and peaceful coexistence have to do with interstate relations. This means above all that disputes and conflicts between countries are not to be settled by war, by the use or the threat of force. Detente does not in the slightest abolish, nor can it abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle . . . . We make no secret that we see detente as the way to create more favorable conditions for peaceful socialist and communist construction.*

Whereas the US saw detente as a way to manage the Soviets’ emergence on the world scene, the Soviets saw it as a way to manage America’s transition to a new and lesser status without undue resistance.

Detente ended after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Ronald Reagan's election as president in 1980 solidified the close of detente and saw a return to Cold War tensions, a period now known as the Second Cold War. In his first press conference, President Reagan said “‘Detente' has been a one-way street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its aims.”
Both the United States and the Soviet Union were consumed with the idea of encirclement.

The Americans focused on “a global battle against communism.” They saw Russia’s goal as the control of the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. This control was part of a communist plan to encircle and capture Germany and Europe. America’s fight against encirclement was seen as a struggle between liberty and dictatorship.

The Soviets, on the other hand, feared capitalist encirclement. They viewed almost everything through the lens of their disastrous experience in World War II. That conflict had destroyed 1,700 Russian towns and 70,000 villages, leaving 25 million homeless. Over 20 million Russians died, 600,000 starving to death at Leningrad alone. The Soviets were determined to protect their borders, and they were determined to make sure that nations surrounding their borders were ensconced in the Soviet camp.
The Cold War was global in scope and created political divisions based on free world orientation, socialist orientation, and nonalignment.

Free World Orientation is generally associated with liberalism: democratic political systems and capitalist theories of development/economic progress.

Socialist Orientation is typically associated with totalitarian or communist political systems and Marxist theories of development/economic progress.

(For nonalignment, see Letter N.)
The term *competitive grand strategy* refers to the rivalry between the individual grand strategies of the two superpowers as they competed for power and influence in the less developed world.

*American grand strategy* can be defined as an integration of military and economic objectives in the war against communism.

The military component of *grand strategy* was concerned with repelling the Soviet threat through a policy of containment. (For more on containment, see Letter C.)

The economic component was concentrated on protecting America's desire for open markets.

At first these two prongs could be separated. By the end of the Eisenhower administration, though, the two were intertwined.
American grand strategy evolved into **liberal grand strategy** as the US became more explicit in its drive to foster democracy and capitalism abroad.

**Soviet grand strategy** focused on combating the threat of capitalist encirclement and on acquiring the resources necessary to develop economic and industrial prowess as a preparation for the 'hot war' that the Russians thought was inevitable as long as capitalism existed. (For more on encirclement, see Letter E.)

To summarize, after World War II, the United States was obsessed with the war against communism and the idea of containment which scholars say "has truly been America's grand strategy since the late 1940s."

The overarching US objective was to prevent Soviet penetration of emerging nations.

As previously mentioned, the USSR was determined to prevent 'capitalist encirclement' of its territories and was eager to prove its economic and industrial prowess.

By the mid-1950s, each superpower believed that the success of its **grand strategy** depended on "winning" the Third World. The competition to supply military and economic assistance, weapons, technology, and expert advice to the less developed world accelerated.
In June 1930, the US House of Representatives created a special committee to police Communist activities in the United States.

On January 3, 1945, the opening day of the 79th Congress, John E. Rankin (D-Mississippi), the Chairman of the powerful Veterans Committee, proposed that the **House Un-American Activities Committee** be reactivated as a standing committee of the House of Representatives. The motion passed. HUAC was funded with $50,000 and given latitude to investigate in any direction it saw fit.

The committee soon gained notoriety for its Hollywood hearings, focusing on the real and purported infiltration of Communists into the film industry. Many Hollywood personalities were blacklisted.
Another well publicized event was the July 1948 hearing involving the testimony of Elizabeth Bentley, an American who had been working as a Soviet agent in New York. Among those whom she named as communists were Harry Dexter White and Whittaker Chambers.

HUAC subpoenaed Chambers for early August 1948. Also a former Soviet spy, Chambers was editor of the foreign desk at Time Magazine. He, too, named communists — more than a half dozen government officials including White, Alger Hiss, and Hiss's brother Donald. The majority of these former officials refused to answer committee questions citing the Fifth Amendment.

In 1969, the House changed the committee's name to "House Committee on Internal Security." The House abolished the committee in 1975 and its functions were transferred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Important Note: The committee's anti-Communist investigations are often confused with those of Senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy, as a US Senator, had no direct involvement with the House committee. He was the Chairman of the Government Operations Committee and its Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the US Senate, not the HUAC.
The term Iron Curtain symbolizes the ideological conflict and physical boundary dividing Europe into two separate areas from the end of World War II in 1945 until the end of the Cold War in 1990. The term represents efforts by the Soviet Union to block itself and its dependent and central European allies off from open contact with the West and non-communist regions.

Physically, the Iron Curtain took the form of border defenses between the countries of Europe in the middle of the continent. The most notable border was marked by the Berlin Wall and its Checkpoint Charlie which served as a symbol of the Iron Curtain as a whole.
The Johnson Doctrine evolved from activities occurring in the Dominican Republic on April 24, 1965. On this date, a civilian government (headed by Donald Reid Cabral) was attacked by liberal and radical followers of Juan Bosch. By April 28, the military seemed to have the upper hand, but uninformed Washington officials hastily concluded that marines would have to land to prevent a Castro-style revolution.

On May 2, 1965, Johnson announced that “The American nations cannot, must not, and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government (like Cuba) in the Western Hemisphere.” President Johnson warned that change “should come through peaceful process” and he pledged that the United States would defend “every free country of this hemisphere.” This announcement became known as the Johnson Doctrine.

Faced with the Dominican Revolt, the Johnson administration adopted a view that the uprising was part of a larger challenge to American security everywhere.

On April 30, President Johnson announced that “people trained outside the Dominican Republic are seeking to gain control.” The CIA didn’t agree. Johnson was furious with the CIA’s stance and ordered the FBI to “find me some Communists in the Dominican Republic.”
In 1969, President Nixon announced that US troops would leave Vietnam in a phased withdrawal. His goal was to wind down the war in Southeast Asia and end the antiwar protests in the United States. But, despite the drawdown, the president had no intention of becoming isolationist.

As Nixon pulled out troops, he secretly escalated the bombing, especially in Cambodia. Although that country was a neutral state, it was used by the communists to funnel troops into South Vietnam. The bombing turned out to be unwise. It drove communist forces deeper into Cambodia, destabilizing that country.

On April 30, 1970, a right wing coup in Cambodia deposed the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Shortly thereafter, Nixon announced that American troops were invading Cambodia to clean out the communist camps.

On May 4, 1970, at Kent State in Ohio, student protestors were shot and killed. Members of the Ohio National Guard fired 67 rounds in 13 seconds, killing 4 students and wounding 9 others. Students at nearly 500 other colleges went on strike to protest the “Kent State massacre” as well as Nixon’s policies.

By 1971, communists controlled half of Cambodia; by 1975, they controlled all of it. More than 250,000 persons had been killed, there was massive starvation, and the country was in ruins.
Cold War linkage theorized that the various issues on which the United States and the Soviet Union interacted should be viewed as interconnected.

For example, Nixon and Kissinger did not believe that arms control negotiations could or should be able to proceed in isolation from other issues reflecting political sources of tension such as Berlin or Third World conflicts in Vietnam or the Middle East. More positively, it was believed that an improvement in US-Soviet relations would be more durable if it proceeded on a broad front, embracing progress on regional conflicts as well as on more central issues.
The Marshall Plan for the recovery of Europe was formally unveiled in a speech given by US Secretary of State, General George C. Marshall, at Harvard University on June 5, 1947. The speech was a natural outgrowth of the Truman Doctrine. (For more on the Truman Doctrine, see Letter T.) Suffice it to say, the Truman administration used the American fear of communism both at home and abroad to convince Americans they must embark upon a Cold War foreign policy. Most importantly, Truman and Marshall used this fear to justify a gigantic aid program designed to prevent a collapse of the European and American economies. Later such programs were expanded globally.
The question of Russian participation in the plan was uppermost in many minds. Although the Soviet bloc was invited, the State Department made Russian acceptance improbable by demanding that the economic records of each nation be open for scrutiny. It was also suggested that, despite their devastated economy, the Soviet Union should ship goods to Europe. The Russians, on the other hand, wanted to extract reparations from Germany. Still, the Russians gave the plan serious consideration. They even ordered their East European satellites to be prepared to join the plan. Eventually, though, the Russians revolted, warning that the plan would undermine national sovereignty, revive Germany, allow America to control Europe, and divide Europe into two groups of states. They saw the plan as a way for the US to infiltrate the Soviet Union and its sphere of influence in order to destroy it.

In the end, 16 European nations designed a program for US Secretary of State George Marshall to consider, and the US embarked on a controversial program to quickly revive Germany.

The Europeans proposed a 4 year program of $17 billion of American aid. At Soviet insistence, no Eastern European nations were participants. Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, and even Finland rejected the invitation. (In retrospect, this has been defined as the moment when the Soviet boot crushed the face of Eastern Europe.)

The Marshall Plan soon evolved into military alliances.
Nations who refused to closely associate themselves with either the Soviets or the US were known as neutral or **nonaligned**.

The very concept of neutralism was a problem for US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. At the same time, he acknowledged the vitality of nationalism in the Third World. He also understood the moral as well as the strategic arguments for assisting the new nations whether they were members of our anti-Communist alliance system or not. The issue of foreign aid was central. Third World leaders were masters at playing the two camps off against each other. They operated according to strategic calculations of how to maximize their own national interest.
Less developed nations weren’t making any kind of judgment as to the rightness of the two superpowers. Julius Nyerere, leader of Tanzania (then Tanganyika) summed things up saying:

> Our desire is to be friendly to every country in the world, but we have no desire to have a friendly country choosing our enemies for us.

The Soviets understood this game better than the US did, and the nonaligned nations usually soft-pedaled Soviet misdeeds, especially if they feared a Soviet reprisal for complaining. However, both superpowers saw the nonaligned nations in terms of “winning the battle for men’s minds.” President Kennedy may have summed the issue up best when he stated:

> people are more interested in development than in doctrine. They are more interested in achieving a decent standard of living than following the standards of either East or West.

Kennedy thought the US could court the emerging nations with

> kindness, decency, and demonstrations of the success of the American free-market economy and open society.

In actuality, the Cold War overlay inevitably imposed itself. When the Cold War ended, Third World countries found they had lost much of their leverage over the West. Nonalignment lost its meaning when there were no two sides to “align” with or against. Moreover, much of the West’s resources and attention were now drawn to the plight of the newly liberated countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviets left most of the Third World alone with the West and with the necessity of redefining their relationship with the technically advanced societies.
On the surface, the boycott of the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980 was a direct response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Seen from this perspective, it appeared to many to be an overreaction by a naive president. Actually, though, America’s relationship with the Soviet Union had been declining for some time as President Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy unraveled.

Carter was under attack both at home and abroad. At home, he ran into problems gaining Senate approval of the SALT II pact agreed on at a summit conference in Vienna during mid-1979. When the president sent the treaty to the Senate, a group called the Committee on the Present Danger attacked the agreement. Established in 1976, the committee was headed by longterm Washington insiders, Paul Nitze and Eugene Rostow. Both were driven by the fear that Americans were losing their will to oppose communism. Their arguments were picked apart by many arms experts, but Carter’s relations with Congress were so poor, and the Cold War atmosphere in the country was so tense, that opponents of detente gained the upper hand. (For more on detente, see Letter D.)
The President was also blamed for a hike in oil prices linked to the failed rescue mission in Iran.

Western European allies were especially critical, criticizing Carter’s indecisiveness in planning a weapons program to defend Western Europe. Consequently, the US had few, if any, friends in the industrialized Western world who would fully cooperate in containing Soviet power or disciplining Third World revolutionaries.

Closer to home, in 1979, Sandinista forces overthrew Nicaragua’s dictator Somoza who had long been supported by the US. The Sandanistas were (at first) determined to follow a nonaligned foreign policy, but soon drew closer to Cuba. Carter tried to mobilize the Organization of American States to intervene, but he couldn’t find a single significant Latin American supporter. Relations with Nicaragua approached the breaking point and trouble soon broke out in nearby El Salvador.

Unable to devise coherent policies, in mid-1979, Carter seized his only alternative, a major military buildup which initiated the first chapter in the massive military spending program undertaken by the Reagan administration in the 1980s. The Defense Department budget began to grow as Carter built bases in the Persian Gulf region and authorized a so-called Rapid Deployment Force that (at least on paper) could strike quickly into Third World regions. As Carter turned to the military, so did the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev.

On Russia’s border, Afghanistan began to move away from the control that the Soviets had wielded through puppet governments. On December 27, 1979, the Red Army invaded Afghanistan, executed the weak Marxist leader, and soon committed nearly 100,000 troops to the confrontation. Carter further accelerated his military build-up, withdrew SALT II from the Senate, began registering young men for the draft, embargoed US wheat and technology exports to Russia, and ordered Americans to withdraw from the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow. He promised to increase defense spending.

President Carter also formally announced the **Carter Doctrine** that pledged American intervention (unilaterally if necessary) if the Soviets threatened Western interests in the Persian Gulf region. Despite these actions, Carter entered the 1980 presidential campaign with one of the lowest approval ratings in recent history.
Perhaps the most famous pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Pact, was signed on April 4, 1949. Its underlying premise was that European defense could not be entrusted to the United Nations. NATO, therefore, was designed to “create not merely a balance of power, but a preponderance of power” to deal with the Russians from “positions of strength.”

Twelve nations signed the pact including the US, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Portugal, Norway, Great Britain, and the Benelux. These nations pledged to use force only in self-defense and to develop “free institutions,” particularly through the encouragement of “economic collaboration between any or all” of the parties. Article 5 of the agreement was central.” It stated:

The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all, and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them . . . will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force.
Article 11 modified this commitment by adding that the pact’s provisions “shall be carried out in accordance with each nation’s ‘constitutional processes.’” $11.2 billion for European military aid was the immediate financial price for the NATO commitment.

In the years following NATO’s signing, President Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, devoted a considerable amount of diplomatic energy to further constructing a worldwide network of alliances to block Soviet expansion. In Latin America, they reinforced the Rio Pact which had been signed on September 2, 1947; in Southeast Asia, the Manila Pact of 1954; in the western Pacific, mutual defense treaties in 1954 with the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China; in the Near East, the 1955 Baghdad Pact, and, in 1960, the security treaty with Japan. Some called these efforts pactomania.

So far as the Soviets were concerned, Khruschev safeguarded Soviet security both ideologically and militarily by developing the Warsaw Pact -- a bloc military alliance, patterned after NATO, which could allow Soviet military control of Eastern Europe after the political controls were relaxed. It was signed on May 14, 1955, in Warsaw. By the end of 1956 the Soviets had engaged in 14 economic and military agreements with nations in Asia and the Middle East. North Vietnam and Indonesia were favored in Southeast Asia. In the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Egypt were targets of the Soviet economic offensive.
A challenge that would trigger action by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization was successfully blunted in 1954 and 1955 when the Chinese Communists threatened the offshore islands of Quemoy, Matsu, and the Tachens, islands which lay between Mainland China and Taiwan. As the communists shelled the islands and then announced the imminent “liberation” of Taiwan, Eisenhower warned that any “liberation forces” would have to run over the American Seventh Fleet stationed in the Formosa Straits.

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles flew to Taiwan in December and signed a mutual defense pact with Chiang Kai-shek, pledging that the US would defend Chiang in return for his promise not to try to invade the mainland without American approval. The treaty was signed on December 2, 1954, and went into effect on March 3, 1955. Nothing was said in the pact about the offshore islands.
On January 18, 1955, the communists took the small northernmost island of the Tachen group. Eisenhower declared that, because this island had no relationship to the defense of Taiwan, the attack required no counteraction. Within five days, however, he asked Congress for authority “to assure the security of Formosa [Taiwan] and the Pescadores [Matsu and the rest of the Tachen group]” and, if necessary, “closely related localities.” Congress whipped through the resolution by a vote of 409 to 3 in the House and 85 to 3 in the Senate.

On August 23, 1958, just as China was embarking on the Great Leap Forward (goal: to concentrate 20 years of Soviet-style development into a single year), China began shelling the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu which were occupied by the forces of Taiwan. The American Seventh Fleet shipped Taiwanese reinforcements to the islands, and provided extra artillery capable, at least in theory, of firing atomic shells. Mao appealed for Soviet nuclear weapons, but Khruschev responded only with assurances that the Soviet Union would come to China’s support if the Americans actually attacked. For China this was betrayal. Khruschev said:

We didn’t want to give them the idea we were their obedient slaves, who would give them whatever they wanted, no matter how much they insulted us.
The Red Scare was the name for the anti-communist militancy that swept the US in the years after World War II. Postwar rhetoric about Godless Communism infused all media and invaded Americans’ everyday lives. Fear of spies, threats of a communist takeover, and paranoia about nuclear war were exploited as reality as well as fantasy, and were offered in large doses in print and on film, often as entertainment but with psychologically devastating results for the audience. Red-baiting reached its peak in the US in the mid to late 1950s. The power of anti-Communist propaganda was so effective that Americans relinquished basic rights and liberties. Justice William O. Douglas warned in 1952 that

the restriction of free thought and free speech is the most dangerous of all subversions. It is the one anti-American act that could most easily defeat us.
On the morning of October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union successfully launched the world’s first artificial satellite named Sputnik (Russian for “travelling companion”). Weighing 184 pounds, the satellite orbited the earth at 18,000 miles per hour. The booster launching demonstrated the skill of Soviet missile science. Americans were extremely disturbed. Strategic air force units were dispersed and placed on alert, short-range Jupiter missiles were installed in Turkey and Italy, money was poured into missile and bomber programs, and achievement “gaps” were discovered in everything from missile production to classroom performance.

Secretary of State Dulles was concerned about the impact the launch would have on world affairs. He felt that “the newly emerging nations could view Russia as a people who in 1917 had been generations behind other industrialized nations but who, through harsh regimentation, had assumed first place in the race for control of outer space. They could also interpret the launching as a dramatic swing in the balance of military power toward Moscow.”

President Eisenhower, however, knew from his intelligence sources that Soviet missile forces posed little threat to the US. The purported Soviet lead in ICBMs was not real. He refused to skew the economy by dramatically increasing military spending.
President Truman made a dramatic address on March 12, 1947, to both Houses of the US Congress. In the speech (known as Truman’s Declaration of Cold War), the president asked Americans to join in a global commitment against communism. He asked for $400 million in emergency aid and for the right to send US troops to administer reconstruction and train local forces in Greece and Turkey. These measures were necessary, he said, to save those countries from imminent Communist takeover. The Truman administration feared that the Greek Communists would align Greece with the Soviet Union.

The president said the US had no choice but to step in with an extensive program of economic and military assistance:

I believe 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.

This became known as the Truman Doctrine. It appeared to apply globally, not only to southeastern Europe.
Congress, in an unprecedented show of bipartisan responsibility, voted an aid program for Greece and Turkey in May. The congressional action confirmed the end of Britain’s role as a dominant world power and the beginning of America’s role as principle guardian of the postwar peace. It also set forth the basic postwar philosophy of containment of Soviet aggression. (For more on containment, see Letter C.) Senator J. William Fulbright declared:

More by far than any other factor the anti-communism of the Truman Doctrine has been the guiding spirit of American foreign policy since World War II.

Noted historian Walter LaFeber says the Truman Doctrine was a milestone in American history for at least 4 reasons:

1) It marked the point at which Truman used the American fear of communism both at home and abroad to convince Americans they must embark upon a Cold War foreign policy;

2) Congress gave the President great powers to wage the Cold War as he saw fit;

3) For the first time in the postwar era, Americans massively intervened in another nation’s civil war; this intervention was justified on the basis of anticommunism;

4) Truman used the doctrine to justify a gigantic aid program to prevent a collapse of the European and American economies; later such programs were expanded globally.

The Truman Doctrine became an ideological shield behind which the US marched to rebuild the Western political-economic system and counter the radical left. From 1947 on, any threats to the Western system could be explained as communist-inspired, not as problems arising from difficulties within the system itself.
In 1956, the US Air Force bought 48 single-seater models of Lockheed’s U-2 spy plane, and five 2-seater models. The planes flew too high for Soviet anti-aircraft missiles or fighters, and had free reign after 1957. They flew from bases in Japan, Turkey, and Britain, staying in the air for 12 hours, and mapping and photographing the Russian land mass, air and missile bases, and factories.

In 1960, as President Eisenhower prepared for a summit with Russia’s Khruschev in Paris, the CIA pressed for one last U-2 mission over the Soviet Union to establish whether there was a missile plant or base near the Urals. It was one mission too many.
On May 5 as the summit was about to begin, Khruschev announced that a U-2 had been shot down over Soviet territory. The Americans denied that the plane had been on a spy mission, but Khruschev produced the pilot, Gary Powers, along with his suicide needle, cameras, and other evidence.

Eisenhower accepted responsibility and declared in Paris that the spy flights had taken place with his full knowledge. Khruschev insisted on an American apology, a promise not to do it again, and that ‘the criminals be punished’. Ike refused.

France’s DeGaulle pointed out that modern technology was making sovereignty over a state’s higher airspace a more and more elusive concept. He pointed out that a Soviet satellite was orbiting over France.

In the end, the Paris summit never took place. A month later the Soviet delegation walked out of the Geneva disarmament talks.

By late 1961, the U-2 flights and the first of the American spy satellites made it clear that the US had overwhelming superiority in the ability to deliver nuclear weapons, even if not in warheads.

In 1962, U-2 flights played a critical role in the Cuban Missile Crisis.
**Vietnamization** involved the gradual unilateral withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam. The policy, initiated by President Eisenhower, was coupled with stepped-up training and equipping of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Ike’s intention was to give the South Vietnamese the maximum chance for survival after the departure of the Americans. At a minimum, it was to leave a “decent interval” between the American exit and whatever might befall the Vietnamese.

In the early 1970s, **Vietnamization** became a catchword for Richard Nixon’s policy. The expectation of the Nixon administration was that, given the proper circumstances, the Vietnamese could survive without American troops. However, as one US official said, **Vietnamization** simply meant “changing the color of the corpses.”

Photograph by: jonrawlinson
Enacted over President Nixon’s veto in November 1973, the War Powers Act (Resolution) of 1973 required that “in every possible instance” the President must consult with Congress before sending troops into hostilities.

The law also required that, when the President commits forces, he must send a full explanation to Congress within two days. He must withdraw forces within sixty days unless Congress expressly gives him permission to keep them in battle. In reality, the act gives the President the power to wage war for sixty days without congressional approval.

Congress hoped the law could prevent future Vietnams. Actually, though, it reflected the political weakness of the presidency in the 1970s. Nixon saw the act as unconstitutional. So have all his successors, Democrat or Republican.
The “X” article appeared in the July 1947 issue of *Foreign Affairs* under the mysterious pseudonym, Mr. “X.” Written by George Kennan, Washington’s most respected expert on Soviet affairs, the article gave the Truman administration’s view of what made the Russians “act like communists.” The analysis began by assuming that Stalin’s policy was shaped by a combination of Marxist-Leninist ideology, advocating revolution to defeat the capitalist forces in the outside world. It emphasized the dictator’s determination to use “capitalist encirclement” as a rationale to regiment the Soviet masses so that he could consolidate his own political power. (For more on encirclement, see Letters E and Z.) Mr. “X” believed that Stalin wouldn’t moderate communist determination to overthrow Western governments. He argued that any softening of the Russian line would be a diversionary tactic designed to lull the West into complacency. He thought Soviet aggression could only “be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of a counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” (For more on containment, see Letter C.) The US would have to undertake containment alone and unilaterally, but if it could do so without weakening its prosperity and political stability, the Soviet party structure would undergo a period of immense strain climaxing in “either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.” The publication of the article triggered intense debate, but, in the end, it spurred increased concern with all things military.
The “Big Three” — Britain, Russia, and the United States — met at Yalta, a resort on the Russian Black Sea, in February 1945. Their purpose was to shape the post World War II world. During the conference, the Western Allies (to their regret) acknowledged that the enormous Soviet sacrifices and successes in the war entitled the Soviet Union to a preeminent role in Eastern Europe. This understanding was reflected in a number of key decisions that — during the Cold War — became known as “the treason of Yalta” or the “Yalta agreements.”
At the conference a nasty debate erupted over the future of Poland. The Soviets had recognized a communist-dominated regime before the meetings began. During the talks, FDR and Churchill demanded that pro-Western Poles be included in the government. The three men finally agreed that the regime must be “reorganized on a broader democratic basis.” To reinforce the agreement, FDR proposed a “Declaration of Liberated Europe,” providing that each of the three powers would pledge cooperation in applying the self-determination principle to newly liberated nations. The Russians amended the declaration until it was almost meaningless.

Stalin left Yalta believing that his allies had acquiesced to his domination over Eastern Europe. But he had miscalculated. Two weeks after the conference adjourned, the Soviets demanded that the king of Rumania appoint a communist-controlled government. The US claimed that Stalin was breaking the Declaration of Liberated Europe. Control of Eastern Europe was at stake. Soon after, a crisis developed when Russia refused to allow more than three pro-Western Poles into the 18 member Polish government.

For America, Poland became the test case of Soviet intentions. On April 1, Roosevelt warned Stalin that the Soviet plan for Poland could not be accepted. Within a week Roosevelt was dead and the new President, Harry Truman, inherited a decayed alliance. Truman demanded that the Soviets agree to a “new” (not just “reorganized”) Polish government. Stalin rejected Truman’s demand, observing that it was contrary to the Yalta agreement. Truman’s toughness reinforced the Russian determination to control Poland. By mid 1945, Churchill would note that an “iron fence” was falling around Eastern Europe. (For more on the Iron Curtain, see letter I.)
At the first Cominform conference in September 1947, Andrei Zdanov, Stalin’s Politburo colleague, articulated the Soviet response to Mr. X. He surveyed the Russian view of the global situation as it had emerged from World War II. In what has become known as the Two Camp Speech, Zdanov announced that American economic power was organizing Western Europe and “countries politically and economically dependent on the United States, such as the Near-Eastern and South-American countries and China” into an anticommunist bloc. The Russians and the “new democracies” in Eastern Europe, Finland, Indonesia, and Vietnam meanwhile formed another bloc which “has the sympathy of India, Egypt and Syria.” Zdanov argued that the world was now divided into two camps, the “imperialist and anti-democratic camp” and the “anti-imperialist and democratic camp.” This two-camp view of the world had previously dominated Russian policy between 1927 and 1934 when Stalin bitterly opposed the West. Post WWII, it became known as the Zdanov Doctrine.