PART I

THE COLD WAR

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2 FROM WORLD WAR TO COLD WAR

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain the reasoning for the Soviet Union's distrust of the United States after World War II.
- Discuss the Russo-Soviet approach to foreign policy.
- Examine Soviet expansion after World War II.
- Contrast the major strategic positions on American policy regarding the Soviet Union after World War II.
- List the major goals of the Truman Doctrine.

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World War II left the European landmass in ruin. Japan and its short-lived empire were devastated. China was immersed in civil war. India remained under colonial rule, as did most of Africa. In Latin America, poverty and government repression plagued most lives.

By contrast, the United States emerged from the war physically secure, politically stable, and economically prosperous. The "arsenal of democracy" created by Franklin Roosevelt, by now the world's most potent military force, also remained intact.[1] For the second time in three decades, Americans had been drawn into world war and triumphed.

How would the United States manage its "preponderance of power"?[2] It was one thing to exploit the seemingly limitless natural resources of North America during the nation's western expansion and industrial development. It was quite another for the U.S. government to manage the transformed world order in a way that preserved its security. While many aspects of the post–World War II order remained unclear in 1945, the only thing certain was that the United States would be vital in creating and managing that order. Decisions made in Washington would reverberate worldwide; its choices of friends and enemies would determine the balance of power.

But even before the embers of World War II had cooled, the sparks of a new conflict illuminated the future of American foreign policy. The United States and the Soviet Union confronted one another with rival political systems and conflicts of interest throughout the world. As the first half of this book describes, the subsequent

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power struggle between the two countries would become the defining feature of world politics for decades to come. Nine American presidents would take part in managing this bipolar power balance. No foreign country would be able to escape the pressures, dangers, and consequences of the Cold War.

National Archives

President Franklin Roosevelt (center) confers with Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (left) and British prime minister Winston Churchill (right) in Tehran in November 1943. The three leaders, who had joined forces to defeat Germany, would meet again in Yalta in February 1945 to discuss military strategy and the structure of the postwar world.

Signs of this schism between Washington and Moscow were ignored as the final battles of World War II were fought in central Europe and East Asia.[3] Such neglect was reflected in a U.S. War Department memorandum written before a conference between British prime minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin Roosevelt. "With Germany crushed, there is no power in Europe to oppose her [the Soviet Union's] tremendous military forces," the report stated. "The conclusions from the foregoing are obvious. Since Russia is the decisive factor in the war, she must be given every assistance, and every effort must be made to obtain her friendship. Likewise, since without question she will dominate Europe on the defeat of the Axis, it is even more essential to develop and maintain the most friendly relations with Russia."[4] The importance of this assessment lies less in its prediction of the Soviet Union's postwar position, which was fairly obvious, than in its statement of American expectations about future U.S.-Soviet relations. Military leaders apparently accepted without any major misgivings the prospect of the Soviet Union as the new dominant power in Europe. They did not imagine that it might replace Nazi Germany as a grave threat to the European and global

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balance of power. Although twice in the twentieth century, the United States had been propelled into Europe's wars at exactly those moments when Germany became so powerful that it almost destroyed this balance, the lessons of history—specifically, the impact of any nation's domination of Europe on American security—had not yet been absorbed. Roosevelt and the U.S. government did not attempt to reestablish a balance of power in Europe to safeguard the United States; they expected this security to stem from mutual U.S.-Soviet goodwill, unsupported by considerations of power. This reliance on goodwill and mutual esteem was to prove foolish at best—and fatal at worst.

AMERICAN WARTIME ILLUSIONS

Postwar expectations of an "era of good feelings" between the Soviet Union and the United States epitomized the idealistic nature of American foreign policy, which perceived war as a disruption of the normal harmony among nations. Once the war was finished, this thinking presumed natural harmony would be restored, and the struggle for power would end. In Washington, government leaders celebrated the triumph of America's moral vision and its rejection of old-style power politics. As World War II wound down, Secretary of State Cordell Hull anticipated the day in which "there will no longer be need for spheres of influence, for alliances, for balance of power, or any other of the special arrangements through which, in the unhappy past, the nations strove to safeguard their security or to promote their interests."[5]

Such optimism about the future of U.S.-Soviet relations made it necessary to explain away continuing signs of Soviet distrust during World War II. When the Allies postponed the launching of their western front against Germany from 1942 to 1944, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin rejected Allied explanations that they were not yet properly equipped for such an enormous undertaking. Stalin especially denounced Churchill for refusing to intervene until the Germans were so weakened that Allied forces would not have to suffer massive losses.

It is no wonder, then, that the Soviets adopted their own interpretation of American and British behavior. From the Marxist viewpoint, the Allies were doing exactly what a rational observer would expect: postponing the second front until the Soviet Union and Germany, the communist and fascist superpowers in Europe, respectively, had exhausted each other. Then the United States and Britain could land in France, march into Germany without heavy losses, and dictate the peace to both countries. The Western delay was seen in Moscow as a deliberate attempt by the world's leading capitalist powers to destroy their two major ideological opponents at one and the same time.

For their part, American leaders found a ready explanation for the Soviets' suspicions. Roosevelt placed Soviet distrust squarely in the context of the West's previous anti-Sovietism: The Allied intervention in Russia at the end of World War I aimed at overthrowing the Soviet regime and, after the failure of that attempt, the establishment of a *cordon*

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sanitaire in Eastern Europe to keep Soviet influence from spreading; the West's rejection of Soviet offers in the mid- to late 1930s to build an alliance against Adolf Hitler; and, especially, the effects of the Munich agreement of 1938, when Britain and France stood by while the Nazi dictator destroyed Czechoslovakia, opening his gateway to the East. These efforts by the West to weaken and ultimately destroy the Soviet Union, as well as its attempts to turn Hitler's threat away from Western Europe and toward Russia, were considered the primary reasons for Soviet hostility. To overcome this attitude, American leaders thought they had only to demonstrate good intentions.

Roosevelt's efforts to gain this cooperation focused on Stalin. In that respect, Roosevelt's instincts were correct: If he could gain Stalin's trust, postwar U.S.-Soviet cooperation would be possible. But in another respect, his instincts were poor. Roosevelt's political experience was in the domestic arena. He had dealt successfully with all sorts of politicians and had managed to resolve differences by finding compromising solutions. As a result, he had great confidence in his ability to win Stalin's favor. He would talk to Stalin as "one politician to another." In short, Roosevelt saw Stalin as a Russian version of himself—a fellow politician who could be won over by a mixture of concessions and goodwill. It did not occur to Roosevelt that all of his considerable skill and charm might not suffice with the man he referred to as "Uncle Joe." At home, these qualities were enough because he and his opponents agreed on ultimate goals; differences were largely over the means to achieve them. But the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union were over the ends, the kind of world each expected to see when the war was over.

In February 1945 at the Yalta Conference of the Big Three—Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill—Roosevelt and his advisers believed they had firmly established amicable and lasting relations with the Soviet Union.[6] Stalin had made concessions on a number of vital issues and had pledged cooperation in the future. In the Declaration on Liberated Europe, he promised to support self-government and allow free elections in Eastern Europe. He also responded to the wishes of the American military and promised to enter the war against Japan after Hitler was finally subdued. Stalin sought repeatedly to reassure the Allies by expressing hope for fifty years of peace and great-power cooperation.

Upon his return from Yalta, Roosevelt told Congress and the American people that his recent conference with Stalin and Churchill "ought to spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the spheres of influence, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries—and have always failed." Instead, "We propose to substitute for all these, a universal organization in which all peace-loving nations will fully have a chance to join."[7]

The new era of goodwill was to be embodied in the United Nations (UN), the symbol of democracy working on a global scale. Through the UN, power politics would be replaced by reliance on sound universal principles and cooperation. Roosevelt hosted the UN's organizing conference, which was held in San Francisco early in 1945. Under the plan approved by fifty governments at the conference, the UN's General Assembly

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would provide a forum for all countries to meet and discuss their concerns. The most pressing and immediate problems would come before the UN Security Council, composed of fifteen countries. Ten of these seats would rotate among all UN members, and the United States and four other great powers—Britain, China, France, and the Soviet Union—would have permanent seats and would be able to veto any proposed actions they opposed. These measures were a bow to the realism that was lacking in Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations and assured passage of the UN Charter and construction of the UN headquarters in New York City.

THE RUSSO-SOVIET APPROACH TO FOREIGN POLICY

In Chapter 1, it was argued that before World War II, American foreign policy was shaped by a cultural tradition that reflected the nation's detachment from the great powers of Europe and its pursuit of regional security in the Western Hemisphere. It is thus useful to contrast the American tradition with that of its Cold War rival, the Soviet Union, whose leaders also inherited a distinct style of foreign policy, the product of centuries of fragile coexistence with a menacing external environment. These leaders then integrated the lessons of Russian history with the maxims of Marxist-Leninist ideology to fashion an assertive and confrontational approach to postwar foreign affairs. The emergence of the Soviet Union as a global superpower, and the American response to this shift in the balance of power, would dominate world politics for nearly half a century.

The Russian Background

Understanding the source of the Russo-Soviet foreign policy begins by simply analyzing a globe. Unlike the United States and other maritime powers, Russia was not blessed by geography. Unprotected by natural barriers such as oceans or mountains, its people were vulnerable to invasions from several directions. And the enormous size of its territory rendered internal cohesion, communication, and transportation very difficult—a situation exacerbated by the diverse ethnic backgrounds, languages, and religious identities of the Russian people.

Russian leaders viewed their history as a succession of external attacks on their territory. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mongols from the East ruled Russia. By the 1460s, their domination had been repelled, and a Russian state had emerged with Muscovy (Moscow) as its capital. In more modern times, Napoleon Bonaparte's armies invaded and captured Moscow in 1812. British and French armies, backed by their allies in the Ottoman Empire, sought to occupy the Crimean Peninsula from 1854 to 1856, capturing several cities in bloody battles. Half a century later, Japan attacked and claimed territories in eastern Russia in 1904–1905. Most notably, Germany invaded Russia twice during the twentieth century. Its first attack prompted the final collapse of the Russian monarchy, civil war, and the rise of the communists

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to power; its second cost the Soviet Union millions of lives and untold destruction of property. The United States under Woodrow Wilson also deployed troops to Russia, launching an expedition in 1918 to support anti-Bolshevik forces that tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent the creation of a communist government in Moscow.

Historically, then, Russia could not take its security for granted or give priority to domestic affairs. In these circumstances, power became centralized. All the political leaders, under both the czarist and communist governments, firmly held their far-flung regions together. Such efforts, however, required large standing military forces, and much of the Russian population was mobilized in their service. Indeed, the Russian armed forces were consistently larger than the armies of the other European great powers, a fact not lost on political leaders in Warsaw, Budapest, Paris, and London.

This militarization of Russian society, purportedly for defensive purposes, also carried with it the potential for outward aggression. The same lack of natural frontiers that failed to protect Russia from invasion also allowed its power to extend beyond its frontiers. To the historian Richard Pipes, Russia no more became the world's largest territorial state by repelling repeated invasions than a man becomes rich by being robbed.[8] Indeed, sustained territorial expansion became known as the "Russian way." According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser, any list of aggressions against Russia in the last two centuries would be dwarfed by a list of Russia's expansionist moves against its neighbors.[9]

Whether Russian motives were defensive or offensive, the result was a pattern of expansion. To the degree that Russian rulers feared attacks, they pushed outward to keep the enemy as far away as possible. Territorial extension became a partial substitute for the lack of wide rivers or mountains that might have afforded a degree of natural protection. Individual rulers' ambitions, such as Peter the Great's determination to have access to the sea, also resulted in territorial conquest and defeat of the power blocking that aim (in this case, Sweden). Even before the communist revolutionaries, or Bolsheviks, seized power and established a one-party state, authoritarianism, militarism, and expansionism characterized the Russian government. The basic "rules" of power politics—the emphasis on national interests, distrust of other states, expectation of conflict, self-reliance, and the possession of sufficient power, especially military power—were deeply ingrained in Russia's leaders.

The Soviet Ingredient

These attitudes, deeply embedded in Russian history, were modified and strengthened by the outlook of the new regime after 1917. Vladimir Lenin, the founder and first premier of the Soviet Union, fused Russian political culture with Marxist ideology. His all-encompassing *weltanschauung* (worldview) did not dictate action in specific situations. Instead, Lenin's perspective provided the new regime with a broad framework for understanding and relating to the outside world.

For Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks, history centered on the class struggle between the rich and privileged who owned the means of production and the greater numbers of

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propertyless citizens who worked for them. Why were most human beings poor, illiterate, and unhealthy? Why did states fight wars? The answer was that a small minority of capitalists, monopolizing the industrialized world's wealth and power, exploited the men and women who worked in their factories to maximize profits. To keep wages down, they kept food prices low, with the result that agricultural labor also lived in destitution. Domestically as well as internationally, wars were one product of the ongoing search by these capitalists for profits.

The predictable result was the conflict waged over dividing up the non-European colonial world. For Lenin, global imperialism represented the "highest stage of capitalism." As he summed up his argument in 1917, "Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development in which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the great capitalist powers has been completed."[10] Lenin viewed World War I as a climactic showdown among capitalist empires, a fight for the spoils of the developing world now that their own frontiers were settled. Like a shark, the capitalist economy could not be still. Capitalists had to expand their firms and markets constantly lest they be swallowed up in the competition for economic markets. If human beings were ever to live in freedom and enjoy a decent standard of living, capitalism must be replaced by communism—by revolution if necessary.

As Lenin was aware, the application of Marxism to Russia suffered from one glaring deficiency. In Karl Marx's dialectic view, communism stemmed directly from the failures of capitalism. Thus a communist society must first experience industrialization, urbanization, and the enlistment of its working classes into an organized "proletariat," none of which occurred in Russia to the extent necessary to spark revolution. Lenin attempted to resolve this problem by centralizing power in a "vanguard" of enlightened Marxists, who would bring communism to the Russian people without first exposing them to the contradictions and inequalities of capitalism. Once firmly in place within the Kremlin, this vanguard would then disseminate Lenin's ideological vision through a pervasive propaganda campaign.

Soviet leaders believed the state system, increasingly composed of capitalist states with close economic ties, was a very hostile environment. They rejected the latter's professions of goodwill and peaceful intentions and committed their country to the "inevitable and irreconcilable struggle" against these states. Stalin fostered a strong emphasis on self-reliance and an equally intense emphasis on Soviet power. Tactically, he was convinced that when an enemy made concessions in negotiations or became more accommodating, it was not because the enemy wanted a friendlier relationship; rather, it was because the enemy was *compelled* to do so by the Soviet Union's growing strength, a rationale used by Stalin to amass ever more military power. In short, Stalin and his successors imposed constant pressure on the United States and its allies while managing their communist system at home with an iron fist.

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Russian history served as a warning to Soviet leaders that peace was but preparation for the next war. The Soviet worldview, in short, reinforced the historically repetitious cycles that had resulted in further expansion of Soviet power. Even if insecurity, rather than any historical mission, drove this expansion, the result for neighboring states remained the same—they were vulnerable. They were perceived as inherent threats to Soviet interests, and they represented possible additions to the Soviet Union's own frontiers. Such a drive to achieve absolute security in a system that rendered such security utterly impossible left other governments insecure in the early Cold War. The contrast between the American culture, which emphasized peace as normal and conflict as abnormal, and the culture of the Soviet Union, which stressed the pervasiveness of war, could not have been more striking. Both societies felt a sense of historical mission, and yet their principles, goals, and tactics were worlds apart. These clashing approaches to foreign policy were to confront one another as the Soviet and Western armies, led by the United States, advanced from the opposite sides of Europe.

SOVIET EXPANSION AFTER WORLD WAR II

The American dream of postwar peace was shattered when the Soviet (Red) Army, having finally halted the Nazi armies and decisively defeated the Germans at Stalingrad in late 1942, began to pursue the retreating Germans westward toward Berlin. Even before the war ended, the Soviet Union expanded into eastern and central Europe and began to impose its control on Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania. In these nations, the Soviets unilaterally established "puppet" governments. With key posts in communist hands, the Soviets found it easy to extend their domination further. It became clear that the Yalta Declaration, in which the Soviets had pledged to allow democratic governments in Eastern Europe, meant something different to the Soviets than to the Americans. After suffering two German invasions in less than thirty years, it was not surprising that the Soviet Union would try to establish "friendly" governments throughout the area. For the Soviets, democratic governments were communist regimes, and free elections were elections only among members of the Communist Party. Western peace treaties with the former German satellite states (Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania), painfully negotiated by the victors in 1945 and 1946, could not loosen the Kremlin's grip on what were by now Soviet satellites.

In terms of the state system, the Soviet behavior was understandable. Each state had to act as its own guardian against potential adversaries in a system characterized by conflict among states and a sense of insecurity and fear on the part of its members. As the alliance against the common enemy came to an end, the Soviet Union predictably would strengthen itself against the power most likely to be its new opponent. As czarist Russia, with a long history of invasions from the east and the west, it had learned the basic rules of the international game through bitter experience. As the Soviet Union, its sense of peril and mistrust had been intensified by an ideology that posited capitalist states as implacable enemies. In the war, it had suffered more than twenty million

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casualties, both soldiers and civilians. Thus the establishment of noncommunist regimes in Eastern Europe was unacceptable, and the American insistence on free elections was viewed as an attempt to push the Soviet Union out of Europe.

U.S.-Soviet Differences

The question of elections vividly illustrated the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union. During the war, Roosevelt worried that Soviet and U.S. interests might clash in the period of flux after Germany's defeat. He therefore single-mindedly pursued a policy of friendship toward the Soviet Union. Roosevelt, however, did not view free elections in Eastern Europe in terms of the creation of a new anti-Soviet belt. For him, free elections and a friendly attitude between East and West were quite compatible.

The model he had in mind was Czechoslovakia. As the only democracy in that area, Czechoslovakia had maintained close ties with the West since its birth after World War I. But because France and Britain had failed to defend Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 and betrayed it by appeasing Hitler, it also had become friendly with the Soviet Union. After 1945, Czechoslovakia, like the other Eastern European states, knew that it lay in the Soviet sphere of influence and that its security depended on getting along with, not irritating, its powerful neighbor. Thus Czech leaders expressed amicable feelings for the Soviet Union and signed a security treaty with Moscow. Later, in one of the rare free elections the Soviets allowed in Eastern Europe, the Communist Party received the largest vote of any party and therefore the key posts in the government.

During World War II, the heroic Soviet war effort and sacrifices had created a reservoir of goodwill in the West. Had the Soviets acted with greater restraint after the war and accepted states that, regardless of their governments' composition, would have adjusted to their Soviet neighbor, Stalin could have had the security he was seeking. But Stalin did not trust the American government. No matter how personable Roosevelt was, Stalin saw him as the leader of a capitalist nation. As a "tool of Wall Street," Roosevelt could not be sincere in his peaceful professions.

From London, Winston Churchill voiced concerns about Soviet expansion and urged the United States to send forces to take control of Berlin and to advance further east into Czechoslovakia. He also suggested that, until Stalin observed his agreements in Eastern Europe, U.S. forces not pull back to their agreed-upon occupation zones in Germany and the United States not shift its military power to the Far East for the final offensive against Japan. Roosevelt rejected all of these suggestions. He had assured Stalin that all American troops would be withdrawn within two years after the war. Why then should Stalin worry about U.S. opposition to his efforts to control Eastern Europe? Carefully waiting to see what the United States would do, Stalin allowed free elections in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the two states closest to American power. But elsewhere, he solidified Soviet control.

In the absence of Western protests about Stalin's actions, Hungary's freedom was soon squashed by the Soviets.[11] Then in 1948, the Czech government was overthrown

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by the Soviets in a coup d'état, even though the Communist Party had the largest plurality. Contrary to Roosevelt's expectations, not even a communist-controlled coalition government was acceptable to Stalin. The Soviet leader's conception of Soviet security left little, if any, security for his neighbors. The limits of Moscow's power had to be defined by the United States.

The Soviet Push to the South

Just as in the two world wars when Britain had led the effort to contain Germany, London—not Washington—took the first step toward opposing the Soviet Union after 1945. Indeed, the United States at first tried to play the role of mediator between the Soviet Union and Britain. Only when British power proved to be insufficient did the United States take over the task of balancing Soviet power. America's initiative, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, evolved gradually over 1946–1947 and was precipitated by Stalin's attempt to consolidate his power beyond Eastern Europe. The Soviets began moving even before the smoke from World War II had cleared (Map 2.1). Turkey, Greece, and Iran were the first to feel their pressure. If Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe could be explained in defensive terms, this was less true for the area south of the Soviet Union, the line from Turkey to India. Long before Stalin, the czars sought to establish a warm-water port on the Mediterranean Sea and to establish a presence in the Middle East, goals that Stalin later shared.

The Soviet Union first sought to gain influence in Turkey in June 1945, when it made several demands: the cession of several Turkish districts lying on the Turkish-Soviet frontier; a revision of the Montreux Convention governing the Dardanelles Strait in favor of a joint Soviet-Turkish administration; the severance of Turkey's ties with Britain and the conclusion of a treaty with the Soviet Union; and, finally, an opportunity to lease bases in the Dardanelles for Soviet naval and land forces, to be used for "joint defense." These demands aroused great concern in the United States, which sent a naval task force into the Mediterranean Sea. Twelve days later, the United States formally replied to the Soviets by rejecting their demand to share responsibility for the defense of the straits with Turkey. Britain sent a similar reply.

In Greece, communist pressure was exerted on the government through widespread guerrilla warfare, which began in the fall of 1946. Civil war in Greece was nothing new. During World War II, communist and anticommunist guerrillas had spent much of their energy battling each other instead of the Germans. When the British landed in Greece and the Germans withdrew, the communists attempted to take over Athens. Only after several weeks of bitter street fighting and the landing of British reinforcements was the communist control of Athens dislodged; a truce was signed in January 1945. Just over a year later, the Greeks held a general election in which right-wing forces captured the majority of votes. In August 1946, the communist forces renewed the war in the north, where the Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe could keep the guerrillas well supplied.

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MAP 2.1 ■ Soviet Expansion in Europe, 1939–1948

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union intensified pressure on Iran by refusing to withdraw its troops from that country. The troops had been there since late 1941, when the Soviet Union and Britain had invaded Iran to forestall the spread of Nazi influence and to use the nation as a corridor through which the West could ship military aid to the Soviet Union. The Soviets had occupied northern Iran, while the British occupied the central and southern sections. When the British withdrew, the Soviets sought to convert Iran into a Soviet satellite. The Iranian prime minister's offer of oil concessions to convince

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the Soviets to withdraw was rebuffed. Moscow's goal was nothing less than detaching the northern area of Azerbaijan and then by various means pressuring Iran into servile status. The U.S. government was once more confronted by the need to support London. After the United States and Britain delivered firm statements that they would use force to defend Iran, Stalin finally relented.

Although American foreign policies in these areas were largely effective, actions taken by President Harry S. Truman, Roosevelt's successor, were merely swift reactions to immediate crises.[12] The policies were not the product of an overall American strategy toward waging and winning the Cold War. Such a coherent strategy came only after a reassessment of Soviet foreign policy that placed Moscow's behavior after World War II in historical perspective.

THE STRATEGY OF CONTAINMENT

Eighteen months passed before the United States undertook that review—from the surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945, until the announcement of the Truman Doctrine on March 12, 1947. Perhaps such a reevaluation could not have been made any more quickly. Public opinion in a democratic country does not normally shift drastically overnight. It would have been too much to expect Americans to suddenly abandon their friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union, inspired largely by the images of Soviet wartime bravery and endurance and by hopes for peaceful postwar cooperation. Moreover, war-weary citizens of the United States wished to be left alone to occupy themselves once more with domestic affairs.

Military leaders urged Truman to reduce the armed forces gradually in order to safeguard the enhanced strategic position of the United States. But the president and Congress, sensing the national desire for detachment from foreign concerns, ordered the "most rapid demobilization in the history of the world."[13] Total active-duty troop levels fell from more than 12 million in 1945 to fewer than 1.5 million in 1948 (see Figure 2.1). This reduction in military strength, a symptom of America's psychological demobilization, no doubt encouraged the Soviet Union's intransigence in Europe and its attempts to extend its influence elsewhere. Even with the steep reductions in military personnel, the United States continued to possess the largest navy in the world and a nuclear monopoly. But after U.S. commitments to occupied territories were taken into account, "the United States lacked the ground forces required to intervene in anything greater than a minor conflict."[14]

When Soviet expansion finally led to a reevaluation of American policy, three strategic positions became clear. At one extreme stood that old realist Winston Churchill, who had long counseled against the withdrawal of American troops from Europe. He insisted that the presence of British and American troops would force the Soviet Union to live up to its Yalta obligations to allow free elections in Eastern Europe and to withdraw the Red Army from eastern Germany. After the United States rejected his plea,

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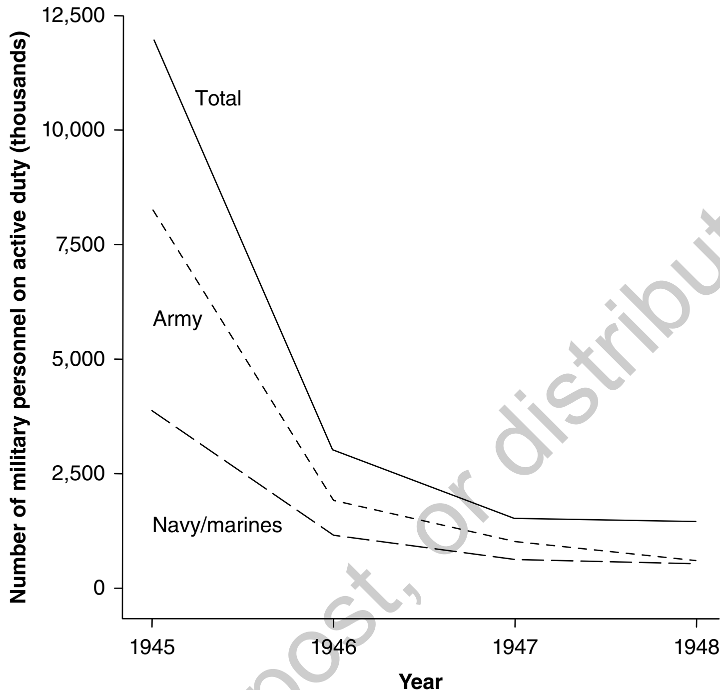
FIGURE 2.1 ■ American Demobilization after World War II



Churchill took his case directly to the American public in a March 1946 speech at Fulton, Missouri: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, all the famous cities and populations around them lie in the Soviet sphere and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow."[15]

Churchill did not believe that the Soviets wanted war: "What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines." And the only thing lying between the Soviets and their desires was the opposing power of the British Commonwealth and the United States. In short, Churchill was saying bluntly that the Cold War had begun, and that Americans must recognize this fact and give up their dreams of Big Three (United States, Great Britain, and Soviet Union) unity in the United Nations.

At the other extreme stood Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace, who felt Churchill's antagonistic views merely inflamed Soviet hostility. The United States and Britain, he said, had no more business in Eastern Europe than the Soviet Union had in Latin America. Consequently, Western intervention in nations bordering the Soviet

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Union was bound to arouse Soviet suspicion. "We may not like what Russia does in Eastern Europe," said Wallace. "But whether we like it or not, the Russians will try to socialize their sphere of influence just as we try to democratize our sphere of influence." Only mutual trust would allow the United States and the Soviet Union to live together peacefully, and such trust could not be created by an unfriendly American attitude and policy. "The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get," Wallace predicted.[16]

George Kennan and the New Grand Strategy

The task of devising a comprehensive U.S. response to the Soviet Union was assigned to George F. Kennan, the State Department's foremost expert on the Soviet Union. In a detailed telegram sent from the U.S. embassy in Moscow, Kennan in 1946 analyzed the Soviets' outlook on world affairs and mapped out a counterstrategy that would form the basis of American foreign policy for nearly half a century.[17] More generally, Kennan devised a plan for "political warfare [that]? sought the integration of every possible method, short of war, to achieve U.S. objectives."[18]

Kennan's report began with a summary of Russia's long history of insecurity with vast, largely unprotected frontiers. This cultural trait was then combined with communist ideology, which claimed that it was the communists' duty to overthrow the capitalist states throughout the world. This assertion of Soviet military power, guided by "the powerful hands of Russian history and tradition," sustained Moscow in its pledge to destroy the capitalist system.[19] From the U.S. government's standpoint, this hostility was visible daily in Soviet foreign policy: "the secretiveness, the lack of frankness, the duplicity, the war suspiciousness, and the basic unfriendliness of purpose." Kennan explained that "these characteristics of the Soviet policy, like the postulates from which they flow, are basic to the *internal* nature of Soviet power, and will be with us . . . until the nature of Soviet power is changed."[20] Until that moment, he said, Soviet strategy and objectives would remain the same.

The U.S.-Soviet struggle would thus be a long one, but Kennan stressed that Soviet hostility did not mean the Soviets would embark on a do-or-die program to overthrow capitalism by a fixed date. Given their sense of historical inevitability, they had no timetable for conquest. In a brilliant passage, Kennan outlined the Soviet concept of the struggle:

> The Kremlin is under no ideological compulsion to accomplish its purposes in a hurry. Like the Church, it is dealing in ideological concepts which are of a long-term validity, and it can afford to be patient. It has no right to risk the existing achievements of the revolution for the sake of vain baubles of the future. The very teachings of Lenin himself require great caution and flexibility in the pursuit of communist purposes. Again, these precepts are fortified by the lessons of Russian history: of centuries of obscure battles between nomadic forces over the stretches of a vast unfortified plain. Here caution, circumspection, flexibility, and deception are the valuable qualities. . . . The main thing is that there should always be pressure, increasing constant pressure, toward the

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> desired goal. There is no trace of any feeling in Soviet psychology that the goal must be reached at any given time.[21]

How could the United States counter such a policy? Kennan's answer was that American policy would have to be one of "long-term, patient, but firm and vigilant containment." He viewed containment as a test of American democracy to conduct an intelligent, long-range foreign policy *and* simultaneously contribute to changes within the Soviet Union that ultimately would bring about a moderation of its revolutionary aims. The United States, he emphasized in a passage that was to take on great meaning four decades later,

> has it in its power to increase enormously the strains under which Soviet policy must operate, to force upon the Kremlin a far greater degree of moderation and circumspection than it has had to observe in recent years, and in this way to promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power. For no mystical, messianic movement—and particularly not that of the Kremlin—can face frustration indefinitely without eventually adjusting itself in one way or another to the logic of that state of affairs.[22]

And why was the United States so favorably positioned for a long-term struggle with the Soviet Union? The reason, Kennan argued, was that industry was the key ingredient of power and the United States controlled most of the centers of industry. There were five such centers in the world: the United States, Britain, West Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union. The United States and its allies constituted four of these centers, the Soviet Union just one. Containment meant confining the Soviet Union to that one. The question, Kennan said, was not whether the United States had sufficient power to contain the Soviet Union, but whether it had the patience and wisdom to do so.[23]

Alternatives to Containment

Kennan's containment strategy was generally well received in Washington, which then embarked on the complex task of translating the strategy's generalities into specific initiatives. These initiatives would, in turn, entail new strategies for the military services, a greater emphasis on economic statecraft and foreign assistance, and an ongoing effort to enlist foreign countries into bilateral and multilateral alliance networks (see Chapter 3).

In adopting containment, the Truman administration implicitly rejected two other courses of action that had substantial support. The first was a retreat into the traditional pattern of U.S. isolation from European diplomacy. This alternative was rejected when, on the afternoon of February 21, 1947, the first secretary of the British embassy in Washington visited the State Department and handed American officials two notes from His Majesty's government. One concerned Greece, the other Turkey, but in effect they said the same thing: Britain could no longer meet its traditional responsibilities to those two countries. Because both countries were on the verge of

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collapse, the meaning of the British notes was clear: a Soviet breakthrough could be prevented only by an American commitment to stopping it.

February 21 was a turning point for the West. Britain, the only remaining power in Western Europe, was acknowledging its exhaustion. It had fought Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV and Napoleon Bonaparte of France, and Kaiser Wilhelm II and Adolf Hitler of Germany. It had long preserved the balance of power that had protected the United States, but its ability to protect that balance had declined steadily in the twentieth century, and twice it had needed American help. Each time, however, Britain had fought the longer battle; the United States had entered the wars only when it was clear that Germany and its allies were too strong for Britain and that America would have to help safeguard its own security.

IMPACT AND INFLUENCE: GEORGE KENNAN

The euphoria surrounding the end of World War II quickly gave way in the United States to concerns about the emerging Cold War. The U.S. government turned to George Kennan, a State Department officer based in the Soviet Union during and after World War II, to devise an appropriate response to the Soviet challenge in

Bettmann/Getty Images

George Kennan

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central Europe. U.S. presidents would follow Kennan's "containment" strategy, described in this chapter, until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Although Kennan profoundly influenced American foreign policy after World War II, he spent most of the postwar era out of government. In 1950, he joined Princeton University's Institute for Advanced Study, from where he continued to inform the foreign policy debate, often deflecting criticism that his containment policy had led directly to U.S. interventions in Korea, Vietnam, and Latin America. Defending his record, Kennan charged that American leaders had strayed from the strategy he proposed. More generally, he criticized the "legalistic-moralistic" approach to American foreign policy and claimed it had prevented the nation from focusing on its national interests in the late twentieth century. In this respect, Kennan is considered one of the key postwar realists whose views ran counter to the American style of foreign policy.

The second course rejected in adopting the strategy of containment was a direct military assault on the Soviet Union, which was physically ravaged after World War II. While U.S. conventional forces were far stronger than Moscow's, such an attack had little support as war-weary American troops returned home. Although the United States possessed a nuclear monopoly in the late 1940s and the potential to cripple the Soviet Union, this option was also discarded. Quite clearly, launching a preemptive nuclear attack on the Kremlin would violate universal standards of morality.

Still, American leaders sought to maintain their nuclear monopoly as long as possible. Their proposal—first drafted in the 1946 Acheson-Lilienthal Report and then delivered, in modified form, to the United Nations as the Baruch Plan—called for international control of nuclear weapons material along with pledges by all world leaders not to develop such weapons. The United States would only destroy its own nuclear stockpiles after these pledges were made and, particularly in the case of the Soviet Union, backed up by rigorous UN inspections. Not surprisingly, Stalin did not trust Truman's motives and rejected the Baruch Plan. In the words of his UN ambassador, Andrei Gromyko, "America had established a monopoly on the manufacture of nuclear weapons and wanted to retain that monopoly."[24] It also came as little surprise when, on August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union successfully tested its own nuclear weapon, thus launching a long, complex, and perilous nuclear arms race.

For centuries, the principal task of military armaments had been to win wars. From now on, their main purpose for the superpowers would be to *deter* wars. Nuclear weapons could have no other rationale. The United States now had to wage a protracted, low-intensity conflict that was contrary to its traditional style of foreign policy. The term frequently given to this conflict—Cold War—was apt indeed. *War* signified that the U.S.-Soviet rivalry was serious; *Cold* referred to the fact that nuclear weapons were so utterly destructive that, even with conventional weapons, a war between the two nuclear powers could not be waged.

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Even though communist containment was adopted as the linchpin of U.S. strategy, it drew criticism from many quarters. Some felt it did not go far enough, that it failed to exploit U.S. military and economic supremacy and provided the Soviets with the initiative to set the time and place of superpower confrontations.[25] Others felt it went too far. Located as it was between the two extremes, however, containment attracted support among moderates both in the United States and abroad. It thus heralded an auspicious new era in U.S. foreign policy, perhaps best reflected in the title of Secretary of State Dean Acheson's memoir, *Present at the Creation*. For Acheson, the late 1940s "saw the entry of our nation, already one of the superpowers, into the near chaos of a war-torn and disintegrating world society. To the responsibilities and needs of that time the nation summoned an imaginative effort unique in history and even greater than that made in the preceding years of fighting. All who served in those years had an opportunity to give more than a sample of their best."[26]

The Cold War that followed was characterized by long-term hostility and by a mutual determination to avoid a cataclysmic military showdown. As it took over Britain's role as the keeper of the balance of power, the United States had to learn power politics. In protecting itself, it also had to learn how to manage a protracted conflict in peacetime, a new experience and one at odds with its historical ways of dealing with foreign enemies and the international system.

DECLARING COLD WAR: THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE

On March 12, 1947, President Harry Truman went before a joint session of Congress to deliver one of the most important speeches in American history. After outlining the situation in Greece, he spelled out what would become known as the Truman Doctrine. The United States, he said, could survive only in a world in which freedom flourished. And it would not realize this objective unless it was

> willing to help free peoples to maintain their institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States. . . .
>
> At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is often not a free one. . . . I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.[27]

The president asked Congress to appropriate $400 million for economic aid and military supplies for Greece and Turkey and to authorize the dispatch of American personnel to assist with reconstruction and to provide their armies with appropriate instruction and training. And he implicitly offered U.S. assistance to "free peoples," a largely rhetorical pledge aimed to demonstrate his benevolent motives.[28] One of his

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most critical tactical victories in winning approval for these measures was gaining the support of Michigan senator Arthur Vandenberg, a prominent Republican isolationist and chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. With Vandenberg's endorsement, Congress embraced the spirit and financial requirements of the Truman Doctrine.

The United States thus launched its policy of containment. The emerging clash between the postwar superpowers, anticipated by the Truman administration in the late 1940s, was evident in the hostile actions being taken on both sides. To many, the defining moment occurred on July 2, 1947, when the Russian delegation walked out of a meeting organized by Western leaders in Paris to discuss the distribution of Marshall Plan aid (see Chapter 3). From then on, the two antagonists would not even put forward the appearance of great-power cooperation.

In this volatile atmosphere, Soviet behavior left the United States with little choice but to adopt a countervailing policy. During World War II, the United States had sought to overcome the Kremlin's suspicions of the West, to be sensitive to Soviet security concerns in Eastern Europe, and to lay the foundation for postwar cooperation. At the end of the war, the principal concern of American policymakers was not to eliminate the Soviet Union, the self-proclaimed bastion of world revolution and enemy of Western capitalism, nor did they seek to push the Soviet Union out of Eastern Europe. After all, American policy was not the product of a virulent and preexisting anticommunist ideology. Rather, it was animated by its desire to prevent a major nation from achieving dominance in Europe, an occurrence that twice in the twentieth century had led the United States into war.

In this respect, American military strategy toward Europe at the dawn of the Cold War was consistent with that in the early stages of the two world wars, which were fought first against a conservative monarchy in Germany and then against the fascist states of Germany and Italy. In the Cold War, the adversary was the Soviet Union, a repressive communist regime. American strategy and subsequent action remained the same regardless of the opponent's ideology. This does not mean, however, that ideology was irrelevant to these conflicts. On the contrary, all these adversaries maintained systems of government and state-society relations that offended American democratic ideals and seemed threatening to those ideals. Thus the fascist and "godless" communist regimes, located at both ends of the ideological spectrum, also inflamed the moral passions of the American government and provided a further rationale for Cold War. The strategy fit neatly into the traditional American dichotomy of seeing the world as either good or evil, thereby arousing the nation for yet another moral crusade.

The contrasting nature of U.S. and Soviet conduct after World War II reinforced these normative tensions. The Soviet Union, which already had annexed the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, imposed communist regimes on its neighbors and stationed Soviet forces there to ensure the loyalty of these states. In fact, none of these governments could have survived without the presence of Soviet troops. By

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contrast, Iran, Turkey, and Greece invited American assistance because they feared Soviet pressure and intimidation. Soviet expansion meant their loss of independence; American assistance was designed to preserve it. All shared the U.S. perception of the Soviet Union as a threat to their political independence and territorial integrity, and they urged Washington to redress the post-1945 imbalance. Their concern was not U.S. expansion and hegemony, but abandonment.

The Truman Doctrine in its immediate application was intended to be specific and limited, not global. American policymakers were well aware that the United States, although a great power, was not omnipotent; national priorities had to be decided carefully and power applied discriminately. American responses, then, would depend both on where the external challenges occurred and on how Washington defined the relation of such challenges to the nation's security. Containment was to be implemented only where the Soviet state appeared to be expanding its power. The priority given to balance-of-power considerations was evident from the very beginning.

Despite the democratic values expressed in the Truman Doctrine, it was first applied to Greece and Turkey, neither of which was democratic. Their strategic locations were considered more important than the character of their governments. In Western Europe, however, America's strategic and power considerations were compatible with its democratic values; containment of the Soviet Union could be equated with the defense of democracy. The United States thus confronted a classic dilemma: Protecting strategically located but undemocratic nations such as Iran, Turkey, and Greece might make the containment of Soviet power possible, but it also risked America's reputation and weakened the credibility of its policy. Yet alignment only with democratic states, of which there were all too few, might make U.S. implementation of its containment policy impossible. The purity of the cause might be preserved, but the security of democracy would be weakened. This dilemma was to plague U.S. policy throughout the Cold War, and the same dilemma persists today in the war against terrorism.

In summary, the emerging bipolar state system and the behavior of the Soviet Union were fundamental factors precipitating the Cold War. What, if any, was America's contribution to its onset? Perhaps at the time, the United States could not have done more than simply protest Soviet expansion and hegemony in Eastern Europe. It was true that the American people, like the British, admired the heroic efforts of the Red Army in stopping and driving back the Nazi forces. Moreover, the staggering Soviet losses, compared with the relatively light losses of the Allies, were recognized in the West. In these circumstances, the hope for good postwar relations with the Soviet Union was understandable. These optimistic projections, however, were quickly dispelled by events in Eastern Europe. As the United States proceeded with its withdrawal and military demobilization, Soviet leaders made it clear that their control over the region would be anything but temporary. Thus the threatened states bordering the Soviet bloc looked to Washington for help. Having abandoned its hopes for a harmonious world order after World War II, the United States finally took the necessary measures to stand up to Stalin.

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