

CONTAINMENT

Containment refers to the foreign policy strategy of the United States in the early years of the Cold War in which it attempted to stop what it called the domino effect of nations moving politically towards Soviet Union-based communism, rather than European-American-based capitalism.

The concept of containment springs up from the idea that isolation will lead to stagnation. In earlier times, containment was followed as a tactic, rather than a strategy or a policy. Laying a passive siege to a castle where a powerful or influential lord resided, and cutting off supply lines, was a form of containment. This made the lord helpless, as his tactical ability was limited with only a few soldiers at his command. Another way to maximize the damage done due to containment was, after creating a situation of relative isolation, to subvert the enemy. In practice, this is achieved using espionage and sabotage. The anticipated result is that, due to the isolation, any subversion introduced will have a high cost and will take a long time to rectify if left alone, or will consume resources (particularly in the form of security measures) to avoid. This serves the purpose of maintaining a strategic upper hand. Eventually, the United States and allies hoped, containment would cause the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellite nations.

George Frost Kennan (February 16, 1904 – March 17, 2005) was an American advisor, diplomat, political scientist, and historian, best known as "the father of containment" and as a key figure in the emergence of the Cold War. He later wrote standard histories of the relations between Russia and the Western powers.

In the late 1940s, his writings inspired the Truman Doctrine and the U.S. foreign policy of "containing" the Soviet Union, thrusting him into a lifelong role as a leading authority on the Cold War. His "Long Telegram" from Moscow in 1946, and the subsequent 1947 article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" argued that the Soviet regime was inherently expansionist and that its influence had to be "contained" in areas of vital strategic importance to the United States. These texts quickly emerged as foundational texts of the Cold War, expressing the Truman administration's new anti-Soviet Union policy. Kennan also played a leading role in the development of definitive Cold War programs and institutions, most notably the Marshall Plan.

Kennan argued that the primary goal of the United States should be to prevent the spread of Communism to non-Communist nations; that is, to "contain" Communism within its borders. The Truman Doctrine aimed at this goal, and containment was one of its key principles. This led to American support for regimes around the world to block the spread of communism. The epitome of containment may have been domino theory, which held that allowing one regional state to fall to communism would threaten the entire region, similar to a series of dominoes toppling. After the Vietnam War, Kennan asserted that his ideas had been misinterpreted, and that he never advocated military intervention, merely economic support.

Developed during the Stalin era, the policy of containment derived from the belief that Communism in general, and the Soviet system in particular, required the stability of a global state-controlled economy. Otherwise, the capitalist countries could continue to amass and allocate capital, including capitalist military capacity, with efficiencies that could not be matched by the controlled economies of the communist world. Counter-revolutionary forces could develop.

Truman Doctrine

The **Truman Doctrine** was a United States foreign policy designed to contain Communism by stopping its spread to Greece and Turkey. Gaining the support of the Republicans who controlled Congress, President Harry S. Truman proclaimed the Doctrine on March 12, 1947. It stated that the U.S. would support Greece and Turkey with economic and military aid to prevent their falling into the Soviet orbit. The Doctrine shifted American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union from Détente to, as George F. Kennan phrased it, a policy of containment of Soviet expansion. It is often used by historians as the starting date of the Cold War.

Truman's decision, supported by Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg and the Republicans who controlled Congress, came after the British urgently informed Washington that it was no longer able to support the Greece government's efforts to fight its civil war against Communist insurgents. Aid was given to Turkey because of the historic tensions between Greece and Turkey. It was an early response to aggression by the Soviet Union in Europe and the Middle East, illustrated through the communist movements in Iran, Turkey and Greece. The Truman Doctrine was the first in a succession of containment moves by the United States, followed by economic restoration of Western Europe through the The Marshall Plan and military containment by the creation of NATO in 1949. In U.S. President Harry S. Truman's words, it became "the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." Truman reasoned, because these "totalitarian regimes" coerced "free peoples," they represented a threat to international peace and the national security of the United States.

President Truman made the proclamation in an address to the U.S. Congress on March 12, 1947, amid the crisis of the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). Truman insisted that if Greece and Turkey did not receive the aid that they needed, they would inevitably fall to communism with consequences throughout the region.

Truman signed the act into law on May 22, 1947, which granted \$400 million (\$350 million to Greece and \$50 million to Turkey) in military and economic aid. The economic aid was to be used in repairing the infrastructure of these countries and military aid came in the form of military personnel supervising and helping with the reconstruction of these countries while training soldiers. This aid was to help Greece and Turkey get back on their feet so they could both support and defend themselves from coercive forces. It should be noted however that this American aid was in many ways a replacement for British aid which the British were no longer financially in a position to give. The policy of containment and opposition to communists in Greece for example was carried out by the British before 1947 in many of the same ways it was carried out afterward by the Americans.

The "Truman Doctrine" has become a metaphor for emergency aid to keep a nation from communist influence. Truman used disease imagery not only to communicate a sense of impending disaster in the spread of communism but also to create a "rhetorical vision" of containing it by extending a protective shield around noncommunist countries throughout the world. It echoed the "quarantine the aggressor" policy Franklin Roosevelt proposed in 1937. The medical metaphor extended beyond the immediate aims of the Truman Doctrine in that the imagery combined with fire and flood imagery evocative of disaster provided the United States with an easy transition to direct military confrontation in later years with communist forces in Korea and Vietnam. By presenting ideological differences in life or death terms, Truman was able to garner support for this communism-containing policy.

THE MARSHALL PLAN

The **Marshall Plan** (from its enactment, officially the **European Recovery Program** (ERP)) was the primary plan of the United States for rebuilding the allied countries of Europe and repelling communism after World War II. The initiative was named for United States Secretary of State George Marshall and was largely the creation of State Department officials, especially William L. Clayton and George F. Kennan.

The reconstruction plan was developed at a meeting of the participating European states in July 12 1947. The Marshall Plan offered the same aid to the Soviet Union and its allies, if they would make political reforms and accept certain outside controls. In fact, America worried that the Soviet Union would take advantage of the plan and therefore made the terms deliberately hard for the USSR to accept. The plan was in operation for four fiscal years beginning in July 1947. During that period some \$13 billion of economic and technical assistance—equivalent to around \$130 billion in 2006—was given to help the recovery of the European countries that had joined in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

By the time the plan had come to completion, the economy of every participant state, with the exception of Germany, had grown well past pre-war levels. Over the next two decades, many regions of Western Europe would enjoy unprecedented growth and prosperity. The Marshall Plan has also long been seen as one of the first elements of European integration, as it erased tariff trade barriers and set up institutions to coordinate the economy on a continental level. An intended consequence was the systematic adoption of American managerial techniques.

In recent years historians have questioned both the underlying motivation and the overall effectiveness of the Marshall Plan. Some historians contend that the benefits of the Marshall Plan actually resulted from new laissez faire policies that allowed markets to stabilize through economic growth. It is now acknowledged that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which helped millions of refugees from 1944 to 1947, also laid the foundation for European postwar recovery.

THE BERLIN AIRLIFT

The blockade of Berlin was the first serious crisis of the Cold War. By 1948, the Western allies began moving towards consolidating their occupation zones in Western Germany into a single independent German state. As part of that process, the U.S., France and Britain took steps to reform the currency in the parts of Germany they occupied, in order to promote economic recovery. The new currency, over which the Soviets would have no control, was also to become legal tender in the Western sectors of Berlin.

The USSR, which had been invaded twice by Germany, was alarmed at the prospect of a strong Germany. The Soviet leadership responded to the Western allies' currency reforms by installing their own new currency in East Berlin just 24 hours before the West mark was to go into circulation. The Soviets were hoping to continue the German recession, refused to accept the new currency, in favor of the over circulated Soviet Reichsmark. By doing so, the Soviets believed they could foster a communist uprising in postwar Germany through civil unrest. They also imposed a blockade on West Berlin, cutting off all land and rail routes into the Western sectors. American ambassador to Britain, John Winant, stated the accepted Western view when he said that he believed "that the right to be in Berlin carried with it the right of access." The Soviets, however, did not agree. Shipments by rail and the autobahn came to a halt. A desperate Berlin, faced with starvation and in need of vital supplies, looked to the West for help. Lucius Clay, the military governor of the American zone of occupied Germany wrote: "When the order of the Soviet Military Administration to close all rail traffic from the western zones went into effect at 6:00AM on the morning of June 24, 1948, the three western sectors of Berlin, with a civilian population of about 2,500,000 people, became dependent on reserve stocks and airlift replacements. It was one of the most ruthless efforts in modern times to use mass starvation for political coercion... "

Initially the Soviet authorities thought the plan was working. "Our control and restrictive measures have dealt a strong blow at the prestige of the Americans and British in Germany." The Soviet authorities reported. But the Western Allies responded immediately by mounting a tremendous airlift. Under the leadership of General Curtis LeMay, ten-ton capacity C-54s began supplying the city on July 1. By the fall the airlift, code-named "Operation Vittles" and often referred to as "LeMay's feed and Coal Company," was bringing in an average of 5,000 tons of supplies a day.

President Truman, wishing to avoid war or a humiliating retreat, supported the air campaign, against many advisors wishes. Surviving a normally harsh German winter, the airlift carried over two million tons of supplies in 270,000 flights. The blockade of Berlin was finally lifted by the Soviets on May 12, 1949. Berlin became a symbol of the United States resolve to stand up to the Soviet threat without being forced into a direct conflict.

Not only did the blockade turn out to be totally ineffective, it ended up backfiring on the Soviets in other ways. It provoked genuine fears of war in the West. And instead of preventing the establishment of an independent West Germany, it accelerated the Allies plans to set up the state. It also hastened the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an American-Western European military alliance. In May 1949, Stalin had little choice but to lift the blockade.