**THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL**

Department of Politics

Comparative National Security Policy

**THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY**

**SINCE THE END OF SECOND WORLD WAR**

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**The Introduction**.

The aim of this work is to account for the evolution of the American national security policy since the end of the World War II.

Charles Kegley divided the history of the American foreign policy of containing the Soviet Union into the five chronologically ordered phases:

1. Belligerence, 1947-1952

2. Tough Talk, Accomodative Action, 1953-1962

3. Competetive Coexistence, 1963-1968

4. Detente, 1969-1978

5. Confrontation, 1979 onwards[[1]](#footnote-1)

The same pattern fits for the US national security policy quite well. Only some additions must be introduced. The period of confrontation ended in 1986. The period between 1987 and 1990 could be called ‘Ending the Cold War’, and the period from 1991 onwards - ‘The Post-Cold War Era’. The period between 1945 and 1946 could be named ‘Toward Containment’.

So, the goal of the US national security policy for nearly forty years was the containment of the Soviet Union by all possible means.

But in the 1991 the US founded itself in the confusing situation. The major threat - the SU - simply dissapeared. The US left the only superpower. There are no large specific military threats facing the US. The US national security policy must be changed, and it is changing. The problem is that there is no clear consensus in the US over the threats to the security and economic well-being of the US.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Toward Containment, 1945-1946.**

The World War II showed that the US must change its role in the world politics. The World War II reafirmed that the US could not pretend to be immune from the global turmoil and gave birth to the notion of the US as a “superpower”.[[3]](#footnote-3) The first problem was how to deal with the Soviets. The immediate postwar American policy towards the SU was based on the belief that the SU could be integrated in the postwar security structure. President Roosevelt developed the ‘Four Policemen’ idea, which was based on the vision that the US, Great Britain, the SU, and China would impose order on the rest of the postwar world.[[4]](#footnote-4) But in fact, experience showed that there was little the US could do to shape Stalin’s decisions. It was realized that neither trust nor pressure had made any difference.[[5]](#footnote-5) In less than a year President Truman realized that the Soviets would expand as far as they could unless effective countervailing power was organized to stop them.[[6]](#footnote-6) Stalin obviously placed a higher value on expanding the Soviet sphere of control then on maintaining good relations with the US.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Many American defense officials in 1945 hoped to avoid the escalation with the SU. But at the same time their aim was to prevent Europe from falling under Communist regime. The American objective was to avoid Soviet hegemony over Eurasia.[[8]](#footnote-8) In winter 1945-1946 the SU increased pressures on Iran and Turkey. The US viewed this as a threat to the global balance of power. The battleship *Missouri* was sent to Istanbul.

In October 1945 the first postwar base system was approved by both the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the civilian secretaries. It included Iceland as a primary base area. So, when Winston Churchill delivered his famous “Iron Curtain” speech in March 1946, the US was on the path of the Cold War allready.

In fact, the origins of the Cold War were in Europe. Martin Walker wrote: “The Cold War started in Europe because it was there that US and Soviet troops met in May 1945, over the corpse of Nazi Germany, and discovered that their concepts of Europe’s postwar future were dangerously incopatible.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Five Stages of Containment:**

1. Belligerence, 1947-1952. There are different opinions about the date when the Cold War began. In fact, there is no date of the begining of the Cold War. It didn’t begin in one night. It began step by step. And it began from both sides.

In February 1946, Stalin gave a speech in which he spoke about “the inevitability of conflict with the capitalist powers”.[[10]](#footnote-10)

On February 22, 1946, George F.Kennan, at that time charge d’affaires in the US embassy in Moscow, sent to Washington his famous “long telegram” assessing the motivations of the Soviets. Later he published his well-known article “X” in the *Foreign Affairs* (1947). In it, Kennan argued that Soviet leaders would forever feel insecure about their political ability to maintain power against forces both within Soviet society andin the outside world. Their insecurity would lead to an activist - and perhaps hostile - Soviet foreign policy.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In March 1947, the Truman Doctrine was announced. This was a dramatic departure from traditional US foreign, defense, and security policy. It was based on a view of international politics as a contest for world domination, with the SU as an imperial power bent on world conquest.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This was the start of containment policy. Containment was designed to circumscribe Soviet expansionism in order to (1) save the international system from a revolutionary state, and (2) force internal changes in the SU.[[13]](#footnote-13) Containment was a desired condition in US-Soviet relations. It was a geopolitical rather than ideological or military strategy. Its ultimate objective was a stable and peaceful international system.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Soon the first results of the containment appeared. The National Security Act (1947) created a unified Department of Defense with an autonomous Air Force, a Joint Chiefs of Staff system, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council.[[15]](#footnote-15) In June 1947, the Marshall Plan for the economic recovery of Europe was announced.

In July 1947, intelligence analysts in the War Department maintained that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan provoked a more aggresive Soviet attitude toward the US.[[16]](#footnote-16) So, the result of the beginning of containment was the escalation.

Another step to deeper hostility was the document called NSC-68 (approved by President Truman on September 30, 1950). NSC-68 was designed to (1) bolster the conventional capabilities, (2) strenghten the strategic nuclear forces, (3) assist the US allies, especially in Europe.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The aim of NSC-68 was “to check and roll back the Kremlin’s drive for world domination.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

The first military attempt to contain the communism was the Korean War (1950), which had pushed the budget appropriations for defense up to a peak of almost $57 billion (67 per cent of the whole budget) for fiscal year 1952.[[19]](#footnote-19) The Korean War marked a globalisation of containment in terms of operational commitments as well as rhetoric.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This period was also marked by the creation of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The NATO Pact was signed in April 1949. This was open-ended, multilateral, peacetime alliance among the US, Canada, and West European nations that commited the US to consider an attack on any member nation as an attack on itself.[[21]](#footnote-21) The creation of NATO was a response to Soviet actions in Czekoslovakia, Berlin, and Greece.

Also the US signed bilateral mutual defense treaties with Japan and the Philippines and a trilateral pact with Australia and New Zealand (the ANZUS Treaty). All three were signed in 1951.

2. Tough Talk, Accomodative Action, 1953-1962. This was the period of the American superiority in terms of the nuclear capabilities. But President Eisenhover understood that American resources are not endless. The idea of his policy was security and solvency - to regain American initiative in foreign policy without bankrupting the nation.[[22]](#footnote-22) His policy had two elements. The first was “New Look” defense policy, and second - the formation of a global alliance system.

The “New Look” was based on three concepts: *rollback, brinkmanship*,and *massive retaliation.*[[23]](#footnote-23)

*Rollback* stated the goal the US was to pursue: reject merely containing the spread of communist influence and instead “roll back” the iron curtain.[[24]](#footnote-24)

*Brinkmanship* was a strategy for dealing with the Soviets by backing them into the corner with the threat of nuclear amihilation.[[25]](#footnote-25)

*Massive retaliation* was a countervalue nuclear weapons strategy that sought to achieve American foreign policy objectives by threatening mass destruction of the Soviet population and industrial centers.[[26]](#footnote-26)

All this was called compellence strategy, which lasted until1961.

In the early 1960s the American superiority declined. This pushed towards deterrence strategy. Deterrence means discouraging an adversary from taking military action by convincing him that the cost and risk of such action would outweight the potential gain.[[27]](#footnote-27) The concept of *flexible response* was formulated. It means the increase of conventional war capabilities. In 1962 the capacity to wage “two-and-one-half “ wars was embraced as the official strategy.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The formation of the global alliance system continued. The US signed bilateral agreements with South Korea (1953), the Republic of China (Taiwan) (1954), Iran (1959), Pakistan (1959), and Turkey (1959). In 1954 South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was created. In 1959 the US became a member of Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO).

Also the Middle East became the area of concern, especially after the Suez crizis (1956). Fear of Communist incursions in this area led to the formulation of Eisenhower Doctrine.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Of course, the most important event during this period was the Cuban crisis (1962). It was the most dangerous event of the Cold War, and a good lesson for the officials of both superpowers. A nuclear exchange was so close that both White House and Kremlin officials frankly expected the bombs to fall.[[30]](#footnote-30) They recognized that the superpowers must change their policies.

3. Competetive Coexistence, 1963-1968. Because of growing parity of American and Soviet military capabilities the fact was that the alternatives were coexistence or noncoexistence.[[31]](#footnote-31) The powers began to look for the ways to coexistence. One of the first signs was the instaliation of the “hot line” linking the White House and the Kremlin With a direct communication system in 1963. Also a number of agreements were negotiated: The Antarctic Treaty (1959), The Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963), The Outer Space Treaty (1967), The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (1968). All this paved the way towards detente.

4. Detente, 1969-1978. Detente - a policy and a process designed to relax tensions between the superpowers.[[32]](#footnote-32) Nixon and Kissinger viewed detente as yet another in a long series of attempts to contain the power and the influence of the SU.[[33]](#footnote-33)

In July 1969, the Nixon Doctrine was declared. There were three major points: (1) that the US will keep all of its treaty commitments; (2) that the US will provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a allied nation; and (3) that the US will furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with treaty commitments.[[34]](#footnote-34)

The first real step in implementation of the Nixon Doctrine was the gradual withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam. Nixon also reduced the “two-and-one-half” war strategy to a “one-and-one-half” war strategy.

There were two requirements for implementing detente: (1) to engage the SU in serious negotiations; (2) the concept of *linkage .*[[35]](#footnote-35)

Detente led to a series of negotiations and signing of treaties. The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) was signed in 1972, the Vladivostok Accords - in 1974, the Helsinki Agreement - in 1975, and SALT II - in 1979 (SALT II was never ratified by the Congress).

At the same time the more serious doubts about mutual assured destruction strategy (MAD) arose. Early in 1974, President Nixon signed National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM)-242. This was the shift of emphasis away from the MAD strike options in the strategic war plans toward more limited and flexible options designed to control escalation and neutralize any Soviet advantage.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Another important issue was China. During the late 1960s, both Nixon and Kissinger had reached the conclusion that it would not be wise to leave China permanently isolated.[[37]](#footnote-37) Also it became clear that the split between the SU and the China was real.[[38]](#footnote-38) Recognition of the People’s Republic of China and full diplomatic relations with the Beijing goverment took effect on January 1, 1979.

Carter came into office in January 1977. In general, the Carter administration continued the same strategy as Nixon. But some changes were introduced. The Carter administration emphasized a more global agenda, concentrating on regional issues, the North-South relationship, the economic interdependence of the industrial democracies, and human rights. Another important departure was a renewed emphasis on moralism in US policy.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The end of detente was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Ronald Sullivan pointed out: “The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan finally closed the door on the policy experiment known as detente.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

5. Confrontation, 1979-1986. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan opened the new period of the US-Soviet relations. Confrontation rather than accomodation had once again become the dominant mode of interaction between the superpowers.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Even before that the first signs of confrontation appeared. Carter Doctrine (1979) declared: “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the USA.”[[42]](#footnote-42) So, the invasion was regarded as an assault. Carter Doctrine also underlined the importance of Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), which was created in December 1979.

In 1981 Ronald Reagan assumed office. His administration began to pursue much more anti-Communist policy. The keys to the Reagan foreign policy were to be: military and economic revitalization, revival of alliances, stable progress in the Third World, and a firm Soviet policy based on Russian reciprocity and restraint.[[43]](#footnote-43)

In March 1983 President Reagan announced Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), also known as “Star Wars”. The US shifted the focus from offense to defense. The new strategy suggested a profound shift in US nuclear strategy away from reliance on offensive missiles to deter an attack - that is, from dependence on MAD, which Reagan deemed “morally unacceptable.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

The new strategy led to a major increase in defense spending. Real spending in fiscal year 1985 was over 50 per cent greater than in fiscal year 1980.[[45]](#footnote-45) Reagan administration also focused its atention on regional problems. In 1983, a new joint service command - CENTCOM - was established to deal specifically with contingents in Southwest Asia. By early 1986, a new element of strategy informally known as the “Reagan Doctrine” had appeared. This policy sought to roll back Soviet and Cuban gains in the Third World by active support of liberation movements in areas such as Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan.[[46]](#footnote-46)

During this period the relations between the superpowers were highly escalated. But situation changed when Gorbachev came to power in the SU in 1985.

**Ending the Cold War, 1987-1990.**

Gorbachev’s ‘Novoye Myshlenniye’ or New Thinking in international affairs was first spelt out at the Geneva summit with President Reagan in October 1985, when they agreed in principle to work towards a Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to cut their nuclear arsenals in half.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Probably the most radical summit was the Reykjavik summit in October 1986. Despite that fact that no agreement was signed, “it succeeded beyond the limited horizons of diplomats and arms controllers in that it shocked the US-Soviet negotiations into a wholly new dimension. The old ground rules of superpower poker, of incremental gains and minimal concessions, had been ripped up.”[[48]](#footnote-48) In fact, both Reagan and Gorbachev recognized the posibility of nuclear free world. More, they both made it their major mutual goal.

The real agreement was reached at the Washington summit in December 1987. The US and the SU signed the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and formalized their commitment to a 50 per cent reduction in strategic offensive arms.[[49]](#footnote-49) “The signing of the INF Treaty signalled an end to the New Cold War.”[[50]](#footnote-50)

Following a meeting between Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Schevardnadze in Wyoming in September, Secretary Baker suggested that the “era of containment” had perhaps come to an end.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Then followed the Malta summit in December 1989, where President Bush and Gorbachev recognized common interests in maintaining stability in the midst of revolutionary political changes and were even explicit about accepting each others legitimate security interests and role in preserving European security.[[52]](#footnote-52)

The end of the Cold War solved one great problem for the US - the nuclear threat from the Soviet side was eliminated. But it caused a series of other problems. “The Cold War ended wih the US and Britain in recession, the Japanese stock market tumbling by 40 per cent, with the wealth of Germany devoted to the rescue of its reunited compatriots, and the world poised for war in the Persian Gulf.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**The Post-Cold War Era, 1991 onwards.**

With the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) and the dissolution of the SU after the failed coup, August 1991, the US faced the another problem - the lack of a coherent American foreign policy. There is no clear consensus in the US over the threats to the security and economic well-being of the US.[[54]](#footnote-54)

Bush administration’s emphasis was on prudence and pragmatism. The Bush record of six military interventions in four years is remarkable.[[55]](#footnote-55) In the invasion of Panama (Operation Just Came) in December 1989, the Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Storm) in January and February 1991, and the intervention in Somalia in 1992 (Operation Restore Hope), the US was motivated by the desire to impose order in the international system.[[56]](#footnote-56)

But neither the foreign nor the defense policy of the Clinton administration is yet well defined.[[57]](#footnote-57) Through the 1992 presidential campaign, Clinton emphasized the following new priorities for the post-Cold War American foreign policy: (1) to relink foreign and domestic policies; (2) the reassertion of “the moral principles most Americans share”; (3) to understand that American security is largely economic.[[58]](#footnote-58) He also campaigned for the restructuring US military forces. The new military force must be capable of: (1) nuclear deterrence; (2) rapid deployment; (3) technology; and (4) better intelligence.[[59]](#footnote-59)

As president, Clinton directed Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to conduct a review of military requirements. In September 1, 1993, the Clinton administration’s first defense planning document named “Bottom-Up Review” (BUR) was announced. The BUR identifies four major sources of danger to US security: (1) aggression instigated by major regional powers; (2) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; (3) the failure of former communist states to make a succesful transition to democracy; (4) a failure to maintain a strong and growing US economic base.[[60]](#footnote-60) (Recently, one more danger has been added: “transnational threats.”[[61]](#footnote-61) The BUR offers a force structure oriented around three general missions: (1) waging two “nearly simultaneous” major regional conflicts (the two-MRC requirement); (2) conducting peace operations; and (3) maintaining forward presence in areas where the US has vital interests.[[62]](#footnote-62) The BUR accords significant weight to maintaining the overseas military presence of US forces in sizing America’s post-Cold War force structure. The plan is to retain roughly 100,000 troops in Europe and some 98,000 troops in East Asia.[[63]](#footnote-63)

The BUR received a lot of criticims since it was announced. “There is no logical flow from the “top” - political guidance based on the imperative to protect US interests in a new security environment - to the “bottom”, i.e., planned forces.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The other problem that “there are grounds for suspecting that the force structure selected for the late 1990s is geared more to meet fiscal goals than strategic ones.”[[65]](#footnote-65)

So, it is obvious that the end of the Cold War was not the end of the threats for US national security , and not the end of the problems for the US defense planners. More, it seems that it was easier to deal with one big threat rather than with a complex of relatively small threats.

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