

U.S. Foreign Policy

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Set #4 :

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The Open Door or a Big Three

When I left office the question of our future relations with the satellite countries was still under discussion.

CHURCHILL AND STALIN REACH
AN UNDERSTANDING ON THE BALKANS,
OCTOBER 9, 1944¹

Document 9

The moment was apt for business, so I said, "Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?" While this was being translated I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Rumania	
Russia	90%
The others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain (in accord with U.S.A.)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50-50%
Hungary	50-50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The others	25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to me. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set down.

Of course we had long and anxiously considered our point, and were only dealing with immediate war-time arrangements. All larger questions were reserved on both sides for what we then hoped would be a peace table when the war was won.

After this there was a long silence. The pencilled paper lay in the centre of the table. At length I said, "Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper." "No, you keep it," said Stalin.

¹ Selected from W. S. Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1953), pp. 27-28. Reprinted by permission of and arrangement with the authorized publishers.

The Greek Crisis and the Truman Doctrine: Origins of Containment

Perhaps no historical problem has been more controversial than the origins of the Cold War after World War II. Acknowledging its importance to an understanding of modern American foreign policy, your textbook devotes a substantial portion of Chapter 27 to anticommunism and containment. The following documents focus on a pivotal incident of the early Cold War, the Greek crisis of 1947, and on the Truman Doctrine as evidence of the postwar confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. As you examine these materials, be conscious of the conflicting world views that gave rise to the clash. Try also to relate the debates of 1947 to foreign-policy problems that have plagued the United States in more recent times.

The first two documents contain the Truman administration's analysis of the issues at stake when Great Britain withdrew from Greece. Examine acting secretary of state Dean Acheson's and President Truman's assumptions as they moved to forge the Truman Doctrine into a broad commitment to the containment of communism. As you evaluate the argument, compare their position with the Soviet perspective on Truman's message to Congress, as reflected in the *Soviet News* editorial. How did the Soviet and American views of the Greek situation differ? Use the textbook account as a guide to Washington's policy assumptions and sense of urgency.

Once Truman settled on the containment program, his most serious problem involved persuading the Congress (and the public) that the new departure was necessary. The result was a hard-sell campaign that convinced important Republicans, such as Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, that resistance to an expansive communist movement was essential. Vandenberg's letter to a constituent reveals his own beliefs and motives for embracing bipartisanship in foreign policy. Equally significant were the signs of future danger inherent in Truman's approach. Determine why Vandenberg was concerned about the foreign-policy crisis.

A final group of documents explores the intellectual rationale for a firm anti-Soviet stance in American foreign policy. Transcending the immediate Greek problem, George Frost Kennan's well-known essay, "Sources of Soviet Conduct," established a broad framework for Soviet-American relations in the future. Compare the excerpt from Kennan's remarks with the skeptical response of foreign-policy critic Walter Lippman.

As you review the concluding document, drawn from Kennan's memoirs, assess the author's reservations about the Truman Doctrine. Try to relate Kennan's and Vandenberg's concerns to the evolution and extension of the containment policy in a modern setting.

Questions for Analysis

1. What do the documents reveal about the origins of the Greek crisis in 1946–1947? How did American and Soviet analysts interpret the roots of conflict?
2. What were the underlying purposes of the Truman Doctrine? How did the Truman administration implement its plan? With what results, both short term and long term?
3. Define containment as Kennan intended the policy to operate. What do the documents reveal about the assumptions held by Kennan, Acheson, and Truman? What was the logic of Kennan's argument, and what did he hope to achieve through the policies advanced in the "Sources of Soviet Conduct"?
4. What were the criticisms of the Kennan-Truman position, in both the United States and the Soviet Union? On what basis did Kennan himself later fault the Truman administration's adaptation of his ideas? How would you account for the ambivalence expressed in Kennan's memoirs?
5. Democratic senator Walter George of Georgia responded to the Truman Doctrine by saying: ". . . when we make a policy of this kind we are irrevocably committing ourselves to a course of action, and there is no way to get out of it next week or next year. You go down to the end of the road." Where was the end of the road? What do the documents suggest about the future implications of the decisions of 1947–1948?
6. In what way do the documents contribute to an understanding of the origins of the Cold War? What light do they shed on the issue of responsibility for the breakdown in Soviet-American relations, 1945–1948? Is there any reason to believe that the Cold War could have been avoided?
7. As originally conceived by Kennan and Acheson, was the containment policy a political, economic, or military policy? How was the policy implemented in subsequent years? What do the documents reveal about original intent?

1. Dean Acheson Explains the Truman Doctrine, 1947

On February 24 of this year the British Ambassador, in a note dated February 21, informed the Department of State that as of March 31 the British Government would be obliged to discontinue the financial, economic, and advisory assistance which it has been giving to Greece and Turkey. Within a week the President informed congressional leaders of this situation and advised with them on the course of action which the Government should take. On March 12, the President informed Congress and the Nation of the situation and recommended that this Government extend aid to Greece and Turkey.

On March 3 we received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial, economic, and expert assistance. Assistance is imperative, the Greek Government says, if Greece is to survive as a free nation. . . .

[I]t is necessary only to glance at the map to realize that the survival and integrity of Greece is of grave importance in a much wider situation. The inexorable facts of geography link the future of Greece and Turkey. Should the integrity and independence of Greece be lost or compromised, the effect upon Turkey is inevitable. . . .

I need not emphasize to you what would more than likely be the effect on the nations in the Middle East of a collapse in Greece and Turkey, and the installation of totalitarian regimes there. Both from the point of view of economics and morale, the effects upon countries to the east would be enormous, especially if the failure in Greece and Turkey should come about as the result of the failure of this great democracy to come to their aid. On the other hand, I ask you to consider the effects on their morale and their internal development should Greece and Turkey receive a helping hand from the United States, the country with which they closely associate the principles of freedom. It is not too much to say that the outcome in Greece and Turkey will be watched with deep con-

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It is also being watched with deepest anxiety by the peoples to the west, particularly the peoples of Europe who, as the President said, are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedom and independence while they repair the damage of war. . . .

The present parliament of Greece was democratically elected in an election which foreign observers agreed was fair. There can be no doubt that it represents the majority of the Greek people. The present Greek Cabinet contains representatives of 85 percent of the members of the Greek Parliament. The mere fact that Greece has a king does not necessarily make Greece's form of government less democratic than that of other countries, as is shown for instance by the governments of Norway, of Sweden, of Denmark, of the Netherlands and of Great Britain.

It is not the object of our aid to Greece either to help to maintain or to help to remove the present government or the King of Greece. It is our object to help to maintain the present constitutional system of Greece so long as the majority of Greeks desire it, and to help Greece create conditions in which its free institutions can develop in a more normal fashion.

In Greece today we do not have a choice between a perfect democracy and an imperfect democracy. The question is whether there shall be any democracy at all. If the armed minorities that now threaten Greece's political and economic stability were to gain control, free institutions and human freedoms would disappear, and democratic progress would come to an abrupt halt.

It is not claimed that all persons involved in the present armed challenge to the Greek Government are Communists. There are among them many persons who honestly, but in our opinion, mistakenly, support the Communist-led forces because they do

We are planning aid to Greece with the hope and intention that conditions will be created in which the Greek Government can achieve more efficient administration and perfect its democratic processes. . . .

2. Harry S Truman Outlines a Program for Greece and Turkey, 1947

... The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

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.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

The world is not static, and the *status quo* is not sacred. But we cannot allow changes in the *status quo* in violation of the Charter of the United Nations by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuges as political infiltration. In helping free and independent nations to maintain their freedom, the United States will be giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are

of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.

Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war.

It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence. . . .

We must take immediate and resolute action.

I therefore ask the Congress to provide authority for assistance to Greece and Turkey in the amount of \$400,000,000 for the period ending June 30, 1948. In requesting these funds, I have taken into consideration the maximum amount of relief assistance which would be furnished to Greece out of the \$350,000,000 which I recently requested that the Congress authorize for the prevention of starvation and suffering in countries devastated by the war.

In addition to funds, I ask the Congress to authorize the detail of American civilian and military personnel to Greece and Turkey, at the request of those countries, to assist in the tasks of reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and material assistance as may be furnished. I recommend that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of selected Greek and Turkish personnel. . . .

85 - THE COLD WAR.

Within two years, the two major Allies led the two antagonistic ideological blocks that divided the world. The US was on the world scene for good. While he painfully protected New Deal acquisitions at home, H. S Truman implemented a policy of «containment» of Communist expansion within the sphere defined at the Yalta Conference (hence US support for Turkey and Greece). Interpreting this as an open threat of encirclement, the USSR dropped the Iron Curtain which, for at least ten years, divided the «totalitarian» from the «free» world. To all the latter, the US stood ready to give military and economic assistance (Truman Doctrine), especially to Germany, where the split started, and Japan.

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose on 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.

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta Agreement, in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.

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Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war [...].

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world — and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events. I am confident that the Congress will face these responsibilities squarely.

Harry S TRUMAN, *Message to Congress*,
March 12, 1947.

HENRY A. WALLACE AND
JAMES F. BYRNES DISAGREE OVER
POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA

Document 3

(a) *Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace:*¹

I became seriously worried about our stand against Russia when I listened to the first discussion of the atomic bomb in Cabinet meeting. Secretary of War Stimson had a truly statesmanlike attitude, which he expressed in convincing, forthright language. But his view did not prevail.

Stimson was opposed to the policy of keeping atomic energy from the world, within the narrow confines of one nation's military secret. As a matter of fact, he told us, America could not keep it a secret anyhow. There was nothing to be lost, and much to be gained, by imparting it to all peoples. I feel that his departure from the Cabinet was one of the tragedies of the postwar world.

After the left, the Cabinet became more and more heavily loaded on the side of the Russia-haters. As Secretary of Commerce I became aware of the fact that many big businessmen who had co-operated with the Army and Navy during the war were looking ahead to the probability, if not the inevitability, of war with Russia. They were not trying to stop that drift; on the contrary, they looked with favor on very large appropriations for military purposes.

It was steadily driven home to me that these larger businessmen welcomed the thought of being taxed in order to get the nation in trim to fight Russia! Soon it became apparent that the press was cultivating the same red hysteria that arose after the last war, and that this hysteria was being used as a club to beat liberals of any kind.

This disturbed me so much that I put my thoughts on paper in a letter to President Truman dated July 23, 1946. The high point of this letter was my urging that we develop, in co-operation with Russia, practical plans for the two nations to live in the same world without danger of eventual atomic bomb warfare. This letter was not made public until September 17, when the White House authorized its publication.

What caused my resignation, however, were certain sentences in my September 12 speech, which had been cleared face to face with President Truman on September 10. These sentences disturbed Secretary Byrnes and Senator Vandenberg in Paris—not because of the fact that I said them, but because President Truman said at a press conference that he had read my speech and approved it. The key sentences were the following:

"The real peace treaty we now need is between the United States and Russia. On our part we should recognize that we have no more business in the *political* affairs of Eastern Europe than Russia has in the *political* affairs

¹ Selected from *Toward World Peace*, pp. 8-10. Copyright 1948 by Henry A. Wallace. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Co., Inc.

of Latin America, Western Europe, and the United States. We cannot permit the door to be closed to our trade in Eastern Europe any more than we can in China. But at the same time we have to recognize that the Balkans are closer to Russia than to us—and that Russia cannot permit either England or the United States to dominate the politics of that area.”

In retrospect I cannot help thinking that the so-called Truman Doctrine as exemplified in Greece and Turkey was already being incubated in certain minds, that these minds had not yet “sold” Truman, and that therefore he had kicked over their apple cart when he announced his agreement with my sentiments.

(b) *Secretary of State James F. Byrnes:*²

My hope for united support of our foreign policies received a serious setback when, on September 12, 1946, while I was in Paris, Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace made a speech at Madison Square Garden contending that the policy which had been approved by the President, and carried out by me, was too harsh to the Soviet Union and that a more conciliatory approach to them was necessary. I was not greatly surprised by the Secretary's action. Previously, he had made a statement to the *New York Times* referring to our negotiations with Iceland for the use of the airfield we had built there. His statement was effectively used by the Communists in Iceland and it had obstructed the efforts of the State Department to secure an agreement important to the defense of this hemisphere.

In Paris, the importance of Mr. Wallace's Madison Square Garden speech was magnified in the minds of the representatives of foreign governments by newspaper reports quoting President Truman as saying at a press conference that he approved the Wallace speech in its entirety. This report stimulated widespread discussion among the governmental representatives attending the peace conference; it inspired inquiries to our representatives in various capitals. Foreign Ministers wondered whether in my various public statements I had correctly presented American policy.

Senator Vandenberg issued a statement saying that he wanted to cooperate with the administration but he could co-operate with only one Secretary of State at a time.

Senator Connally declared that he supported the policy we had announced and had been following.

I concluded that I should not make a public statement; that the matter called for correction by the President.

Of course, the position of our delegation was a very unhappy one. So far as possible, I tried to avoid delegates to the conference or the other Foreign Ministers because I wanted to avoid answering questions about whether the policy of our government had changed. Our difficulties were increased rather than lessened when Mr. Wallace announced on the White House steps that he and the President had agreed that the Secretary of Commerce would make no more speeches until after the peace conference. To the delegates in Paris, this implied that the President had not objected to a later renewal of his attacks on our foreign policy.

² Selected from *Speaking Frankly* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 239-40. Copyright 1947 by James F. Byrnes. Reprinted with permission.

amorphous mass of human beings among whom no independent organizational structure is tolerated. In Russia there is not even such a thing as local government. The present generation of Russians have never known spontaneity of collective action. If, consequently, anything were ever to occur to disrupt the unity and efficacy of the Party as a political instrument, Soviet Russia might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies.

Thus the future of Soviet power may not be by any means as secure as Russian capacity for self-delusion would make it appear to the men in the Kremlin. That they can keep power themselves, they have demonstrated. That they can quietly and easily turn it over to others remains to be proved. Meanwhile, the hardships of their rule and the vicissitudes of international life have taken a heavy toll of the strength and hopes of the great people on whom their power rests. It is curious to note that the ideological power of Soviet authority is strongest today in areas beyond the frontiers of Russia, beyond the reach of its police power. This phenomenon brings to mind a comparison used by Thomas Mann in his great novel "Buddenbrooks." Observing that human institutions often show the greatest outward brilliance at a moment when inner decay is in reality farthest advanced, he compared the Buddenbrook family, in the days of its greatest glamour, to one of those stars whose light shines most brightly on this world when in reality it has long since ceased to exist. And who can say when in reality it has long since ceased to exist. And who can say with assurance that the strong light still cast by the Kremlin on the dissatisfied peoples of the western world is not the powerful afterglow of a constellation which is in actuality on the wane? This cannot be proved. And it cannot be disproved. But the possibility remains (and in the opinion of this writer it is a strong one) that Soviet power, like the capitalist world of its conception, bears within it the seeds of its own decay, and that the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced.

IV

It is clear that the United States cannot expect in the foreseeable future to enjoy political intimacy with the Soviet régime. It must continue to regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner, in the political arena. It must continue to expect that Soviet policies will reflect no abstract love of peace and stability, no real faith in the possibility of a permanent happy coexistence

of the Socialist and capitalist worlds, but rather a cautious, persistent pressure toward the disruption and weakening of all rival influence and rival power.

Balanced against this are the facts that Russia, as opposed to the western world in general, is still by far the weaker party, that Soviet policy is highly flexible, and that Soviet society may well contain deficiencies which will eventually weaken its own total potential. This would of itself warrant the United States entering with reasonable confidence upon a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.

But in actuality the possibilities for American policy are by no means limited to holding the line and hoping for the best. It is entirely possible for the United States to influence by its actions the internal developments, both within Russia and throughout the international Communist movement, by which Russian policy is largely determined. This is not only a question of the modest measure of informational activity which this government can conduct in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, although that, too, is important. It is rather a question of the degree to which the United States can create among the peoples of the world generally the impression of a country which knows what it wants, which is coping successfully with the problems of its internal life and with the responsibilities of a World Power, and which has a spiritual vitality capable of holding its own among the major ideological currents of the time. To the extent that such an impression can be created and maintained, the aims of Russian Communism must appear sterile and quixotic, the hopes and enthusiasm of Moscow's supporters must wane, and added strain must be imposed on the Kremlin's foreign policies. For the palsied decrepitude of the capitalist world is the keystone of Communist philosophy. Even the failure of the United States to experience the early economic depression which the ravens of the Red Square have been predicting with such complacent confidence since hostilities ceased would have deep and important repercussions throughout the Communist world.

By the same token, exhibitions of indecision, disunity and internal disintegration within this country have an exhilarating effect on the whole Communist movement. At each evidence of these tendencies, a thrill of hope and excitement goes through

the Communist world; a new jauntiness can be noted in the Moscow tread; new groups of foreign supporters climb on to what they can only view as the band wagon of international politics; and Russian pressure increases all along the line in international affairs.

It would be an exaggeration to say that American behavior unassisted and alone could exercise a power of life and death over the Communist movement and bring about the early fall of Soviet power in Russia. But the United States 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 break-up 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.

Thus the decision will really fall in large measure in this country itself. The issue of Soviet-American relations is in essence a test of the over-all worth of the United States as a nation among nations. To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.

Surely, there was never a fairer test of national quality than this. In the light of these circumstances, the thoughtful observer of Russian-American relations will find no cause for complaint in the Kremlin's challenge to American society. He will rather experience a certain gratitude to a Providence which, by providing the American people with this implacable challenge, has made their entire security as a nation dependent on their pulling themselves together and accepting the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear.