

The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the Cold War

And the Death of Stalin

THIS WEEK

- REVIEW
- NSC-68, KOREA AND THE MILITARIZATION OF THE COLD WAR
- WHAT ROLE DID THE ATOMIC BOMB PLAY IN THE EARLY COLD WAR?
- NSC-68, The Truman Doctrine and the Transformation of Containment
 - Pay attention to idea of stalemate
- THE MEANING OF NUCLEAR POWER
 - The Uselessness of Defense
 - The Need to Persuade
 - The Promise it will cost more
 - Capability + Credibility
 - CASES

REVIEW: Consolidation of the Cold War

- Kennan's "Long Telegram" and Containment
 - Soviets will probe weak points, take every opportunity to increase strength
 - But Stalin cautious, will back down if too risky
 - US role is to contain Soviets in areas of importance
 - But contain primarily through diplomatic and economic means
- Truman Doctrine
 - Tries to apply containment to Turkey and Greece
 - Needs to convince Congress
 - Goes to Ideology: Communism is adversary, not USSR; Global, not limited; but economic
- Marshall Plan: The Implementation of Containment

1949: The Consolidation

Containment working well, until:

August, 1949: Soviet Bomb

September, 1949: Communist Chinese take power

June, 1950: Korean War

Truman “Scared the Hell” out of people, but is communism winning?

People are scared: February, 1950: McCarthyism Begins

NSC-68 commissioned: reported in April

NSC-68

- CONFIRMS GLOBAL IDEOLOGICAL WAR, BUT MILITARY STRUGGLE MAY BE NECESSARY:

“Kremlin policy has three main objectives: (1) to preserve and to strengthen its position as the ideological and power center of the Communist world; (2) to extend and to consolidate that power by the acquisition of new satellites; and (3) to oppose and to weaken any competing system of power that threatens Communist world hegemony.”

“These objectives are inimical to American ideals, which are predicated on the concepts of freedom and dignity. . . . It must be assumed that these concepts and objectives of American life will come under increasing attack. If they are to be protected, the nation must be determined, at whatever cost or sacrifice, to preserve at home and abroad those conditions of life in which these objectives can survive and prosper. We must seek to do this by peaceful means and with the cooperation of other like-minded peoples. But if peaceful means fail we must be willing and ready to fight.”

United States Perceives Self as Weak

“Russia's progress in the development of atomic bombs probably means that an approximate stalemate in nuclear weapons will be reached by about 1954.”

...

“In spite of these weaknesses, the Communist military capability for conventional, or nonatomic, warfare is now substantially superior to that of the West and is continuing to improve at a more rapid rate.”

US SHOULD LAUNCH MASSIVE MILITARY BUILDUP

- "[Our preferred policy] calls for the United States to take the lead in a rapid and substantial buildup in the defensive power of the West, beginning "at the center" and radiating outward. This means virtual abandonment by the United States of trying to distinguish between national and global security. It also means the end of subordinating security needs to the traditional budgeting restrictions; of asking, "How much security can we afford?" In other words, security must henceforth become the dominant element in the national budget, and other elements must be accommodated to it. The wealth potential of the country is such that as much as 20 percent of the gross national product can be devoted to security without causing national bankruptcy. This new concept of the security needs of the nation calls for annual appropriations of the order of \$50 billion, or not much below the former wartime levels."

THE ROLE OF THE BOMB AFTER THE WAR

- 1945: US explodes the bomb—15 kilotons of TNT
 - Truman feels more confident in Potsdam
 - Ends war in Japan quickly; excludes Soviet role
 - US acts more assertively, which Stalin interprets as atomic diplomacy
 - Stalin suggests atomic weapons change nothing in his strategy
 - Stalin orders a massive program to develop bomb
 - According to Khrushchev, he is very afraid
- 1949: USSR gets the bomb
- 1952: US explodes hydrogen bomb—10 Megatons of TNT
- Summer, 1953: USSR explodes experimental hydrogen bomb
- Late fall: USSR explodes full hydrogen bomb

THE POLITICS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS



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What is different about nuclear weapons?

- The speed of destruction

- The difficulty—if not impossibility—to defend

- The “crystal ball effect”—large scale war destroys both

The difficulty to defend: Cannot prevent others from attacking

- Therefore emphasis not on defense, but deterrence

- Must persuade potential adversary that not cost much too great

THE REQUIREMENTS OF DETERRENCE

- Possibility of Retaliation
 - What happens if about to go to war, and you know you can destroy others' weapons if you strike first? A First Strike Capability
 - What happens if you know that even if you strike with everything you have, the other will still be able to hit you back? They have second strike capability.
 - What happens if both sides know they can strike back? Mutual Assured Destruction
- Credibility: Need to convince the other side you can do it
 - Often more difficult

CASES: You are defender when someone attacks you with overwhelming conventional forces:

Where do you use nuclear weapons? If ever?

You have a first strike capability with regard to nuclear weapons

What if you are not sure?

What happens if the adversary has a clear retaliatory capability?

Maybe you use one smaller nuclear weapons, just as a warning?

What happens if the defender does not attack your country, but an ally, Latvia or Estonia? Taiwan?

What happens if the problem is like the islands in the South Sea?

How much pressure are you willing to put on China over those islands?

The Game of Chicken

Who is willing to take risk?

Depends on how important it is?

Areas of sphere of influence

Hungary, Czechoslovakia

US and Soviets rarely face each other directly

Korea: USSR says yes to North Korea only when assured
Chinese would fight if US fights

1961: After Berlin Wall built, there was brief confrontation

Sometimes in air fights: in Korea, Vietnam, Egypt

STALIN DIES: MARCH, 1953

New Leadership is worried

Stalin is great hero; great protector of Soviet Union

Can they defend the Soviet Union?

Can they maintain stability of people

New Leadership wants change

Want to end terror

Want to improve things for people to remain stable



Foreign Policy Challenges

Soviet dominated countries having economic problems;

War in Korea taking resources, exacerbating situation

US can deliver weapons on Soviet soil; the Soviets cannot bomb the
United States

Especially in Nuclear age, can you say socialism wins after nuclear war?

A New President: Dwight Eisenhower

Elected in 1952 as a Republican

Republicans argue Truman not strong enough

Selects John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State

Massive Retaliation

Not just containment, but “Rollback”

Seems to threaten nuclear weapons in Korea



The Debates After Stalin Dies



Consensus

Increase consumer goods in Soviet Union

Reform Eastern European Economies

End Korean War: Pressure China to make key concession

Negotiate “Peaceful Coexistence”

Issues:

How much reform at home and Eastern Europe?

What is role of communist party?

How much change in foreign policy?

The Actors

- Malenkov: The Manager
 - Goes furthest for reform
 - More money for consumer goods, agriculture
 - Diminish role of party in industrial enterprises
 - Signals desire to move further: “Another War will end civilization”.
 - Highly criticized, seen as weak

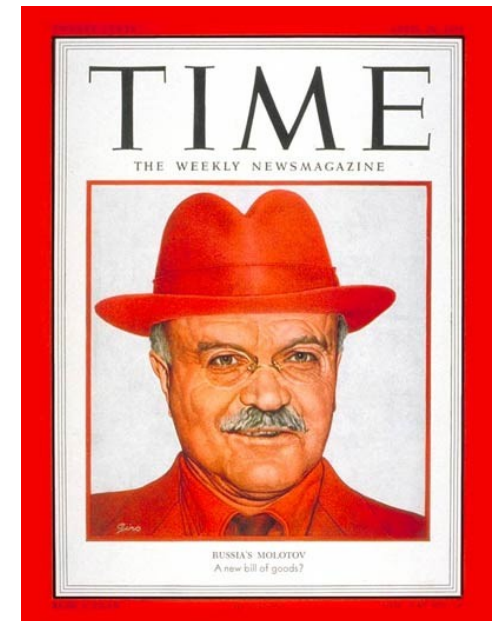
Molotov: The Stalinist

Change as little as possible

Say war is inevitable

Ease tensions, but keep Stalinist vision of strict
distinction between capitalism and socialism

Seen as inflexible, unable to deal with new realities



Nikita Khrushchev: The Politician



- PEACE AND WAR

- Soviet Union wants peace, but imperialist aggressive
- War not inevitable because USSR and socialist camp is strong
- If war occurs, revolution will occur in imperialist countries and socialism will win

- BEYOND BLACK AND WHITE

- Not just socialism and capitalism camps
- Reaches out to Yugoslavia
- Reaches to newly independent states in Global South: India, Egypt, Indonesia

- MAKES OVERTURES TO WEST

- Calls for reduction of conventional weapons
- Summit in Geneva

1955: Khrushchev Comes to the Fore

- New Arms Recommendations
- Austrian State Treaty
- Visit to Yugoslavia
- Disarmament Proposals to West
- Arms Sales to Egypt
- Geneva Conference in 1955