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UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD ASIA,
1949-1950 AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
NSC 68

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ABSTRACT

UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD EAST ASIA, 1949-1950
AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NSC 68

By

William Alexander Mann

UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD ASIA, 1949-1950
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ABSTRACT

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William Alexander Mann

After Dean Acheson became Secretary of State, but before the Korean War began, there was an important shift in the United States State Department's policy toward problems in East Asia. Documents from the Department of State and the Department of Defense show that Acheson, in response to events and conditions throughout East Asia, sponsored a major policy change which called for a dramatic increase in military spending and for greater reliance on military means to prevent radical change in the Third World. This policy was in direct contradiction to the previous policy supported by President Truman and the Congress. It was also different from the policy of the previous Secretary of State, George Marshall, which emphasized economic solutions to the Cold War. This change would have been difficult to accomplish without the eruption of the Korean War. The influence of this document can still be seen in United States policy.

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Many people have helped to complete this thesis. Dave Decker and Chris Hazel were parts of it. Their comments and friendship helped me over the years. Several years ago Norman Pollack and William Miller gave me an interest in history. I am extremely grateful for the help they have given me and for the many other people, as scholars and teachers, who have helped me. I am grateful to all of them in the classroom.

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Many people have helped me complete this thesis. Dave Decker and Chris Hamel read parts of it. Their comments and friendship helped keep me going. Several years ago Norman Pollack and Warren Cohen rekindled my interest in history. I am extremely lucky for the help they have given me and the examples they provide as scholars and teachers. Michael Lewis has always demanded more from me in the classroom and on the squash court than I was prepared to ask of myself. Professor Cohen and Professor Lewis have read this thesis more times than they care to remember; nevertheless they have been supportive and encouraging. Their comments certainly made it much better than I would have if left to my own devices. Despite all this help, I am responsible for any errors and problems which remain. Most of all thanks to Mom and Dad and Kari for never telling me to get a real job.

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INTRODUCTION

America's power and relative position in the world, as well as the economic and political structure of most Asian countries have changed dramatically since the end of the nineteenth century, but the most basic goals of US Asian policy have not changed since the late nineteenth century. American policy in Asia has consistently been designed to prevent any one power from dominating Asia and to ensure the US maximum political and economic influence there. The US has shown little interest in Asian problems unless they have affected this basic goal. Whenever any country has threatened to dominate Asia, the US has acted to counter the influence of that country. In the past fifty years the US has fought in almost every country on the Asian littoral, against Japan and against the perceived threat of Soviet and Chinese Communism in Korea and Vietnam. In each case the US sought to prevent one country from dominating Asian resources and markets, and threatening America's position of power in Asia and the rest of the world.

Although the basic goals of US foreign policy have remained consistent, US policy in Asia has not been static. There have been important changes in the implementation of US Asian policy, and the most important period of transition was the period from 1945-1950. In 1945 after four years of war, the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and ended the Pacific War. The Japanese empire lay in

ruins, and the European empires were crumbling under their own weight. Asian nationalism, fueled by promises of the Atlantic Charter and Communist ideology, ripped into the shaky structures of the colonial empires.

After the Japanese were defeated, almost every country in Asia experienced a nationalist, revolutionary struggle. American policy toward Asia had difficulty adjusting to these changes. The US government was not prepared for the reorganization of East Asia after the defeat of Japan. As Akira Iriye has demonstrated in his book, Power and Culture, the Pacific War was an important turning point in the history of Asian colonialism and imperialism, but neither the Allies or the Japanese were able to create an effective policy which addressed the needs and desires of Asian colonial areas during the war.

Nor did the US deal effectively with Asian nationalism after the war. As Michael Schaller has pointed out in The American Occupation of Japan, the US faced a formidable task in the postwar reconstruction of Asia but was reluctant to assume control except in Japan and the Philippines. He details the evolution of the American commitment to the recovery of Japan and the economic and industrial strength it enjoyed before the war. By 1947 Japanese recovery was the key to US policy in East Asia. It was important to the US to establish a strong, capitalist oriented economy in Asia in order to minimize the influence of international Communism, just as the Marshall Plan encouraged the economic recovery of Western Europe. However, policy in Asia was much more difficult to coordinate. Unstable conditions in Korea, China, and throughout South and Southeast Asia made plans for reconstruction

outside of Japan difficult to implement. Creating a stable balance of power was much more difficult in Asia than in Europe.

Schaller's book is important to understanding the origins of the Cold War in Asia, especially the economic plans for a regional economy formed by the "Great Crescent" from Japan through Southeast Asia and including India, but the economic integration which the "Great Crescent" proposed never materialized. Schaller neglects a key element in the structure of the Cold War in Asia. There were extremely important developments in 1949 and 1950. Dean Acheson refers to the period from the summer of 1949 to the summer of 1950 as one in which the US adopted "a new definition of foreign policy."¹

The definition to which he refers was contained in NSC 68, a document which defined the Cold War as "involving the fulfillment or destruction... of civilization itself."² The implications of the extreme statements made in this document have been discussed primarily in terms of the Cold War in Europe, but this document was most influential in the development of US Asian policy. Communist insurgency appeared to be most effective and most concentrated in Asia during the period of NSC 68's development. The military buildup which it recommended was used primarily to ensure the status quo in Asia, not in Europe. The document was directed primarily in response to problems in Asia. The development of NSC 68 and its subsequent implementation in reaction to the Korean

¹ Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, NY: Norton 1969, title of chapter 41, p. 371.

² National Security Council, Documents of the National Security Council 1947-1977 (hereafter referred to as NSC Documents), Washington: University Publications of America (1980), NSC 68, section I.

War were the final steps in the consolidation of the Cold War in Asia. Unlike the structure of the European Cold War which was based upon the economic measures of the Marshall Plan, the Asian Cold War depended upon US military strength. During the ten months before the Korean War began, there was an important shift in the Truman administration's attitude toward international relations. The US developed a less flexible and more militaristic approach to Asian and world problems.

The detection of the atomic explosion in the USSR in August 1949 initiated this shift. Many policy makers believed that the Soviets were hoping to fill the power gap left by the fall of the Japanese Empire, and would be less restrained after their discovery of nuclear power. In 1950 the US moved away from economic and political attempts to prevent International Communism from expanding into East Asia, accelerated military aid to Asia, and began the tremendous military buildup advocated by NSC 68. There were several events after the Soviet's atomic explosion which influenced this transition, and the Korean War completed the transformation. The Communist inspired aggression which this war represented to the US influenced the administration to focus its attention on a military methods to combat Communism, an attitude which still affects American foreign policy.

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UNITED STATES ASIAN POLICY: 1949

On January 31, 1950 President Harry S. Truman directed the State Department and the Department of Defense to reevaluate American foreign policy completely, "in light of the probable fission bomb capability and possible thermonuclear bomb capability of the Soviet Union."³ In fact the State Department began such a policy review in October 1949 almost immediately after the Soviet explosion was detected. The Soviet nuclear explosion in August 1949 destroyed America's atomic monopoly and removed a key ingredient of American military and diplomatic strategy.⁴ So long as the US was the only country with atomic power, the Truman administration concentrated upon economic and political means to contain Soviet expansion. The administration had quickly demobilized the United States' conventional military power after the war and consistently decreased the Defense budget during the years 1945-1949. However, after the Soviet explosion and the Chinese Communist triumph, military power, both atomic and conventional, became much more important to US policy makers. In Europe the bi-polar structure created by the postwar confrontation between the US and the USSR was reinforced by the policy reevaluation which Truman ordered. However, East Asian countries did not fit as easily into bi-polar definitions. Troubled by a

³ National Security Council, Documents of the National Security Council 1947-1977 (hereafter referred to as NSC Documents), Washington: University Publications of America (1980), NSC 68, p. 1.

⁴ Dean Acheson makes the connection between the atomic power, military policy, and foreign policy quite clear in a memorandum from United States, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter referred to as FRUS), 1949, vol. I, p. 617-8, December 20.

variety of problems, Asia was quite unstable, and US Asian policy still maintained a degree of flexibility.⁵ The reevaluation of foreign policy removed this flexibility and, in combination with other events during 1949-50, established the foundation of US-East Asian relations for the next two decades.

For much of the postwar period, Asian policy had not been as important as European policy. The Truman administration's postwar foreign policy placed Europe above all else, "both for its sake and for our own [the US] enlightened self interest."⁶ Even in 1949 Asia was listed behind Europe and the Middle East in terms of its importance to the State Department.⁷ After 1947 Japan was an important part of plans for world economic recovery, but the primary focus of US policy was the attempt to limit Soviet influence in Europe. Asia seemed unimportant immediately after the war for a variety of reasons. Except for Japan, most of Asia was economically undeveloped. Although the undeveloped countries of Asia could provide markets and resources for Japan, this part of the world was mentioned only in passing by the National Security

⁵ In a conversation with the President in 1949 in preparation for the visit of Prime Minister Nehru of India, the State Department staff agreed that "actions [in Asia since the end of the war]... were not part of any broad global plan... A great deal of improvisation was necessary." It is evident that flexibility was necessary in order to adjust to the complex situations in Asia. Dean Acheson, Official Conversations and Meetings of Dean Acheson, 1949-1953, (hereafter referred to as Official Meetings of Dean Acheson) [microform] Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America (1980) October 13, 1949 Staff meeting with the President.

⁶ European Recovery and American Aid: A Report by the President's Committee on Foreign Aid, Washington (1947) in Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow, eds., The Truman Administration, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1966, p. 263.

⁷ FRUS, 1949, VII, part 2, p. 1135, April 2, 1949, UK Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin to Acheson.

Resources Board in 1949. The natural resources in Asia were not essential to the US economy or national defense, since they were readily available in other areas.⁸ In addition much of the area was controlled by European colonial powers, and the US was reluctant to risk political problems with its European allies by interference in their colonial policy. Finally, the USSR did not seem interested in Asian affairs, but was quite active in Europe. Economically and politically Asia was simply not as important as Europe.

Despite its lower priority, it is clear that the US hoped to keep Asia out of the Soviet orbit, and as Europe began to settle down, Asia received more attention. By the summer of 1949, US policies designed to aid economic recovery and the containment of Communism in Europe appeared successful. The Marshall Plan worked so well in Western Europe that Moscow needed to create a similar program in order to satisfy appeals from its Eastern European satellites.⁹ In April of that year Secretary of State Dean Acheson had signed the North Atlantic Treaty, which committed the US and the Western European nations to a policy of mutual protection. Although the Soviets had consolidated control over Eastern Europe, they had been unable to exert much influence over the rest of the continent. The last Soviet attempt to change the direction of Western European policy, the blockade of Berlin, had been resolved successfully without military or political disaster. Charles Bohlen, who

⁸ FRUS, Vol I. 1949, June 1, pp. 339-345. Asia is barely mentioned in the National Securities Resource Board's review of strategically important areas.

⁹ Walter LaFeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1971, America in Crisis Series, 2d ed., New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972, p. 48.

was recognized in the State Department as one of the best Soviet analysts, said that "with the lifting of the Berlin blockade, a tranquility settled over Europe. There was no crisis in sight."¹⁰

Asia, on the other hand, was far from tranquil. In 1945 Asian nationalism and European colonialism clashed throughout Southeast Asia. The US and the USSR confronted each other in Korea, and civil war resumed in China. Japan was being administered by the US Army and the Philippines were preparing for independence. Five years later most of these problems remained unresolved. Even in countries which had been granted independence from colonial status, like India, Burma, and the Philippines, there were still internal political and economic problems as well as continuing difficulties with the former metropolitan countries.

Despite these persistent problems, the US maintained a postwar strategy similar to its wartime strategy. It concentrated on Japan and the Pacific islands, and left the Asian mainland to others. Even in Korea and China the US had begun to decrease its commitments. After the failure of the Marshall mission to China, the US provided little aid to any Asian country except Japan and allowed its European allies to determine the direction of policy in South and Southeast Asia. Despite being the dominant power in Asia, the US was reluctant to take a strong position there and deferred to the former colonial powers.

Asian experts in the government had struggled to overcome Eurocentric views in the State Department since before the end of the war,

¹⁰ Charles E. Bohlen, Witness to History, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1973) p. 287.

with little success.¹¹ As Europe became more stable, however, the Asianists gained more influence on Asian policy. However, as the US struggled to find a constructive approach to the turbulent former colonial areas of Asia, the Soviet nuclear explosion and the establishment of the People's Republic of China, attracted the attention of policy makers. Perceptions of the Soviet Union and anti-Communist attitudes became much more influential in policy formation than actual Asian problems. US policy became more militaristic and anti-Soviet. As a result, by the middle of 1950 US Asian policy was not designed to resolve Asian problems. Instead Asian policy was based on perceptions of the Soviet Union and International Communism which were contained in NSC 68. Even before the Korean War the US decided to commit more money to military aid in East Asia. Immediately after the outbreak of the Korean War, the US increased its military commitment throughout East Asia and took a strong anti-Communist position which in many cases exacerbated regional tensions.

In the postwar reconstruction, the US intended to work with European colonial powers and Asian nationalists to eliminate colonialism, promote political independence, and oppose Communism, but this combination proved almost impossible to achieve. European policy and fear of Communism overshadowed the other considerations. The search for moderate Asian nationalism became unimportant in 1949 and the US turned to support of the status quo and military power for the containment of Communism.

¹¹ Marc Gallicchio, The Cold War Begins in Asia, p. 23. See also Robert M. Blum, Drawing the Line, NY: Norton, 1982 pp. 104-124.

COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, AND COMMUNISM

you Communist activity everywhere was a major concern of the Truman administration. By 1949 several communist movements in the region had gained a great deal of strength and aroused the attention of many people in and out of government. Much to the chagrin of US policy makers, the most successful Asian Communist movement was in China, where the US had spent two billion dollars from 1945 to 1949 to aid the Guomindang [Kuomintang or KMT], who opposed the Chinese Communists.

During most of their struggle, the Chinese Communists received little aid from anyone, but Stalin demonstrated increased interest and became much more friendly toward them as they gained strength. By 1949 the Soviets and the Chinese Communists were working toward accommodation. The Chinese Communists' association with the USSR and the timing of their triumph shocked many people in the US and the rest of the world. On the same day that the Berlin Airlift recorded its last official flight, Mao Zedong announced the formation of the People's Republic of China.¹² Just as Europe settled down, the Chinese Civil War reached its climax. Although there was still nominal resistance from the Guomindang in the south, most of China had come under control of the Communists.

China was not the only country in conflict. Communist groups were active in almost every Asian country and conflict was the rule, not the exception. After an extensive tour of Asia, Ambassador at Large Philip Jessup reported that "you cannot go around to these countries [Korea,

¹² New York Times, October 1, 1949, p. 1:2, p. 7:7.

Vietnam, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines] without realizing you are in a war situation."⁷ To the Truman administration, and many other Americans, it seemed that the Communists, led by Stalin and the USSR, having reached a stalemate in Europe, were shifting their focus to Asia.⁸

There were other forces besides Communism which contributed to the "war situations" in Asia reported by Jessup, and which drew the attention of policy makers. Asian nationalism was also an important force in 1949. It had been a powerful aspect of Chinese and Japanese politics since the turn of the century, and during the Second World War, its influence spread. President Franklin Roosevelt recognized that nationalist feelings were gaining strength throughout Asia and would be especially important after the war. He expressed sympathy for revolutionary movements in Asia during the war with Japan and discussed the elimination of colonialism after the war. He specifically opposed French return to Indochina and advocated placing the area under joint allied trusteeship in preparation for independence. He also suggested that Hong Kong should be returned to the Chinese. During most of the war the US supported Asian nationalism, especially that which expressed itself

⁷ Philip Jessup, "Report to the American People on the Far East," Department of State Bulletin, vol. XXIII, no. 564, p. 627. Jessup reported to Acheson and the Department that "the situation was bad but not desperate." Positive diplomatic action coupled with military economic aid and propaganda would prevent the advance of Communism. FRUS, 1950, VI, April 3 Record of Oral Report by Jessup.

⁸ For example, in the summer of 1949 NSC 51 reported that Southeast Asia had "become the target of a coordinated offensive plainly directed by the Kremlin," without any conclusive proof of any current contact between the USSR and the leaders of the united front against the French in Vietnam, NSC Documents, NSC 51, p. 1.

as resistance to the Japanese.⁹ The Europeans, however, had no intention of surrendering their Asian empires. By 1945, European determination and Cold War concerns forced FDR and later Truman to back away from strong statements about decolonization. Idealistic notions about the "right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live" were no match for the pride and economic concerns of the colonialist powers and the American desire to maintain friendly relations with European countries.¹⁰ The Truman administration did not want to appear as a proponent of European colonialism, but neither did it wish to offend European allies. Unfortunately for future US policy in the area, the Marshall Plan and other strong economic support for Europe combined with the Truman Administration's weak stance on decolonization worked against Asian nationalism. After the war, when American insignia appeared on military vehicles used against nationalist uprisings in Europe's Asian colonies, Asians could see the US position clearly and became reluctant to trust any US action.¹¹

⁹ FDR's idea of independence was still quite conservative. He initially thought of joint control by the Western democracies and twenty to thirty years of political tutelage, not even close to the kind of independence which Asian leaders wanted. William Roger Louis, Imperialism at Bay, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, p.4.

¹⁰ Potsdam Papers, II, 1569, quoted in Bernstein and Matusow, eds., The Truman Administration, p. 165. The quoted words are part of the Yalta Protocol, the Atlantic Charter, and the UN Charter, but have not often been used to guide the policies of the signatory countries.

¹¹ Robert McMahon, Colonialism and the Cold War (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981) is an excellent analysis of American involvement in Indonesia, and it contains a substantial amount of material on general US attitudes toward colonialism during and after the war. Gallicchio, The Cold War Begins in Asia, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1988) has good but limited comments on decolonization and American

The strength of Asian nationalism after the war, predicted by FDR and Asian experts in the State Department, forced the European countries to appeal to the US for help, much as they earlier had appealed for US help on the European continent.¹² The British quickly realized they could not afford to fight the nationalist movements. By 1948 they granted both India and Burma independent rule, but this action did not resolve all problems. All the British colonies and Commonwealth countries in South Asia were faced with internal rebellions and some degree of Communist activity. British intelligence "believed [the Communist activity] was the consequence of a Soviet decision," but it is clear that internal tensions were equally, if not completely, responsible.¹³ The British approach to their former colonies in Asia was progressive, but even they feared the influence of the USSR in Southeast Asia. Cold War concerns, colonialism, and nationalism combined to create confusing and extremely volatile situations throughout their Asian empire in 1949, and

policy on pp. 3, 25-28. George Herring, America's Longest War, America in Crisis Series (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1979) summarizes and condemns American and French policy toward Indochina from 1945 to 1950, pp. 1-20. The British approach toward decolonization in Malaya with implications for the rest of the Empire is discussed in A.J. Stockwell, "British Imperial Policy and Decolonization in Malaya, 1942-1952," Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth Studies, vol. XIII, no. 1, October 1984, pp. 68-87.

¹² Marc Gallicchio, The Cold War Begins in Asia, p. 26. Gallicchio provides documentation and a strong argument which show that the Asian experts tried to convince the Europeanists in the State Department of the importance of Asian nationalism, but were unsuccessful, and did not achieve any control over policy.

¹³ D.C. Watt, "Britain and the Far East," in Akira Iriye and Yonosuke Nagai, eds., Origins of the Cold War in Asia (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1977) p.89. This article contains good general information about postwar British Asian policy.

they wanted American economic and political support.¹⁴

The French also needed American help, but in contrast to the British, they showed little respect for Asian nationalism after the war. Instead of negotiating with Ho Chi Minh's independent government, they attempted to destroy it. This attempt absorbed two-thirds of the US aid to France after the war, and more than accounted for the French national debt. Instead of being an asset, Indochina became a serious drain on the French economy. The French desperately needed US support to maintain their presence in Southeast Asia.¹⁵

Although most members of the Truman administration were unhappy with the uncompromising French approach in Indochina, little was done to change it. European considerations took priority over Asian affairs. American officials believed that "without French support, the ... administration's European policy would have collapsed; and to endanger such support by meddling in French colonial affairs would have been the height of diplomatic folly."¹⁶ Charles Bohlen was the second ranking foreign officer in the Paris Embassy during the late forties and early fifties. Although he strongly disapproved of French policy, he believed

¹⁴ A.J. Stockwell, "British Imperial Policy in Malaya," *JICS*, vol. XIII, No. 1, October 1984, p. 86-87. Even in Malaya, where the Communist rebellion was directly connected to Chinese residents, ethnic tension and disagreement about post-colonial government were important parts of the conflict.

¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1949, VII, part 1, p. 112, Ambassador to France David Bruce to Acheson, December 22.

¹⁶ McMahon, *Colonialism and the Cold War*, pp. 313-314. See also Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (N.Y.: Norton, 1973) pp. 289. Mr. Bohlen served at the American embassy in France during the late 1940s and his assessment of the situation is identical to the quotation from McMahon's book.

"it would have been difficult to substitute our judgement for that of the French with regard to their colony."¹⁷ In 1949 as the Chinese Communists moved closer to total victory, the French battle against the Communist revolution in Indochina, "an already serious situation, [became]... an emergency" which required more attention from the Truman administration.¹⁸

The Dutch attitude toward their former colony was similar to that of the French. They were determined to reassert control over the Dutch East Indies, but Sukarno's nationalist revolution was extremely strong, and he "recognized that [the Indonesian] bid for independence could best be served through cooperation with the West."¹⁹ The Indonesian nationalists sought and gained the support of the UN. The US tacitly supported the Dutch as long as possible, but in 1949 the strength of the independence movement, its anti-Communist stance, and broad international support finally forced the US to support Sukarno.

The influence of the US was the key to resolution of the situation. Through the combined pressure of the US and the UN, Indonesia gained independence late in the year. It is important to note that US support

¹⁷ Official Conversations and Meetings of Dean Acheson, February 16 1950 Meeting with the French Ambassador; Charles Bohlen, Witness to History, 1929-1969, p.289; see also CIA Research Reports: Vietnam and Southeast Asia Supplement, October 7, 1949, Intelligence Memorandum #231. It is interesting to note from these sources that French spending in Indochina was almost identical to the amount of aid it received from the US.

¹⁸ FRUS, 1949, vol. VII, p. 42, June 6, Webb to French Embassy.

¹⁹ McMahon, Colonialism and the Cold War, pp. 315. McMahon notes that the Truman and Acheson were reluctant to support Sukarno at first, but eventually saw Dutch attempts to return to the islands were helping the Communist movement there. For example see FRUS 1950, VI, p.965, Acheson to Truman.

"was tied less to a deep understanding of the transforming dynamic of Asian nationalism than to global geopolitical considerations stemming from America's Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union." Nevertheless the US acknowledged Asian nationalism and saw it as an important part of anti-Communist policy.²⁰ Even though US policy toward colonialism in East Asia was strongly influenced by European policy and Cold War considerations, the US chose to support an Asian nationalist movement instead of a colonial power. Although the situation in Indochina was different, many Asian experts in the State Department hoped to push the French in the same direction as the Dutch.²¹

It was impossible for the Truman administration to be unaware of the power of nationalism in East Asia after the Second World War. However, nationalism was not an isolated phenomenon to be supported or opposed. Communist movements and the interests of European countries were also an important part of Asian politics. In a statement representative of the State Department's position, Walton Butterworth said that any Communist movement that appeared to be nationalist had "the inevitable intention to subvert the nationalist cause, in the end, to the

²⁰ Ibid. The encouragement of Asian nationalism also served the economic interests of the US. Once the barriers of empire were removed, the US would have access to areas of the world which formerly were controlled by the Europeans. President Franklin Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull had pursued the destruction of imperial barriers as early as 1941 when the negotiations for Lend-Lease began with the British. See for example A.L.K. Acheson et al. eds., Bretton Woods Revisited, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972, Sir Roy Harrod, "Problems Perceived in the International System," pp. 5-19.

²¹ Even Acheson the Europeanist wanted to use the promise of US aid to push the French toward accommodation in Indochina. He was keenly aware that "our [the US] bargaining position disappeared the moment we agreed to give them [the French] aid." Conversations of Dean Acheson February 16, 1950.

requirements of international Communism."²² Stalin projected the image of monolithic international Communism, it was repeated by the administration, and people in the US believed it.²³ The United States was reluctant to support Asian nationalism partially because of potential problems with European countries, but also because many Asian nationalist groups labeled themselves Communist. The US did not want to commit itself to causes which seemed to be linked to the Soviet Union and which could disrupt relations with its European allies. However it could not ignore the "deep and revolutionary movement of the peoples of Asia" working to overcome the problems of "poverty, misery and foreign domination".²⁴ In order for the Truman administration to create a policy which discouraged the growth of Communism, resolved Asian problems, and benefitted the US, it had to devote more energy to Asian affairs.

In addition to the pull of international events, domestic events pushed policy makers to pay more attention to Asia. The China Bloc in Congress and the China Lobby generated a massive bulk of propaganda designed to convince the public and politicians of the need to provide strong economic and military support to the Guomindang and actively oppose the Chinese Communists. The China Lobby consisted of a variety of people -- priests, newspaper publishers, military officers, academics, and businessmen -- with many different motives. They were not formally

²² FRUS, 1949, vol. VII, p. 42, June 6, Butterworth to French Embassy.

²³ George Gallup, The Gallup Poll, 1935-1971, vol 2, 1949-1958 (N.Y.: Random House, 1972) p. 881. According to this poll, 70% or more of those polled in every category believed the Soviets were out to rule the world.

²⁴ Dean Acheson, "United States Policy Toward Asia," Department of State Bulletin, vol. 22, no. 560, p. 467.

organized, but in their combined efforts managed to utilize every possible avenue to put pressure on the Truman administration to support the KMT. Although N.B. Tucker has written that "between January 1949 and June 1950...China Lobby hysteria remained a fairly insignificant phenomenon," it is clear from her research that the intense efforts of this group were not unnoticed.²⁵ Dean Acheson said in private conversation in early 1950 that US policy toward China was affected by problems in the US as well as by Asian problems.²⁶ It is also significant that more people knew about the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and 1950 than about the Committee on Un-American Affairs, the Taft-Hartley Act, or the Hoover Commission.²⁷ The China Lobby may not have been the most important influence on US Asian policy, but it was strong enough to affect legislation and policy toward Asia.²⁸

The United States and its European allies faced difficult decisions regarding Asia in 1949. In the US both the State Department and the Defense Department had solutions for these problems, but they were initially quite different. The Asian experts within the State Department

²⁵ Nancy B. Tucker, Patterns in the Dust (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1983) p. 99. Tucker devotes one chapter of this book to the China Lobby during these years.

²⁶ Meetings of Dean Acheson, Feb 17, 1950, Meeting with L.K. Little.

²⁷ Gallup, George H., The Gallup Poll, 1935-1971, vol. 2 1949-1958, pp. 879-889. Warren I. Cohen, "Acheson, His Advisors and China, 1949-1950," in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds. Uncertain Years, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1980) p. 51, states that "Truman's responsiveness to domestic pressures" was a key ingredient in China policy during these years.

²⁸ The China Bloc was powerful enough to stall administration plans for the rest of Asia until further aid for China was approved, FRUS, 1950, vol. VII, p. 28, Feb 14, Acheson to Embassy in Korea.

considered support of Asian nationalism an essential part of any new policy, while the Defense Department was naturally more concerned with military solutions to Asian Communism. For much of the year the State Department was able to temper the military recommendations of the JCS and the Defense Department. Most policy makers believed creating positions of strength in Asia was important, but not simply through military means and not at the expense of losing the support of Asian nationalism. The documents from the State Department and the National Security Council clearly show the debate about policy and the attention to Asian nationalism in official policy.

In 1950, after the Soviet nuclear explosion, the triumph of the Chinese Communists, and the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet Treaty and as partisan political battles in the US heated up, support for Asian nationalism lost its place in US foreign policy. After the Korean War began, it was almost eliminated as a policy consideration. The most fundamental Asian problems, which had long been subordinate to other considerations in US policy, once again were overshadowed by the global conflict between the US and the USSR.

From April 14, 1950 to April 14, 1951, the National Security Council

NSC Document 54000

The State Department agreed with the military that the US should analyze but its conclusion was that the US should not commit itself to a policy of containment in Asia. It was concluded that in order to ensure the US could not be drawn into a war it was advisable to continue a policy of containment in Asia. The Joint Chiefs were determined to ensure that the US could not be drawn into a war of strategic value.

GLOBALISM VS. REGIONALISM

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

The most obvious manifestation of the increased attention toward Asian affairs was the activity of the National Security Council. In the summer of 1949, the NSC produced a flurry of documents which attempted to define the problems concerning the US in Asia and the best solutions to these problems. On June 10, 1949 Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson wrote a brief memo labeled NSC 48 which stated his concern about the "the need to contain [the advance of] Communism [in Asia] in order to reduce its threat to our security," and what he considered haphazard policy in Asia. He did not believe that current US policy would "develop a broad program in our [the US] best interests."²⁹ NSC 48/1 and 48/2, finished on December 23 and 30 and titled "US Policy Toward Asia," were the result of this memo. Shortly after NSC 48 was circulated, the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented the "Current Strategic Evaluation of US Needs in Japan," NSC 49, which was reviewed, revised, and submitted by the State Department in October as NSC 49/1.³⁰ NSC 51, "US Policy toward Southeast Asia," came less than one month after NSC 48 and 49. There were two progress reports on the situation in Korea during June and July and a series of reports about China and Formosa during that summer. From April to August almost 50% of the National Security Council's

²⁹ NSC Documents, NSC 48.

³⁰ The State Department agreed with most of the Joint Chiefs' analysis but its conclusion was different. The State Department concluded that in order to ensure the long lasting friendship of Japan it was advisable to conclude a peace treaty as soon as possible, while the Joint Chiefs were determined to continue occupation because of Japan's strategic value.

documents concerned East Asia.³¹ The imminent victory of the Chinese Communists and "the advance of Communism in Asia" spurred this activity.³² No matter where Communism appeared it was seen as a threat to the security of the US. Despite this emphasis on Communism, much of the analysis in these documents demonstrated understanding of complex regional problems. Cold War considerations were an essential part of the documents, but they were tempered by an approach which advocated understanding and solving Asian problems in order to thwart Soviet interests.

There are clearly two different attitudes in all these documents. Both were concerned with the influence of the Soviet Union in Asia, but the approach of the JCS and the Defense Department showed little awareness of other problems in Asia. The State Department's analysis was more sophisticated, and sought to resolve Asian problems in order to limit the possibility of the Soviet Union "fishing in troubled waters." Louis Johnson's primary concerns in NSC 48 were "the advance of Communism in large areas of the world (especially China)" and the "need to contain Communism." He mentioned nothing about the other problems in Asia. NSC 49, the JCS review of Japanese policy, stated that a treaty would be premature because of "the continuing Soviet policy of aggressive

³¹ As Michael Schaller has noted in The American Occupation of Japan, there was little consensus in the NSC. The two primary members of the NSC, the State Department and the Defense Department, had different ideas about national security. The differences are readily apparent when reading NSC documents, sometimes even when reading different sections of the same document.

³² Documents of the NSC, NSC 48.

Communist expansion."³³ With regard to Korea, NSC 8/2 reported that the US had "little strategic interest in maintaining its present troops and bases," but could not withdraw since such a move would seem to be acquiescence to the Communists. NSC 51 stated that "Southeast Asia as a region has become the target of a coordinated offensive plainly directed by the Kremlin" without any significant evidence to support this statement. Access to the area was "desirable though not essential."³⁴ More important was the political and psychological value of keeping this large area of Asia free from Communism.³⁵

Despite this concern with Communism, the analyses in these documents, which were developed in the State Department, also demonstrated attention to regional Asian problems. In addition to the strong anti-Communist message in these documents there was sophisticated analysis of Asian affairs. There was even an attitude of cooperation and flexibility in some documents. NSC 48/1 advocated "working in harmony with the dominant motivating forces in Asia today." NSC 51 stated that "the sympathetic encouragement of Asian nationalism is bound to be a rough passage, but it is the only channel lying between polarization and Stalinization."³⁶ Almost every document concerned with Asia recognized the danger of supporting colonialism and offending Asian nationalism. There was an attempt to understand and present the dominant local

³³ Documents of the NSC, NSC 49, item # 9.

³⁴ FRUS, 1949, I, p. 343, June 1, Report of the National Security Resources Board.

³⁵ NSC Documents, NSC 51.

³⁶ NSC Documents, NSC 48/1, NSC 51.

influences in Asia and to coordinate American goals with those of Asians. The Soviets were a major concern, but working in harmony with Asians was the essential method advocated to resist the USSR.

Although the JCS did not believe the Soviets wanted, or were ready to launch, a war, their analysis of the world was based upon the possibility of war in the near future. The State Department also believed the Soviets did not want a general war, but their plans were based upon the continuation of peace in most of the world, especially between the US and the USSR. Instead of advocating direct control of all strategic areas with large numbers of military forces, the State Department encouraged anti-Communist Asian nationalism and promised economic support to the new governments.

To Asian nationalists, however, this encouragement of nationalism seemed mere rhetoric. From 1945-1949 the US had avoided firm commitments except in Japan and to some extent in the Philippines.³⁷ In the rest of Asia, US policy consistently supported Europeans during these years. Even in Indonesia where Sukarno was clearly anti-Communist, the US was reluctant to back nationalism. Most policy makers believed that the violence and distress of revolution was the kind of environment in which Communist forces were most effective. The US had no intention of supporting the chaotic forces of revolution. Instead policy makers had supported the Europeans in hopes that they would provide stability during the transition to independence, as the British did. By 1949 it was clear to Asians that the US was interested primarily in stability and

³⁷ Even in the Philippines the US had failed to settle the question of reparation payments with the new government. Although independent, the Philippines were reduced to begging the US for economic aid.

anti-Communism, not Asian independence.³⁵ Unsurprisingly, Asian nationalists were suspicious of Western motives. These suspicions combined with the turbulent situations which Philip Jessup reported made determination of an effective policy in Asia extremely difficult.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT

In general Secretary of State Dean Acheson "was not persuaded that much of consequence to the United States could happen on the Asian mainland." Europe was most important to him, and he directed most of the department's energy in that direction. Except for Japan, he followed a "policy of salutary neglect" with regard to Asia.³⁹ The Philippines were also valuable enough to "have a policy which would do everything to keep [them]... not only friendly to the US, but close to the US," but most of Asia was of little concern. Acheson believed the rest of South and Southeast Asia were European responsibilities, and he worked to keep the US as uninvolved as possible in China while he waited for the Communists to complete their victory.⁴⁰

Nevertheless in 1949 there was pressure in the department for a more active Asian policy. China was an especially sensitive area. There

³⁵ For examples of US policy goals and reactions to them see FRUS, 1949, VII, part 2, memo by Joseph Satterthwaite; 1950, VI, March 2, US Ambassador to India Loy Henderson to Acheson; June 16, Policy Statement: Burma.

³⁹ Warren I. Cohen, "Acheson, the State Department and Policy toward China 1949-1950" in Borg and Heinrichs, eds., Uncertain Years, p. 16, 49, 50.

⁴⁰ Official Conversations of Dean Acheson, April 25, 1949, Conversation between Truman and Acheson; December 24, 1949, Meeting with British Ambassador Oliver Franks.

are more documents about China published in the Foreign Relations of the United States series of 1949 than about any other country in the world. There is more than twice as much material about China than about the rest of Asia combined. In addition the Department published United States Relations with China, with Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949, better known as The China White Paper, in August 1949. Acheson's primary interest may have been Europe, but he was certainly interested in minimizing the influence of the Soviet Union and Communism in Asia. Consequently the overwhelming success of the Chinese Communists in 1949 changed the way the department perceived the rest of Asia. Simply pumping economic and military aid into China did almost nothing to stop the Communists from winning the civil war. The Asian experts within the department had been trying to explain the importance of Asian nationalism since 1945, and were beginning to make some headway.

A variety of people urged Acheson to increase attention toward Asia in 1949. In addition to his regular reports about conditions in China, Ambassador John Leighton Stuart sent to Washington two memoranda which discussed the problems in US East Asian policy and recommended immediate action to create a new policy in Asia. One of his principal conclusions was that "containment of ... Communism requires in Asia a new approach with appropriate implementation not so much in terms of money or munitions but in convincingly dramatized ideas." He believed that only an approach "primarily to the mind and heart," sympathetic to the revolutionary changes in Asia, would be successful: "Communists cannot be stopped in this ... area by military force or

economic aid alone."⁴¹ The Policy Planning Staff [PPS] submitted a paper which stressed the importance of resolving the problems in Southeast Asia and economically linking it to Japan. Like Stuart's memo this paper stressed the need for immediate amelioration of the conflicts and a positive political and economic policy in Southeast Asia. The paper stated that it was most urgent to resolve the conflicts in Indochina and Indonesia between Europeans and Asians and to help create independent states quickly.⁴² Three months later, in July, the Director of the PPS, George Kennan, and John P. Davies, an Asian expert who had served in China, followed up this policy statement with an outline of political and economic moves during the summer and fall of 1949 which would improve relations with Asian countries. Their recommendations were designed to promote Asian independence and stability and to foster a pro-Western attitude.

Even those in the department who were closest to Acheson, Philip Jessup and Dean Rusk, discussed the problems and the need for immediate action. Jessup, along with two academicians who advised Acheson about Asian affairs, Raymond Fosdick and Everett Case, submitted a memorandum to Acheson pressing him for action in the Far East. They plainly stated that they did "not believe the counters [to Communism in Asia] were primarily either arms or money."⁴³ Pressure for a new, positive policy which emphasized the ultimate independence of Asian countries was

⁴¹ FRUS, 1949 VII, part 2, p. 1117 Stuart to Acheson, February 15; pp. 1121-2 Memo by Stuart (no date).

⁴² FRUS, 1949, VII, part 2, March 29, PPS 51.

⁴³ FRUS, 1949, VII, part 2, July 12 Jessup to Rusk; August 29 Fosdick, Case, and Jessup memo to Acheson.

so strong that while Acheson was in Paris for the Foreign Minister's Conference, the acting Secretary of State sent a telegram to the French supporting the recent French concessions in Indochina, but criticizing past policy and the current slow pace of liberalization. This telegram indicates that Asianists were beginning to overcome the dominance of Europeanists. However, this telegram never left the American Embassy in Paris. The Secretary did not allow the telegram to be given directly to the French. Although Ambassador David Bruce relayed its content to the French the message must have been much milder. Despite this action by Acheson and Bruce, it seems that Asianists were gaining greater influence in the State Department.⁴⁴

The most significant aspect of both the NSC and State Department recommendations for Asian policy was the attitude toward military and economic aid. Except in documents authored exclusively by the JCS, military and economic aid were considered insufficient without a strong program in support of nationalist aspirations. The main suggestions from Kennan, Stuart, Jessup, Case, and Fosdick for effective policy in Asia were the rapid termination of colonialism and support for Asian leaders who were anti-Communist and favored cooperation with the West. The people who urged Acheson to create a more effective Asian policy recognized that economic and military aid would not be effective until the nationalist struggles were resolved. These advisors were searching for a stable Asia which involved little direct influence by the US. Independent Asian states which were tied into the Western economies

⁴⁴ FRUS, 1949, Vol. VII, pp. 38-45, 45-46, June 6, Webb to French Embassy, June 10, Bruce to Webb.

would be prosperous and therefore stable. Such countries would not be susceptible to Communist propaganda.⁴⁵

CONGRESS

The Congress was also concerned with Asian policy. In 1949 it threatened "to cut off funds to the European Recovery Program and to hold up passage of the Atlantic Pact" unless the Dutch granted independence to Indonesia.⁴⁶ In the same year the China Bloc introduced a bill requesting \$1.5 billion in aid to the KMT, an idea in direct conflict with Acheson's policy. The conflict between Acheson and the China Bloc generated a strong interest in China policy among many senators. In the spring of 1949, Senator Tom Connally, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, received a letter signed by fifty Senators which requested an investigation of US China policy.⁴⁷ Acheson sent a long letter to the Committee which explained and defended the position of the State Department. Although the \$1.5 billion did not pass, the Congress was not persuaded to terminate aid to the KMT, as Acheson and Truman had hoped it would be. Domestic political considerations forced the administration to take a patient, deliberate approach in Asia.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Such ideas have been an integral part of US foreign policy since 1945. See Robert A. Packenham, Liberal America and the Third World, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973 pp. 35-49.

⁴⁶ McMahon, Colonialism and the Cold War, p. 313.

⁴⁷ United States Senate, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Economic Assistance to China and Korea 1949-1950, March 11, 1949.

⁴⁸ United States Senate, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Economic Assistance to China and Korea, March 15, 1949 letter from Acheson to the Committee. See also Cohen in Borg and

After the Republicans lost the presidential race, and their Congressional majorities in 1948, partisan political conflict increased in intensity. Any significant change in policy, like that recommended to Acheson by much of the State Department, faced the scrutiny of Congress. It did not help that initially, Acheson was not as careful as George Marshall in securing the cooperation of key Republican leaders who advocated bipartisan foreign policy, like Senator Arthur Vandenberg.⁴⁹ There were many Congressmen who were willing to use the success of the Chinese Communists and the threat of Communism in Asia as a political tool to criticize the Truman administration. Although Congress may not have had much direct influence on the initial development of Asian policy, their control of the purse strings certainly affected its ultimate implementation.

THE PRESIDENT

President Truman's public policy also reflected the increased interest in Asia in 1949. Point Four in the President's inaugural address demonstrated a new concern with Asia and other underdeveloped areas, but Truman's specific attitudes toward the different problems in Asia are difficult to ascertain because he left so much of the decision making

Heinrichs, Uncertain Years. For China Bloc see Footnote #22.

⁴⁹ See Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1952, pp. 502-512. While the Republicans controlled the Senate, Vandenberg had always been consulted beforehand, but after the Democrats won a slight majority in Congress in the 1948 elections, the Republicans had not been consulted as regularly. Although Vandenberg "deeply believed" (p.503) in the North Atlantic Treaty and the accompanying MDAP legislation, he and the Republicans were offended by the lack of consultation on the MDAP legislation. Vandenberg maintained that the essential difference between previous situations and the current fight over funding was that previously the process of compromise had "occurred in private and in advance" (p.509).

process to his advisors. It is clear that he wanted to contain Communism, and that he was aware of the problems direct US intervention in colonial areas might cause. Since he had no expertise in Asian affairs, he trusted his advisors to make reasonable and appropriate recommendations regarding the complex problems in Asia.⁵⁰ He weighed different opinions and made decisions based on the information other people presented to him. N.B. Tucker has written that when he was Secretary of State, Dean Acheson was "virtually the President's only advisor on international relations."⁵¹ Truman on the other hand was the only person, according to Warren Cohen, who had any significant influence on Acheson's recommendations.⁵² Although both these men believed Europe should be the primary focus of US foreign policy, in 1949 they were unable to ignore the pressure within the executive branch, from the Congress, and from the China Lobby to pay some attention to China and the rest of Asia. The President, like the Secretary, wanted to terminate relations with Nationalist China and approved the attempt to encourage the Chinese Communists to lean away from the USSR. He seemed to understand that all Communists were not united by an unbreakable bond.⁵³ He was aware that Asian problems were complicated. He did not want the US to appear as an imperialist power to Asians by becoming too involved militarily or

⁵⁰ Conversations of Dean Acheson, February 3, 1950, Cabinet meeting notes; February 4, 1950, meeting with President Quirino of the Philippines and the Philippine ambassador to the US.

⁵¹ Tucker, Patterns in the Dust, p. 6-7.

⁵² Cohen in Borg and Heinrichs, Uncertain Years, p. 17.

⁵³ Conversations of Dean Acheson, November 17, 1949, Memo of Conversation between the President and Acheson.

economically in other countries' problems. He seemed to be willing to maintain a flexible, patient, and detached approach to China and the rest of Asia.

It is clear that in 1949 US policy makers became more concerned with Asian problems. They were all concerned with the containment of Communism, but the best method of containment was hotly disputed. Although reluctant to fill the power vacuum left by the fall of the Japanese Empire, the US was being drawn toward a more active policy. Most people in the Truman administration agreed that termination of colonial relationships was necessary. Despite disagreements from a few China Bloc congressmen and some military officers, most policy makers believed that psychological, political, and economic support for Asian nationalism would be the policy most beneficial to US interests in Asia, but as yet no change in policy had been approved.

Just as US policy makers turned their attention to Asia, a series of events combined to change the administration's perspectives on foreign policy in Asia. The Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb, the official establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the beginning of Joseph McCarthy's attack on the State Department were a combination which deeply affected policy formation. By the spring of 1950 the Truman administration developed and approved a policy, outlined in NSC 68, which sought answers through military power and fervent anti-Communist rhetoric. Policy became less balanced and more rigid in its response to problems throughout the world. Resolving the problems of nationalism and colonialism became much less important than creating positions of strength. The US was no longer as reluctant to use its own

A NEW DEFINITION OF FOREIGN POLICY

In 1949 it appeared that policy makers were beginning to believe that "in the Far East the problem is not one primarily of Russia, but of the basic relations between Americans and Asiatics."⁵⁴ As the US reevaluated foreign policy in the light of domestic and international events in late 1949 and 1950 such a regional approach was pushed aside, and all problems in international relations were defined in terms of the confrontational relationship with the Soviet Union.

The detection of Soviet nuclear capability in August 1949 sent shock waves through the government of the US. The US military believed the Soviet bloc possessed a significant advantage in conventional military strength and that only fear of the American's atomic weapons kept the expansionist desires of the Soviet Union under control. The Air Force Chief of Staff General Hoyt S. Vandenberg explained that organizational and technological progress in his service branch had been slow because "even though [it was] officially estimated the Soviets could **probably** have an atomic bomb by mid 1953, many thought it more likely they would not have the bomb for from ten to fifteen years thereafter."⁵⁵

The discovery of the Soviet explosion immediately changed US atomic and military policy. On October 20, 1949, less than a month after he had announced that the Soviets possessed nuclear technology, President

⁵⁴ FRUS, 1949, I, p. 402, October 11, Minutes of Policy Planning Staff Meeting.

⁵⁵ United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, part II, 1946-1953 (hereafter referred to as JCS Records) [microform] Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America (1980), Air Defense, Nov. 1949-April 1950, JCS 2084, p. 1.

Truman revealed his decision to "expand the facilities of the Atomic Energy Commission," and sought to speed up the decision regarding the development of a hydrogen bomb. Nine days later he signed a Congressional Act which gave the Air Force a \$615 million dollar increase in appropriations.⁵⁶ At the same time the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department began a review of foreign policy which was expanded, continued, and defined in NSC 68.

The language of NSC 68 is rigid and dogmatic in comparison to that of the documents relating to Asian policy created in 1949. Regional problems were forgotten. It reduced all the problems of the world to a simplistic, black and white formula:

the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world...
The fundamental purpose [of the US] is to assure the integrity and vitality of our free society...
The issues that face us are momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction ...of civilization itself.⁵⁷

The dramatic image of a life and death struggle between the forces of freedom and the forces of slavery became the official world view of the United States. Given that the world faced a choice between fulfillment or destruction, the US had only one choice: to stop this "new fanatic faith" wherever it appeared.

Stopping Communism was not a new part of US foreign policy, but the method advocated in this document was. The continuation of current

⁵⁶ Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1949, October 20 News Conference, October 29 Press statement.

⁵⁷ NSC Documents, NSC 68, I. "Backgrounds of the Present World Crisis;" III. "Fundamental Design of the Kremlin."

policies, according to NSC 68, would "not succeed in making effective use of [the free world's] vastly superior political, economic, and military potential to build a tolerable state of order among nations." Only "a more rapid build-up of political, economic, and military strength [was]... consistent with ...achieving our [the US] fundamental purpose."⁵⁸ This build-up was to be achieved by returning military spending to Second World War levels, almost 50% of the national budget and roughly five times current levels. Such a change would produce two results. The "free world" would build a huge military force capable of winning any military engagement anywhere in the world and the Soviets would be forced into an arms race they could not afford. They would either lose any attempt at war, destroy their economy attempting to keep pace with the West, or acquiesce to Western conditions for an end to the Cold War. No matter what course the Soviets chose, the document predicted the US would be "successful in checking and rolling back the Kremlin's drive."⁵⁹ The Truman administration officially adopted the ideas always present in the government that sheer force was the best way to deal with the USSR.

The process of review began immediately after the detection of the Soviet nuclear explosion, although President Truman's request for policy reevaluation did not occur until January 1950. The document was completed in April 1950. Although key figures in the Truman administration, like Acheson, supported it, there was serious opposition in both the State and Defense Departments. It is especially ironic that the State

⁵⁸ NSC Documents, NSC 68, Section IX, part A, #4; part D.

⁵⁹ Ibid, NSC 68, Section IX, Part A., #3.

Department had officially opposed NSC 20/4, which contained the same ideas as NSC 68, approximately one year earlier, before Acheson became Secretary, and that the Defense Department was in the midst of the most severe spending cuts effected since the end of the war. Since NSC 68 called for such a complete change in policy, it required careful attention and skillful manipulation in order to avoid serious problems during its creation.

The idea behind the shift cannot be described as new. Some elements in the military had presented this view of the Soviet Union since the end of the Second World War.⁶⁰ The Joint Chiefs had always believed a strong well trained military force with the "readiness and determination to take prompt and effective military action abroad to anticipate and prevent attack" was necessary to ensure the security of the US. The National Security Council had consistently argued for a strong military posture against the USSR. The primary recommendation of NSC 7, completed in March 1948, was prompt action to "strengthen... the military establishment of the United States" and Western Europe.⁶¹ The analysis in NSC 20/4, a document concerning policy toward the USSR which was completed in November 1948, was identical to that in NSC 68. NSC 68 states that "the objectives outlined in NSC 20/4 are fully consistent with the objectives stated in this paper."⁶² The NSC

⁶⁰ W. Chris Hamel and Russell D. Buhite, "War for Peace," Diplomatic History (forthcoming). The authors thoroughly explore the arguments during the Cold War for preventive war against the USSR.

⁶¹ Thomas H. Etzold and John L. Gaddis, eds., Containment (N.Y. Columbia University Press, 1978) pp. 42, SWNCC 282, section 8.a., September 19, 1945; pp. 167-168, NSC 7, March 30, 1948, "Conclusions."

⁶² NSC Documents, NSC 68, Section IV., part B.

documents concerned with Asian problems which were created in 1949 presented the USSR as the ultimate source of many problems facing the US, but sought solutions to international problems through attention to regional issues. Although communism was an important problem in Asia, these documents also recognized that "the US can neither impose nor enforce a pro-Western orientation on any foreign people."⁶³ Only through sympathetic attention to Asian problems could the US hope to achieve positive influence in Asia.⁶⁴

The State Department was responsible for the balanced perspective in these NSC documents.⁶⁵ The State Department officially withheld its approval of NSC 20/4 because "no useful purpose would be served by attempting to draft a detailed paper of this kind... Such a report would lead to rigidity of US positions rather than to flexibility of options." The document caused the State Department staff to question the purpose

⁶³ NSC Documents, NSC 49/1.

⁶⁴ NSC Documents, NSC 49/1(Japan), prepared exclusively by the State Department, and NSC 48/1 and 48/2(East Asia) lack the extremist caricatures of the USSR. It is likely that the detailed analyses in 48/1 and 48/2 were prepared by State Department experts. NSC 8/2(Korea), 22/1(China), 37/7(Formosa) all show concern for regional problems and lack extremist statements about the USSR. Even when the USSR is depicted as "the most voracious and evil imperialist in history" in NSC 51(indochina)the document also condemns colonialism as the friend of Communism and advocates cooperation with nationalist forces.

⁶⁵ Schaller, The American Occupation of Japan, pp. 195-211. Using the Freedom of Information Act Professor Schaller was able to obtain documents concerning Asian policy in 1949 which detail the struggle between the State Department and the Department of Defense. Only through skillful argument and political maneuvering did State Department officials manage to blunt the hard line anti-Communist policy of the Defense Department.

of the NSC, as it had "in other instances."⁶⁶ George Kennan was especially influential in resisting the narrow militaristic recommendations it contained, but he apparently had the complete support of the Department. He and the other prominent Soviet expert, Charles Bohlen, were initially successful in convincing the rest of the State Department that the USSR was "largely motivated by its interests as a national state" and not by ideological fanaticism.⁶⁷ However the ideas in NSC 20/4 were too common for Kennan and Bohlen to purge them from the Truman administration. Even Secretary Acheson and President Truman found such ideas attractive. In order for the new secretary of state to pursue such ideas, it was important for him to minimize the influence of Kennan, a prominent figure in the Department who had been close to the previous Secretary of State, George Marshall.⁶⁸ It did not prove difficult to move Kennan and Bohlen out of the way. Almost exactly one year after the State Department had condemned its conclusions, NSC 68 was endorsed by the Departments of State and Defense and presented as the only practical direction for US foreign policy. At the same time George Kennan was preparing to leave the State Department.

⁶⁶ FRUS, 1949, I, p. 282, April 14, Kennan to Acheson and Webb; p.285, April 15, Minutes of Weekly Staff Meeting with the Under-Secretary.

⁶⁷ Bohlen, Witness to History, p. 290.

⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that Kennan's office adjoined Marshall's, making Kennan the only State Department officer with direct access to the Secretary.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT

When the Policy Planning Staff began its review of foreign policy in October 1949, George Kennan was chairman. He clearly did not want policy to take the direction of NSC 20/4. Acheson saw that "Kennan and Bohlen approached the problem of policy definition with a very different attitude and from a different angle from the rest of us, ... [and Acheson was] impatient with obscure argument."⁶⁹ In January 1950 Paul Nitze took over the position of Chairman and assumed control of policy reevaluation. Acheson knew that "Nitze was doubtful of the line of argument George Kennan had taken" and that Nitze had the same opinions as the Secretary.⁷⁰ This move was supposed to allow Kennan to concentrate his energy on the role of Counselor, but it is difficult to believe that Acheson did not appoint Nitze PPS Director in order to control the direction of the policy review. Whatever the reason, Kennan soon decided to leave the Department to teach at Princeton. He was frustrated with the Department.

Kennan was not scheduled to leave until the summer of 1950, and he continued to recommend a regional approach to foreign policy. In preparation for Acheson's address to the Congressional foreign relations committees in January 1950, Kennan sent the Secretary an outline of the world situation. Although the world was divided into two sections, Communist and free, the report was not simplistic or militaristic. It further divided the world into regions and then into individual countries.

⁶⁹ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p.347.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

With regard to Asia Kennan stressed that there were "great dangers in over-simplified and impulsive approaches." The report is notable for its patient attitude toward Asia and its advocacy of a "psychological approach" which concentrated on the "different needs, traditions, motives and terms of reference" in Asia.⁷¹ The emphasis was on Asia, not the USSR, and military power was not the key part of policy. Kennan provided the Secretary with several statements of his positions with regard to policy in Asia and the rest of the world before he left Washington. The Secretary appears to have used some of Kennan's ideas in his public statements, but the development of NSC 68 was unaffected.⁷²

It is also interesting to note that the other Soviet expert, Charles Bohlen, was moved out of Washington during this period of policy review. He was offered the position of ambassador at almost any post he desired, which he declined because he considered such a high position premature in his career. He did accept an appointment to the embassy staff in Paris, and left Washington. Acheson removed the two best Soviet experts in the State Department, who disagreed with the Department's characterization of the USSR and the general direction of policy, from positions which could influence policy development during this crucial period. He did not want any interference with the creation of NSC 68.⁷³ These

⁷¹ FRUS, p. 127, 6 January 1950, Kennan to Acheson.

⁷² See Dean Acheson, Department of State Bulletin, vol. XXII, 1959, #551, January 23; #560, Mar 27; #573 June 26. Although the statements in these speeches and articles contain ideas similar to ones Kennan presented to Acheson, it is difficult to establish any direct connection.

⁷³ Cohen in Borg and Heinrichs, eds. Uncertain Years points out Acheson's tendency to listen only to advice which supported beliefs he already held. Acheson himself discusses his impatience with what he admits were the legitimate concerns of Kennan and Bohlen in Present at

personnel changes insured that Acheson would be the dominant voice in the Department and that NSC 68 would have little trouble being approved.

Another step which smoothed the way for NSC 68 was the addition to the State Department of John Foster Dulles, who happened to be quite sympathetic to the ideas contained in the document. He was added in March 1950 as Kennan was being phased out. Dulles was a staunch Republican who was brought into the Department to help restore bipartisan foreign policy. He and Kennan had little in common. Reviewing the situation for Acheson in February 1950 Kennan stated that there were problems in Asia, but the overall situation was "neither unexpected nor catastrophic... There is little justification for the impression that the 'Cold War'... has suddenly taken some drastic turn to our disadvantage."⁷⁴

Dulles on the other hand believed that with the victory of the Communists in China, "the US faces a new and critical period in its world position. The loss of China to the Communists... has marked a shift in the balance of power in favor of Soviet Russia and to the disfavor of the US."⁷⁵ Dulles had a blind spot with regard to Communism and the Soviet Union, much like Senator Robert Taft. Both men were intelligent and well educated, but for Dulles and Taft, "the Soviet government represented ... the universal value defined as evil."⁷⁶ Dulles was certainly not as

the Creation, p. 347.

⁷⁴ FRUS, 1950, I, p.160, Kennan to Acheson, February 17.

⁷⁵ FRUS 1950, Vol. I, Dulles memo to Rusk and Nitze, May 18, p.314.

⁷⁶ Mark Toulouse, The Transformation of John Foster Dulles, (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1985) p. 220. For similar statements about Taft see James Patterson, Mr. Republican, pp. 442-449. Dulles was right in tune with NSC 68 in his public statements. For example see Department of State Bulletin, Vol. XXII, #566, May 8, 1950,

conservative as Taft, but the intricacies of Kennan's perspective were unimportant to him. Instead of careful attention to regional problems he suggested the US "quickly take a dramatic and strong stand that shows our [US] confidence and resolution." Since Communism had been successful in Asia recently, Dulles wanted to stage such a drama somewhere in Asia. The place did not matter, but he believed that Taiwan provided the most likely spot for conflict involving Communists and therefore for US intervention. He believed such action would stop the expansion of Communism in "the Mediterranean, the Near East, Asia, and the Pacific."⁷⁷ As it turned out, the Korean War served the same purpose. US action in Korea was directed against the USSR. The possibility that it was a result of internal Korean problems was initially not considered and later dismissed as unrealistic. Policy makers saw all conflict as a product of the Soviet Union. They saw the USSR exactly as NSC 68 defined that country.

In addition to establishing his authority in the State Department, Acheson carefully sought to avoid problems from other parts of the government. When he failed to consult Senator Arthur Vandenberg and the Republicans in 1949 about the Mutual Defense Assistance Act he faced difficulties which could easily have been avoided, but he learned to pave the way for future plans.⁷⁸ Acheson was well aware of the

"New Aspects of American Foreign Policy" which is concerned with "the black plague of Soviet Communism."

⁷⁷ FRUS, 1950, Vol. I, p. 314-315, May 18, 1950, Dulles to Rusk and Nitze.

⁷⁸ Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, the Riverside Cambridge Press, 1952) p. 503-504. Vandenberg noted in letters to his wife that he "would

criticisms which the Truman administration faced from various factions in American politics. He spent much of his time persuading Congressmen, Pentagon officials, and members of the press that his ideas on foreign policy were valid.⁷⁹ He carefully planned the way for NSC 68 in the State Department and in terms of his relationship with the Republicans.

Acheson later said "that the purpose of NSC 68 was to so bludgeon the mind of 'top government' that not only could the President make a decision, but that the decision could be carried out."⁸⁰ In order to create such a tool, he admitted to deliberately simplifying the world situation: "qualification gave way to simplicity of statement, nicety and nuance to bluntness, almost brutality in carrying home a point."⁸¹ By the spring of 1950, this deliberate simplification had removed much of the flexibility in US policy. Prior efforts to explain the intricacies of international politics to people outside of the State Department had not met with much success. In August 1949, the attempt to explain the complexity of the Chinese Civil War in the China White Paper "was greeted by a storm of abuse from very diverse groups in the Congress and the press."⁸² The bulk of this abuse came from a small group of

not support the [original] bill," although he "deeply believed" in its objectives.

⁷⁹ FRUS 1950, Vol. I, January 26, Memo of meeting by Jack McFall p.140. In this meeting Acheson faced criticism from many idfferent points of view -- from isolationists to those advocating preventive war. See also FRUS, 1949, IX, pp. 463-467, Memo by Acheson. Acheson had to talk General Omar Bradley and the JCS out of supporting Taiwan only a few hours before a crucial meeting on NSC 48 and Asian policy.

⁸⁰ Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation, p.374.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 375.

⁸² Ibid, p. 303.

people, but the paper did not generate the support for the administration which Acheson and Truman had hoped it would. In the next few months, the Soviet nuclear explosion was discovered, Judith Coplon and US Communist Party officials went on trial, Alger Hiss was convicted, Klaus Fuchs was arrested, bi-partisan cooperation on foreign policy began to erode, and Joseph McCarthy began his tirade against the State Department. In this "veritable witches' brew" it must have seemed rather futile to the Secretary and most of the Department to explain the complexity of the third world to anyone.⁸³

Instead of a policy which combined military demobilization with political and economic finesse, which was the policy of the first Truman administration, Acheson successfully directed the State Department toward a policy which appealed to the strong anti-Communist feelings in the US and which challenged the Soviet Union to an arms race which would strain the Soviet economy. In addition, except for Japan, most of Asia did not have the economic or political structures which would allow programs like the Marshall Plan to be successful.⁸⁴ A strong military policy would provide the US with a more reliable short term solution for the instability in Asia. The policy also justified increased spending to the domestic opponents who complained that the US was spending too

⁸³ Ibid, p. 345

⁸⁴ FRUS, 1949, VII, 2, September 12, p.1197-1204 minutes of a meeting between US and British officials. Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs W. Walton Butterworth made it clear that a Marshall Plan in Asia was impractical in the view of the State Department.

much money on defense and foreign affairs.⁸⁵ Acheson listened to a wide range of criticism in meetings with Congressional leaders. The administration was handicapped on all sides. It needed to regroup, to develop an aggressive policy which would answer its critics and allow the US to get on with the business of saving the world, which most people in the administration believed was the mission of the US. The "brutal" simplicity of NSC 68 seemed to be the answer.

As a political tool, which appears to be what Acheson was attempting to create, this document answered the Truman administration's problems. It satisfied conservative critics who claimed Truman was soft on Communism by advocating a tremendous military buildup. To those concerned with the economy of the country, it pointed out that unemployment would be reduced approximately 75% if such a program were implemented. With this document, Truman also "saw a beautiful opportunity to turn the tables on the Communist witch-hunters in Congress." They would have to support the President or face the same criticism they had directed at him.⁸⁶ To those who complained about the increased tax burden, it could be argued that the stimulation of the economy would provide the necessary funds. Internationally it would force the Soviets into an arms race which their economy could not afford, demonstrate American commitment to its European allies, and provide the military

⁸⁵ These two items accounted for over 40% of the actual and estimated amounts of the national budget from 1948-1951, January 9, 1950, Annual Budget Message to Congress, Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman 1950. In addition NSC 68 calculates that the US defense budget was between two and three times larger than that of the USSR. Perhaps there was reason to complain.

⁸⁶ Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman, p. 436.

power to stabilize Asia.

As a practical expression of foreign policy it was limited. As Kennan and Bohlen stated, it did not allow much flexibility in US policy. NSC 68 classified the whole world as locked in a struggle between the forces of good and evil, but it was impossible to define the political situation in Asia in bi-polar terms. India did not wish to be classified as belonging to either side, nor did Indonesia. The PRC and the USSR had only a tenuous alliance that unraveled after Stalin's death. Yet NSC 68 defined only two groups. The result was that Communist leaders such as Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh were pushed closer to Stalin by the rigid anti-Communist stance of the US, and newly independent countries seeking an alternative path resented the efforts of the US to classify them in bi-polar terms.

Acheson could not foresee the Korean War, which provided the justification for implementing NSC 68. He was searching for a strong simple message to unite the country behind his President and to demonstrate American power and determination to the Soviets, especially in Asia. The structure of the Cold War in Europe was settled. Even the legislation for rearmament of Europe had been passed (MDAP), though it was not funded at the level Acheson desired. In order to reassure allies in Europe, but perhaps more important, to provide the means to halt Communist expansion in Asia, the only area of the world in which the Communists appeared to be gaining ground, Acheson engineered a change in US foreign policy. He admitted that this change was a distortion of reality and one which stressed power and emotion over reason, but believed the achievement of his goal justified his methods. This attitude

signaled America's turn toward military aid as the basis of controlling change in the Third World. Unfortunately, when the State Department stopped trying to explain the intricacies of international relations, there was no one left to do it.

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The review of policy which Truman ordered was supposed to be a joint effort of the State and Defense Departments, but relations were especially strained between these two departments during this period. In 1949 Truman appointed Louis Johnson to succeed James Forrestal as Secretary of Defense. Forrestal was reluctant to step down and probably did not like the choice of Johnson as his successor, but there was little he could do. The transition was difficult for Forrestal, for Johnson, for President Truman, and for the military establishment. Forrestal died under mysterious circumstances at Bethesda Naval Hospital shortly after his resignation, and Johnson almost immediately alienated the military establishment. Johnson was so truculent that Truman replaced him with George Marshall only 18 months later. In addition Johnson and Dean Acheson disliked each other so much that they avoided contact as much as possible. These difficulties affected military and foreign policy development in the State and Defense Departments and the reevaluation of foreign policy, which was intended to be a collaboration between these two departments.

Johnson had been Assistant Secretary of War from 1936 to 1940 and "so improved the industrial preparedness of the United States that it was said he shortened World War II by eighteen months." He was a staunch Democrat, a good businessman, and had experience in Washington, but during his tenure in public service he been at odds with the military, and his personal feud with the Secretary of War caused President Roosevelt to

request both of their resignations.⁸⁷

His past certainly foreshadowed his experiences in the Truman administration. It is difficult to discover exactly why James Forrestal resigned and Louis Johnson was appointed Secretary of Defense, but the available evidence paints an ugly picture of Johnson's role in the process.⁸⁸ However it is clear that Johnson shared Truman's ideas about controlling the Defense budget and further unification of the armed forces, and that James Forrestal had opposed Truman on both these issues. There were other personal and political events which entered into the decision, but they are difficult to verify and matter little to policy formation. Truman's determination to consolidate control over the military and to reduce military spending were important enough for him to appoint Johnson. Although Truman had reduced the Defense budget rapidly and significantly after the conclusion of the Second World War, continued pressure from Congress to reduce the national debt forced him to seek even greater spending restrictions.⁸⁹ He knew Johnson would be more enthusiastic about implementing budget reduction in the Defense Department.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Paolo Coletta, The United States Navy and Defense Unification, (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1981) p. 126-128.

⁸⁸ For more information about Johnson and Forrestal see Coletta, The United States Navy and Defense Unification, p. 117-128.

⁸⁹ Lawrence Korb, The Joint Chiefs of Staff, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1976) states that defense appropriations had fallen from over 80 billion in 1945 to less than 15 billion in 1949.

⁹⁰ In one of his first meetings with the House Armed Services Committee, Johnson assured the Committee that from one to one and one half billion dollars could be cut from the current budget and still maintain an adequate level of military preparedness. Public Statement by the Secretaries of Defense, Frederick, Md.: University Publications of

Johnson went to work immediately and alienated most of the Pentagon and the State Department. He threatened the Joint Chiefs with arbitrary cuts unless they agreed to cooperate in controlling spending. He set a budget ceiling of \$13 billion in consultation with President Truman before the fiscal year 1951 budget deadline. He stated

it is highly unusual for any such figure to be mentioned prior to submission of the budget to Congress by the President.... But I have taken this unusual step... in order to convey to you the dimensions of the problem ...to maintain... maximum preparedness at the least possible cost.⁹¹

Johnson was determined to maintain tight control over the Defense budget, but this determination ran contrary to the ideas of the Joint Chiefs and to the trends in the State Department after the Soviet nuclear explosion.

Within the Defense Department Johnson quickly made a host of enemies in the Navy and the Marine Corps. He had been in office less than two months when he cancelled the Navy's super carrier, despite the fact that the keel had already been laid and money appropriated for the project. Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan resigned in protest, because he had not been consulted and most of the Naval establishment supported him. In response Johnson appointed a man who knew nothing about the Navy, Francis Matthews, as the next Secretary. This action increased tension within the Department of Defense. Johnson also supported the consolidation of all aviation branches under the Air Force. He did little to hide his bias toward the Air Force and his preference for

America (1980) Part 1, Louis Johnson, Vol. 3, p. 476.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.468.

Air Atomic Power as the primary aspect of military power. With Johnson as Secretary, the other service branches expected the Air Force to receive some special treatment, but neither the Navy nor the Marine Corps believed consolidation of all air groups was necessary or desirable and resisted this idea with all their power. The Navy's response to Johnson's actions has been called "the Revolt of the Admirals." Admiral Robert L. Dennison, Truman's Naval Aide in 1949, later said "it wasn't a revolt and it wasn't just the admirals. The whole Navy was questioning what the future held, what were the policies and why?...It was a disturbing time."⁹²

The antipathy between Johnson and the services was not limited to the Navy and the Marine Corps. Johnson and General Omar Bradley had extremely different views about the Defense budget. It seems that Johnson managed to offend everyone with whom he came in contact. From Government documents it is difficult to see the problems between Acheson and Johnson, but Acheson presents his difficulties with Johnson clearly in his memoirs. Johnson was such a problem in interdepartmental meetings on the H-Bomb proposal that meetings with him were halted after two sessions.⁹³ More significant was the final meeting before the formal presentation of NSC 68 to the National Security Council. Johnson staged a tirade so outrageous that it succeeded in "scaring [Acheson] out

⁹² Quoted in Coletta, The United States Navy and Defense Unification, p. 203.

⁹³ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 348. Acheson and Johnson were also on opposite sides of the China question. Johnson was a supporter of the KMT and was in close contact with Madame Jiang and Wellington Koo among others. See V.K. Wellington Koo, The Columbia Oral History Project: Wellington Koo Memoir, Part II, vol VI, pp. J-94, J-160, J-184-185.

of [his] shoes" and left Johnson's liaison to the joint committee on NSC 68, Major General James Burns, weeping at the conference table. Acheson attributed Johnson's behavior to a brain disease for which Johnson later required treatment, but it is more likely that Johnson's outburst was caused by his frustration with a document which recommended an enormous increase in military spending, a policy directly contradictory to his efforts. Acheson controlled the direction of NSC 68 and since it had the support of almost all the personnel, except Johnson, in both the Defense and State Departments, there was little Johnson could do. Acheson had excluded Johnson from the process of development and Johnson was naturally angry.⁹⁴

The Joint Chiefs of Staff had long thought along the same lines as those advocated in NSC 68, and they were chafing under Johnson's administration. They were not rabid proponents of war like some of the Senators who hounded Acheson, nor were they willing to give the Soviets an inch. In 1948 they had formally stated their belief that although the Soviets did not want war, "the USSR has striven and will continue to strive for the maximum buildup of military potential in the shortest period of time." They believed that the only way to ensure the national security of the US was to hold strength superior to Communist strength at all points threatened by Communism.⁹⁵ Such strength would require a tremendous buildup such as that advocated by NSC 68. The Defense Department was aware of the political problems of budget management

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.373.

⁹⁵ JCS Documents. Joint Intelligence Committee, JIC 380/2, February 16, 1948, p.2-3.

and was made especially aware of budget restrictions under Louis Johnson. Before the Soviet nuclear explosion most of the Chiefs of Staff were unhappy about budget restrictions, but reluctantly agreed to compromise with the administration.⁹⁶ Afterward there was an explosion of material about the security of the US and strategic defense against nuclear attack. The possibility of the USSR reaching the US with atomic bombs made the military an energetic group, but initially only the Air Force was able to pry more money out of Congress.⁹⁷ The service Chiefs needed a document like NSC 68, which had the support of the State Department, to circumvent Johnson and persuade the Congress of the need for more money.

Most of the Defense Department was happy to follow the trend of NSC 68. Johnson was too zealous in his determination to keep the Defense budget down and consequently had aroused deep feelings of antipathy and opposition. Both inside and outside his department the trend was against him. All the Chiefs of Staff wanted more money. When the State Department began to adopt the language of extremism regarding the USSR and advocated a huge military buildup, no one, except perhaps Johnson, put up an argument. The military was certainly not going to complain about a trend within the other branches of government which would increase their budget four-fold.

⁹⁶ Lawrence Korb, The Joint Chief of Staff: the First 25 Years, pp. 94-104; Kenneth Condit, The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vol. II, pp. 253-260, 273-281; Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Documents relating to Internal Security, June 1949 to June 1950.

⁹⁷ The argument put forth by the Air Force Chief of Staff is interesting. He explained that "progress in air defense was slow. This is perhaps understandable since even though [it was] officially estimated the Soviets could probably have an atomic bomb by 1953, many thought it more likely they would not have it for...ten to fifteen years," JCS Documents. 2084, November 16, 1949, p. 1.

THE PRESIDENT

President Truman ordered the re-evaluation of US foreign policy, and the attitudes of the Chief Executive were obviously important to the ultimate implementation of policy. He reflected the increasing concern with Asia in his "State of the Union" address on January 4, 1950, stressing the importance of continued foreign economic aid, "particularly in the Far East."⁹⁸ He worked hard to push aid for Korea through the House and to increase the amount of aid, albeit mostly military, available to Southeast Asia. He was concerned about an increase of Communist influence with the victory of the Chinese Communists, but he did not want to present a policy which seemed only to be negative. He wanted US policy toward the underdeveloped countries of Asia to appear to be more than anti-Communist.

He believed that "Communism has little appeal for people who are healthy, well educated, prosperous, and free," and wanted US aid to underdeveloped countries to work for such goals.⁹⁹ This aid program became known as Truman's Point IV Program. Such a idea did not indicate that Truman was a philanthropist. Attaching other countries to the economic orbit of the US was essential to winning the Cold War. Point Four was "realistic as well as idealistic... The development of these countries would keep our own industrial plant in business for generations." Even though it was of direct benefit to the US, it was a policy

⁹⁸ Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1950, "State of the Union," January 4, 1950, p.5.

⁹⁹ Public Papers of Harry Truman, 1950, April 24, Address to the Federal Bar Association.

which was based upon positive social, economic, and political goals, and not simply anti-Communism. In 1950 he denied such economic aid was directed against Communism, but he later wrote that his Point Four Plan was "the strongest antidote to Communism that has so far been put to practice."¹⁰⁰ Despite his protestations there is little doubt that the aid programs he mentioned were directed as much against "the new imperialism of the Communists" as for the peoples of Asia or anywhere else.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to find clear statements about Asian policy in President Truman's public or private papers. It is clear that he would have liked to keep as much of the world free from Communism as possible, but he left specific policy up to Acheson. The President rarely opposed any Asian policy which Acheson presented it him. Even when the President attempted to impose economic restrictions on the Chinese Communists shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the State Department was able to convince the President to change his attitude.¹⁰² The President never strayed far from Acheson's recommendations with respect to Asia. He occasionally forced Acheson to pay more attention to domestic politics when forming policy, but in general

¹⁰⁰ Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, vol. II, p. 239.

¹⁰¹ Harry S. Truman, Public Papers of the Presidents, "State of the Union," 4 January 1950, p.5.

¹⁰² Blum, Drawing the Line, pp. 161-165. Blum highlights several aggressive and expensive ideas of Truman's designed to impress the PRC that the US "meant business." In each case the President presented the ideas to the State Department for consideration, and in each case was advised against such action. Finally after a six weeks of sometimes crackpot ideas Acheson convinced the President that aggressive action would not be effective.

there was little disagreement between them.¹⁰³

Truman's attitude toward the Soviet Union and Communism was also important to the development of NSC 68. Again he was in agreement with Acheson that the Soviets needed to be contained, and that military strength was the best way to stop Soviet expansion. Truman believed that reason was impossible with the Soviets and therefore strength was the only method which could effectively contain their advances. This attitude is clear in Truman's public speeches. In a visceral response to a question at a news conference, he proclaimed that Communists had no morals and that the USSR was "a country [with] no ethics and no morals."¹⁰⁴ In more formal addresses, the Soviet Union was often presented by the President as a sinister force surviving by deception and force. The politically immature people of the third world were particularly vulnerable to Communist propaganda. Communist promises of freedom from imperialist domination, and their promises of opportunity for democracy and equality attracted those disillusioned with Western countries. The people of these countries were then imprisoned behind the Iron Curtain.¹⁰⁵ He presented the threat as truly monolithic.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Cohen, "Acheson and China" in Uncertain Years, p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, p.347.

¹⁰⁵ Public Papers of the Presidents, 1950, February 22. Almost everyone in the administration from Kennan to Dulles held that Asian people were politically immature and were more vulnerable to the influences of Communism.

¹⁰⁶ It is ironic that at the same time he accused the Republicans of using Communism as a political tool, he used the threat of Communism to gain support for his international programs. See Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman, 1950, February 16; May 8-10 during his whistle stop campaign.

Some of Truman's images were especially vivid. In December 1949 he stated:

The Earth is deeply divided between free and captive peoples. There is no appeal to the brotherhood of men who live in daily fear of the concentration camp. Until the captive peoples of the world emerge from darkness, they cannot see the hand we hold out in friendship...we have no choice but to stand ready in self defense.¹⁰⁷

It seems clear that Truman believed the people in control of the Communist countries to be operating in darkness, in sin, outside of the realm of moral and ethical conduct in which peaceful coexistence could be discussed. How could one trust a country with no morals and no ethics? The US had to negotiate from a position of strength. Moral suasion would not work on the Soviet Union, only brute strength. Truman did not expect any change within the USSR, so the only choice left was to create a strong position from which to force the views of the US on the USSR. NSC 68 was a logical step for President Truman.

Truman's attitude toward implementation of NSC 68 in Asia is also clear. He supported those who were most likely to oppose Communism; few other requirements were necessary to receive American aid. He realized that sometimes his choice was between two evils. In his memoirs he said that he

"did not care for the method used by [President Syngman] Rhee's police to break up political meetings and control political enemies and was deeply concerned over the Rhee government's lack of concern about the serious inflation that swept the country. Yet we [U.S.] had no choice but to support

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 1949, December 21, Carillon address.

Rhee.¹⁰⁵

Because he was the strongest anti-communist political figure in South Korea, he deserved support. It is ironic that in the name of freedom and democracy, Truman could justify support for a leader who showed little respect for freedom or democracy. Such support for Rhee set a dangerous precedent for US policy. US credibility, already damaged by support for the colonial powers, suffered further because US policy aligned the US against nationalist aspirations, against freedom and democracy and for colonial control and for dictators such as Rhee. Frightened by the situation in Asia, the US sought control rather than facing the uncertainty of freedom of choice and nationalism.

¹⁰⁵. Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, vol 2. p. 329.

NSC 68 AND ASIAN POLICY BEFORE THE KOREAN WAR

Despite all of Truman's tough talk, and the apparent desires of most of the State and Defense Departments, NSC 68 was not approved by President Truman as official policy until September 1950, several months after the document's presentation in April 1950, and well after the Korean War had already begun.¹⁰⁹ Although Acheson said that it became policy almost immediately, getting the money from Congress was not easy even after the Korean War. The President could not have reversed his policy of Defense budget reduction overnight. His own background shows that he would have been unlikely to support avidly such a tremendous increase in the military budget. While still a Senator and chairman of the Truman Committee, he worked to limit the voracious appetite of the military during the Second World War. In addition, the most effective programs thus far in the Cold War had been economic and political in nature. In East Asia, the most volatile area in the spring of 1950, there was no evidence to demonstrate that military aid since the end of the war had worked for the interests of the US. Two billion dollars had been wasted on Jiang Jieshi and the KMT. The People's Republic of China had been alienated and pushed closer to the USSR by US military policy. Instead of using Marshall plan money to rebuild their economy, the French were pouring much of it into Indochina to no avail. Ho Chi Minh had increased the strength of his movement. The Dutch had only increased the Communist threat in Indonesia with their military actions, which were initially supported by US aid. Truman was not the

¹⁰⁹ FRUS, 1950, Vol. I, p. 400, September 30.

only person on Capitol Hill who was suspicious of the military. Congress supported, and in some cases demanded budget reductions in the military.

Ideas in the State Department clearly changed during 1950. In January before Truman officially asked for the reevaluation of policy, Acheson emphasized economic aid in a general telegram which he sent to embassies throughout Southeast Asia.¹¹⁰ However by the first week in February the only projects discussed were military ones.¹¹¹ Even Philip Jessup, who had advised Acheson to avoid military aid in Asia six months earlier apparently had changed his mind. In a report delivered at a conference in Southeast Asia, he stated that the US must "give all military aid possible" to support friendly governments in Southeast Asia and to discourage the Communists.¹¹² When Mao and Stalin concluded the Sino-Soviet agreement in February 1950, it was evident that the USSR and the People's Republic of China would cooperate in Asia, encouraging the revolutionary struggles which the US hoped to defuse. The subsequent recognition by the two Communist allies of Ho Chi Minh's government as the legitimate government of Vietnam added to US fears of Communist activity in Asia. The result of this increased fear of Communist activity in Asia was an increased interest in military security. All governments in Asia which were not Communist became potential recipients of military aid from the US. NSC 68 encouraged the trend to

¹¹⁰ FRUS, 1950, VI, p. 4, January 27, Acheson to Saigon and other posts regarding Point IV and MDAP money.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, February 1, pp. 5-8, Johnson to Acheson; February 3, pp. 8-11, Merchant to Acheson.

¹¹² *Ibid*, February 27, p.29, Stanton to Acheson re Jessup's statements at the Bangkok conference.

militarization and also encouraged a simplistic view of the complex political, economic and social situations in Asia.

Convincing the President to change his mind and convincing Congress to approve the massive increase in military expenditure were tasks which Acheson knew would be difficult. In the spring of 1950 he "repeated and elaborated the themes [of NSC 68] from Massachusetts to Texas, on the Berkly campus in California, and at the United Nations."¹¹³ He worked hard to sell his ideas to the country, but he admits

it is doubtful whether anything like what happened in the next few years could have been done had not the Russians been stupid enough to have instigated the attack against South Korea and opened the 'hate America' campaign.¹¹⁴

The Korean War provided Acheson and others with a concrete reason to support the recommended escalation in military spending. The internal Korean problems which provided the spark for the explosion of war were not as important as the global confrontation which US policy makers perceived. The Korean War provided an opportunity to consolidate the proposed ideas for establishing military power as the basis of containment of the USSR.

¹¹³ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p.381.

¹¹⁴ Ibid p. 374.

THE KOREAN WAR

As the administration came to terms with Communism and anti-Communism and the role of the US in world politics, it had decided several times to confront the USSR or movements believed to be supported by the USSR in Berlin, Greece, and Iran. These actions were referred to by the President as "successful opposition to the aggressive moves of the Communists."¹¹⁵ Although Korea was likened to these other events, it was clearly different. For the first time in the Cold War, a military force proclaiming to be Communist crossed a boundary recognized by the US with the intention of expanding Communist control. For the first time, the US used its own military forces in battle against Communist forces. No one questioned whether the US should intervene. Initially the conflict surprised most Americans, but it also seemed like the first thunderstorm after a severe drought; it was bound to happen sooner or later.¹¹⁶ Some policy makers had argued for initiating a confrontation with the Communists. One month before the fighting began in Korea John Foster Dulles advocated the creation of such a situation on Taiwan. Although the place was unexpected, the conflict in Korea provided the

¹¹⁵ Harry S. Truman, Memoirs, p. 340.

¹¹⁶ In their memoirs Kennan and Truman both recall that before the war broke out, the Soviet specialists within the State Department noted that in the USSR there was discussion of some military venture by a country within the Soviet orbit. Korea and several countries were examined for potential weakness or significant buildup of Communist forces on the opposing side, but all were dismissed because the situations seemed relatively stable. Truman, Memoirs, p. 331; Kennan, Memoirs 1925-50, p. 512.

opportunity for which Dulles hoped.¹¹⁷ Even the conservative, neo-isolationist Senator Taft said in the Senate that "the time had to come sooner or later when we would give notice to Communists that a move beyond a declared line would result in war."¹¹⁵

The response from the President and the State Department was almost exactly the same. Truman, Acheson, Kennan, and Bohlen each noted their firm belief that the Soviets were responsible for the attack on South Korea and that it was absolutely necessary for the US to intervene.¹¹⁹ Communism was a universal concern which had been shaped as much by events before the Second World as by the events after it. All of the confrontations with the USSR after the Second World War were affected by the impression that well-intentioned acquiescence to Japan and Germany in the 1930s paved the road to the Second World War. Korea was no exception. People believed that the best way to prevent war was to make a strong stand. Secretary of the Air Force Thomas Finletter expressed a common belief that the Cold War was much like "the situation between the two world wars. He thought we should take

¹¹⁷ FRUS, 1950, Vol. I, p.314, Dulles to Rusk, May 18. Dulles was an intelligent man, but concerning Communism he was prone to exaggeration. Despite figures in NSC 68 which revealed the US defense budget to be two or three times that of the USSR, he claimed in the above memo that the Soviet rate of growth in military forces was much higher than that of the US and that the US was losing its position in the world power structure.

¹¹⁵ Patterson, Mr. Republican, p. 452.

¹¹⁹ These opinions are clearly stated in their memoirs; Truman, Memoirs, p. 333; Acheson Present at the Creation, p. 405; Kennan, Memoirs 1925-50, p. 514; Bohlen, Witness to History, p. 292. These men did not all agree on the nature and extent of US intervention.

calculated risks hoping that our action would keep the peace."¹²⁰ He was certainly not alone. Most of the non-Communist world believed that intervention was necessary and within the first week after the hostilities began, Canada, Australia, Norway, Sweden, Britain, and other countries had offered to help stop the hostilities in Korea by supporting the US, the UN, and South Korea.

Truman, the State Department, and the Defense Department were not certain what would follow the outbreak of war in Korea. All believed the Soviets were responsible but they were also careful not to give them an excuse to become directly involved. Truman said that "every decision [he] made in connection with the Korean conflict had this one aim in mind: to prevent a third world war."¹²¹ Although this statement does not seem to stand up under scrutiny of later decisions and actions, it is true for the first few weeks of the war. In the meetings at Blair House to determine US response to the Korean War, only General Hoyt Vandenberg of the Air Force suggested crossing the 38th Parallel and he was silenced by everyone else at the meetings. The vast majority of military and civilian personnel involved in the decisions about Korea did not want to provoke the USSR or the PRC by crossing the 38th parallel or making any other threatening gesture. Initial involvement was conservative as the policy

¹²⁰ FRUS, 1950, Vol. VII, p. 160, Memorandum of Conversation, June 25. The conversation occurred at the first meeting of the President and his top State and Defense Department advisors after they learned of the situation in Korea.

¹²¹ Truman, Memoirs, p. 345.

makers waited for other possible action from the Soviet Union.¹²²

While the initial response in Korea was firm but careful, policy toward the rest of Asia was modified to prepare for a third world war which might erupt. The administration had convinced itself that the Soviets were bent on world domination and were "animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to [that of the US]."¹²³ With this attitude and the recent agreements between Moscow and China, every potential American base in East Asia became important. The Philippines were prepared to be a staging area with increased attention to US bases and the general security of the islands. The Japanese peace treaty was ordered to be hurriedly concluded along with a security agreement between Japan and the US. Indonesia was given aid and warned about Communist subversion. The French, who had already begun to receive US military aid, were immediately given more aid to fight the Viet Minh, and the Seventh Fleet was ordered to separate Taiwan from the mainland.¹²⁴ The thought of Soviet possession of any of these areas in case of a global war was frightening to all military planners. Although the US had already moved toward support of conservative and even repressive governments in Asia, the Korean War cemented the relationships with conservative power and ensured that the US would assume a more active

¹²² Official Conversations and Meetings of Dean Acheson, meetings about the Korean Situation, June 25-30, 1950. In the policy meetings all the participants agreed to operate in defense of South Koreans only below the 38th parallel

¹²³ NSC Documents, NSC 68, Part I, #2.

¹²⁴ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 407-408.

role in Asia.¹²⁵

In 1949 the US saw the need to pursue a more active policy in Asia and began to consider economic and political policies which would enable Asia to resist Communist expansion and develop a close relationship with the West. After the Soviet nuclear explosion and the success of the Chinese Communists, the economic and political policies were abandoned in favor of a strong military policy. The eruption of the war in Korea reinforced the need for a military which could respond to such conflicts. Europe had stabilized, and both the State and Defense departments agreed that the Soviets were unlikely to initiate a direct attack on the US and its allies. The forces which would be created by NSC 68 would deter the Soviets to some extent, but also would provide support in areas of instability, like Korea and the rest of East Asia. The Korean War accelerated tendencies already present in US policy by allowing the US aggressively to fill the power gap left by the fall of Japan.

There was little debate about whether to intervene in Korea. Most of the world was so fearful of the USSR and Communism that within forty-eight hours the UN had declared full support of South Korea. The question was not whether to intervene, but how much and how far. Seen throughout the world as a test of the UN's guarantee of collective security, which had failed in the 1930s, acquiescence to the North Koreans was equated with acquiescence to Germany and Japan in the 1930s. No one believed that the action in Korea was primarily a civil

¹²⁵ Aid to Indochina, Indonesia, Thailand and Korea had been approved over two months before the fighting began in of Korea. FRUS, 1950, VI, April 12, Samuel T. Parleman to Livingston Merchant.

war.¹²⁶ From June 26 to 30 the US received notes of support not only from the General Assembly of the UN, but also from the individual governments of many countries. This preparation for war did not leave much room for sympathetic encouragement of Asian nationalism.

By the end of June 1950, seven days after Truman and his staff learned of the conflict in Korea, the US was committed to the military defense of South Korea. In the words of Dean Acheson, this commitment "removed the recommendations of NSC 68 from the realm of theory and made them immediate budget issues."¹²⁷ The Korean War was the final step in the transition of US foreign policy to one based upon military power, a distorted view of the USSR and Communism, and a highly visible and aggressive position for the US in Asia.

The Cold War refused to take a bi-polar shape in East Asia, but US policy was defined in bi-polar terms. After the summer of 1949 the general assumptions of US foreign policy became distorted visions of reality, in the words of Acheson: "we made our points clearer than truth."¹²⁵ The attempt to impose these exaggerated ideas on the complex and volatile situation in East Asia did nothing to relieve the tensions which already existed and in some cases made them worse.

The policy makers made little room for regional differences as they

¹²⁶ Robert McMahon states in a recent article about current scholarship on the Cold War that "most contemporary historians of US-Korean relations consider the Korean War essentially civil in its origins." He cites Bruce Cumings, Burton I. Kaufman, and William Stueck. McMahon, "Toward a New Synthesis: The Cold War in Asia," Diplomatic History, 12:4, 1988, p. 316.

¹²⁷ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 420.

¹²⁵ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p.375.

reevaluated policy in 1949-1950 before the Korean War. The attitude toward the USSR affected all other policy, but since Asia was still "in the throes of political upheaval,... economic distress, and social unrest," it was especially important in the policy review. The US believed the USSR was best able to achieve its objectives in areas of instability.¹²⁹ The victory of the Chinese Communists and the increased strength of the Communist movement in Indochina, both extremely unstable areas, reinforced this opinion. Even before the Korean War, the Truman administration believed that "Communist aggression against Indochina [was] only one phase of anticipated plans to seize all of Southeast Asia."¹³⁰ When Korea became a battlefield, Asia appeared to be falling to Communists from the Northeast to the Southeast.

Like most of his staff by the summer of 1950, Acheson was not convinced that political and economic methods of containment would halt Soviet expansion. In an attempt to justify his position on NSC 68, he compared the threat of the USSR to "that which Islam had posed centuries earlier," which had only been stopped by "a great outburst of military power and social organization."¹³¹ For the next two decades the US sought to impose its own social order and military power on as many nations as possible in East Asia.

If one wishes to link such involvement to the economic success of countries like South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan, one should also

¹²⁹ NSC Documents, NSC 48/1, section 5.

¹³⁰ NSC Documents, NSC 64, February 27, 1950, section 2.

¹³¹ Acheson, Present at the Creation, p. 376. Historians of the Middle East would note that this represents a distortion not only of Soviet but also of Middle Eastern history.

acknowledge the devastating military conflicts in Korea and Indochina; the repressive dictatorships in South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines; the subversive activities of the CIA in Indonesia, Australia, Indochina, and China; and the conspicuous lack of democracy in any country in East Asia except Japan (although South Korea and Taiwan have showed some signs of democratic processes recently). US policy since 1950 has not served to solve problems, but merely to prevent significant change. Military power has been put in the hands of any government which claimed to be anti-Soviet. Social organization has merely meant prevention of any disruptive changes in the structure of society. Fear of the unknown, of radical change which would favor the USSR, motivated the development of a policy which was designed for maximum control and minimum change. Unfortunately this shift submerged the most important concerns in Asian policy and left them under a mass of Cold War rhetoric. Much of Asia has suffered because of these US policy priorities.

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