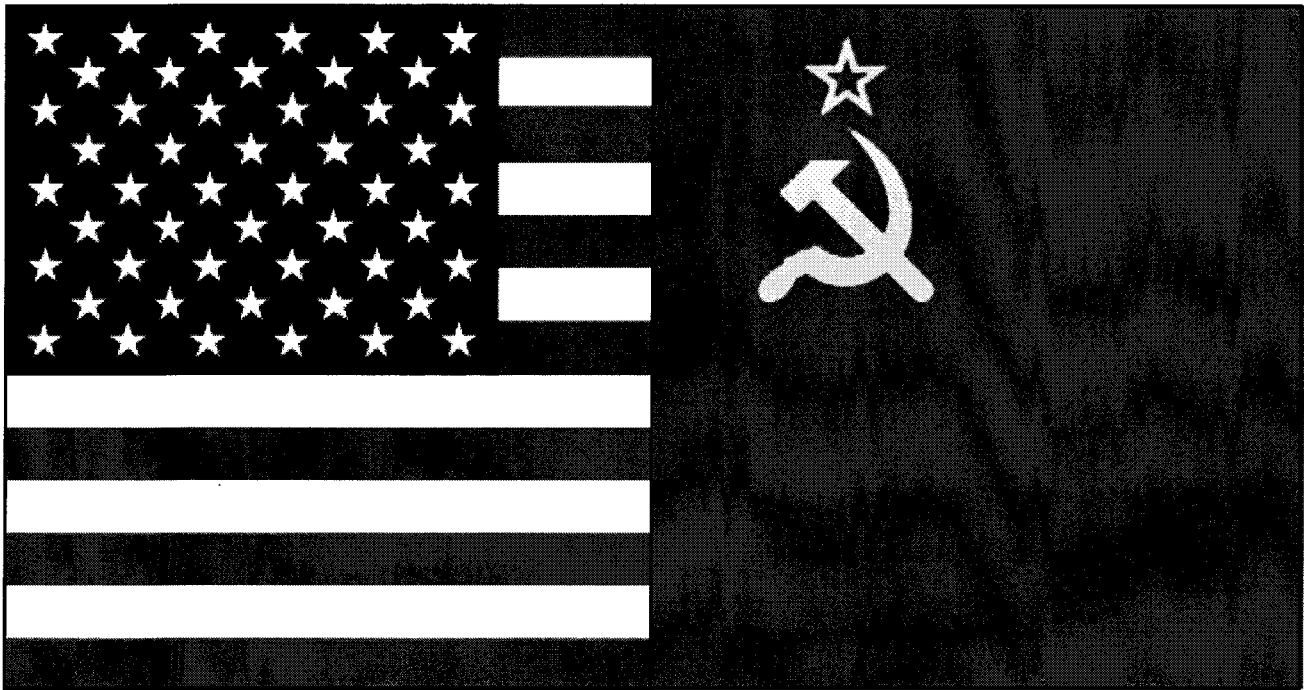


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# The Geography of the Cold War: What Was Containment?

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**Overview:** From the end of World War II in 1945 until 1991, the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in a battle of nerves called the Cold War. Throughout almost all of this period the United States was guided by a foreign policy called ‘containment.’ This Mini-Q asks you to express your understanding of containment using mostly maps as your sources.

## The Documents:

- Document A: The Long Telegram
- Document B: The Berlin Blockade and Airlift (map)
- Document C: The Korean War (map)
- Document D: The Cuban Missile Crisis (map)

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A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

## The Geography of the Cold War: What Was Containment?

It was a glorious meeting. On April 25, 1945, at the Elbe River in Germany, two powerful armies met. Coming from opposite ends of Europe, the Americans and Russians had cut Hitler's Germany in two. Now at the Elbe, soldiers from the Red Army of the Soviet Union reached out their hands to their American counterparts. It was a time for great happiness. World War II, the deadliest war in all of human history, was nearly over.

Unfortunately, the warmth of the handshakes did not last. The Soviet Union and the United States had serious differences. Their greatest difference was over a political and economic system called **communism**.

In its pure form, communism is a belief that private property should be replaced by community ownership. In the Soviet Union this idea was not easily accepted by the people. Russian leaders Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin were ruthless in their elimination of those who had different ideas about Russia's future. It is estimated that in the 1930s, Stalin was responsible for killing more than 10,000,000 Soviet people who he believed were in his way.

Soviet communists did not like **capitalism**. They opposed private ownership economies of the United States and its allies. Russian leaders believed that capitalism was doomed and that communism would spread throughout the world. This caused great tension and the emergence of a new kind of war, a **Cold War**. Mistrust ran deep. In the words of Winston Churchill, it was as if an "**iron curtain**" had been drawn between the Soviet-con-

trolled countries in Eastern Europe and the Western democracies.

The Soviets had suffered terribly in World War II, losing more than 27,000,000 soldiers and civilians. Stalin was determined that Germany would never be able to strike Russia again. To protect Russia, Stalin wanted a buffer zone in Eastern Europe, but he wanted more. It was no secret that Stalin and his successors wanted to expand the Soviet Empire.

If the Soviet policy was expansion, then the American policy was **containment**. Containment was the idea that the Soviet Union and Soviet communism should not be allowed to spread. One example of containment was the **Truman Doctrine**. In 1947, President Harry Truman declared that the United States would support "free peoples," like those in Greece and Turkey, who were being threatened by communists. The Truman Doctrine was followed by the **Marshall Plan**, which gave over 12 billion dollars in aid to help rebuild European democracies like France and West Germany. The idea was to give these countries resources so that communist ideas would not be so attractive.

By 1947 the United States and the Soviet Union were clearly on a collision course. Stalin and his successors were always looking for weak spots to push and probe, to test American commitment to containment. This Mini-Q features three occasions where the Soviets tested American containment policy. Your task is to examine the maps, then answer the question, *The geography of the Cold War: what was containment?*

## Background Essay Questions

1. What happened at the Elbe River in April 1945?
2. The Soviet Union and the United States believed in two very different economic systems. What were the names of each?
3. The Soviet Union had a total of two leaders between the early 1920s and the early 1950s. What were their names?
4. Why did Stalin want control of Eastern Europe after WW II?
5. Define each of the following:

communism

capitalism

Cold War

Iron Curtain

containment

Truman Doctrine

Marshall Plan

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**1945** – World War II ends

**1946** – Winston Churchill delivers “Iron Curtain” speech in Fulton, Missouri

**1947** – Jackie Robinson signs with the Brooklyn Dodgers

**1948** – Congress approves the Marshall Plan

**1948-49** – Berlin Airlift

**1950-53** – Korean War

**1955** – US stockpile of atomic bombs estimated at 4000; Soviets have 1000

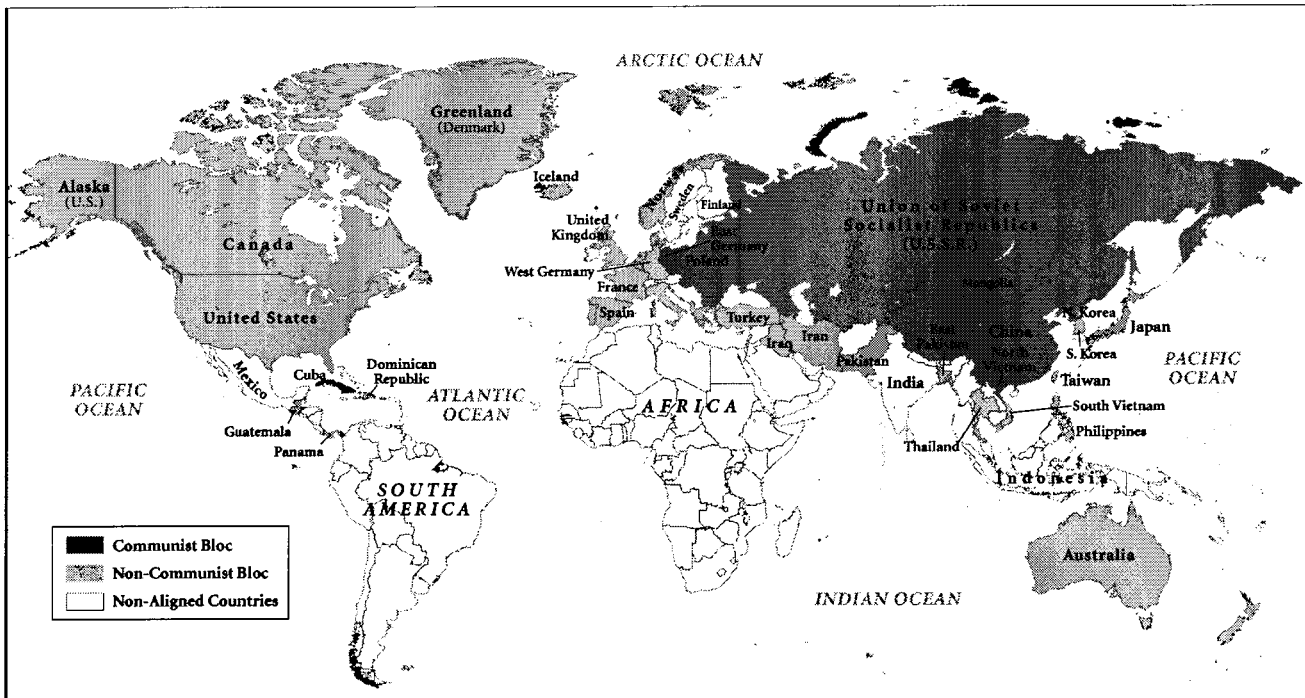
**1962** – Cuban Missile Crisis

## Hook Exercise: Containment

**Directions:** After World War II, most of the countries in the northern part of the world divided themselves into two large groups or blocs. One bloc was communist and was dominated by Russia, the largest republic in the huge country called the Soviet Union. The other bloc was largely democratic and was led by the United States. Examine the map below and answer the questions that follow.

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**Map: Two Worlds**  
Circa 1960



### Questions

1. Including the Soviet Union, list two European countries in the communist bloc.
2. Excluding the Soviet Union, list the Asian countries in the communist bloc.
3. List five North American and European countries in the non-communist bloc.
4. List three Asian countries in the non-communist bloc.
5. With a partner, discuss why looking at this map would make both a Russian and American of 1960 very nervous. Write down your ideas.

Russian fears

American fears

## Document A

**Source:** "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" by X, *Foreign Affairs*, April 1947.

**Note:** This is a short passage from an 8,000-word telegram that was secretly sent to US State Department officials on February 22, 1946. X turned out to be George Kennan, an American Foreign Service officer stationed in Moscow. Earlier in the "long telegram," Kennan makes two main points:

1. Stalin and the Soviets believe that communism is better than capitalism.
2. Stalin and the Soviets believe they will win.

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In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.

### Document Analysis

1. When was this document first telegraphed to American officials in Washington? Was this before, during, or after World War II?
2. Who was X?
3. Looking at the Note, what were the two points X wants American policy makers to remember about the Soviet Union?
4. What would historians probably agree is the most important single word in the document passage?
5. What do you think X would say to an American president who wanted to invade the Soviet Union? What is your evidence?
6. What is the meaning of containment?

## Document B

Source: Map created from various sources.

**1.** At the end of WW II, Germany was occupied by four major powers. The western three zones unified and became West Germany. East Germany was communist, but the old capital of Berlin was divided up between the four powers.

**2.** On June 27, 1948, Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union decided to blockade any shipments (including food) coming into West Berlin.

**3.** West Berlin was completely surrounded by communism and may have had to surrender if it had not been for the US and its allies.

**4.** America and its allies decide to support the West Berliners by air, flying in supplies for the over two million people for nearly a year. Everything from food to coal was provided. It was a stunning turn of events given that Americans had just three years earlier been fighting Hitler and the Germans.

**5.** On May 12, 1949, Stalin removed the blockade. Harry Truman and the nation were thrilled.

**Legend:**  
 West Germany (light gray)  
 East Germany (dark gray)  
 Airlift Routes (white lines)  
 Soviet Blockade (black arrows)  
 Airfields (X marks)

**Map Labels:** NETH., BELG., LUX., HAMBURG, Hanover, Berlin, Frankfurt, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AUSTRIA, WEST BERLIN, EAST BERLIN, French zone, British zone, American zone, Soviet zone, Tegel Airfield, Gatow Airfield, Tempelhof Airfield.

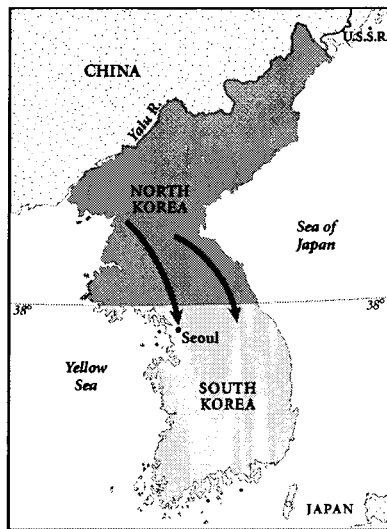
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### Document Analysis

1. "In 1948, western Berlin was a pro-American island in a Soviet sea." Explain.
2. What did the Soviets do between June 27, 1948, and May 12, 1949?
3. Why do you suppose the Soviets did what they did?
4. How did Britain, the United States, and France respond to the June 27th action?
5. How does this document demonstrate the American policy of containment?

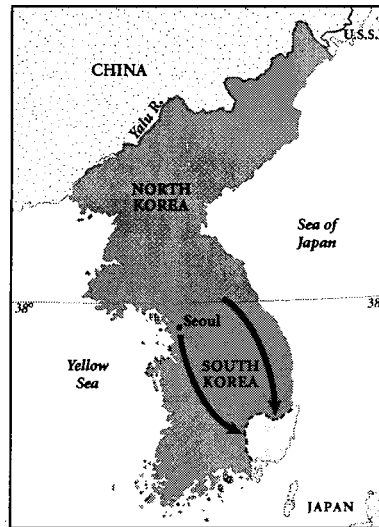
## Document C

Source: Map created from various sources.



June 25, 1950

**1** Communist North Korea (supported by the Soviet Union) invades US-supported South Korea. The attack comes without warning and President Harry Truman, with the help of the United Nations, vows to defend democratic South Korea.

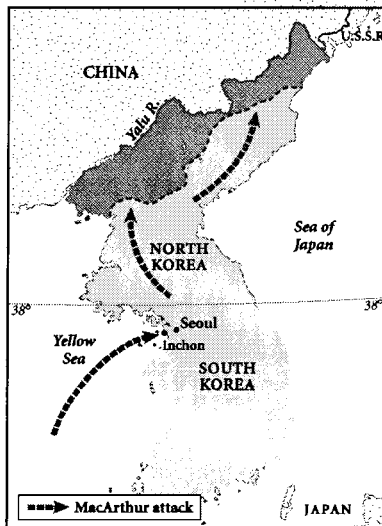


September 14, 1950

**2** American forces occupying Japan after WWII are sent to defend South Korea. The US and United Nations forces are nearly pushed off the Korean peninsula. The American commander is General Douglass MacArthur.

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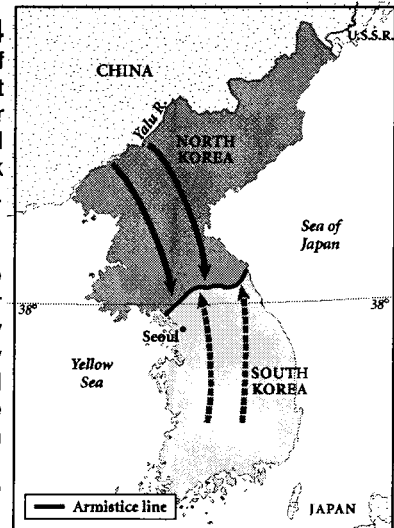
**3** MacArthur stages a risky, yet successful counterattack at the port of Inchon. North Korean forces are routed and pushed back all the way to the Yalu River, the border of North Korea and communist China.



November 25, 1950

**4** In November of 1950, communist China enters the war and pushes the UN and US forces back into South Korea.

**5** The war drags on for several years, finally ending in 1953 very close to the original 1950 borders. The war caused more than two million deaths, including over 50,000 Americans.



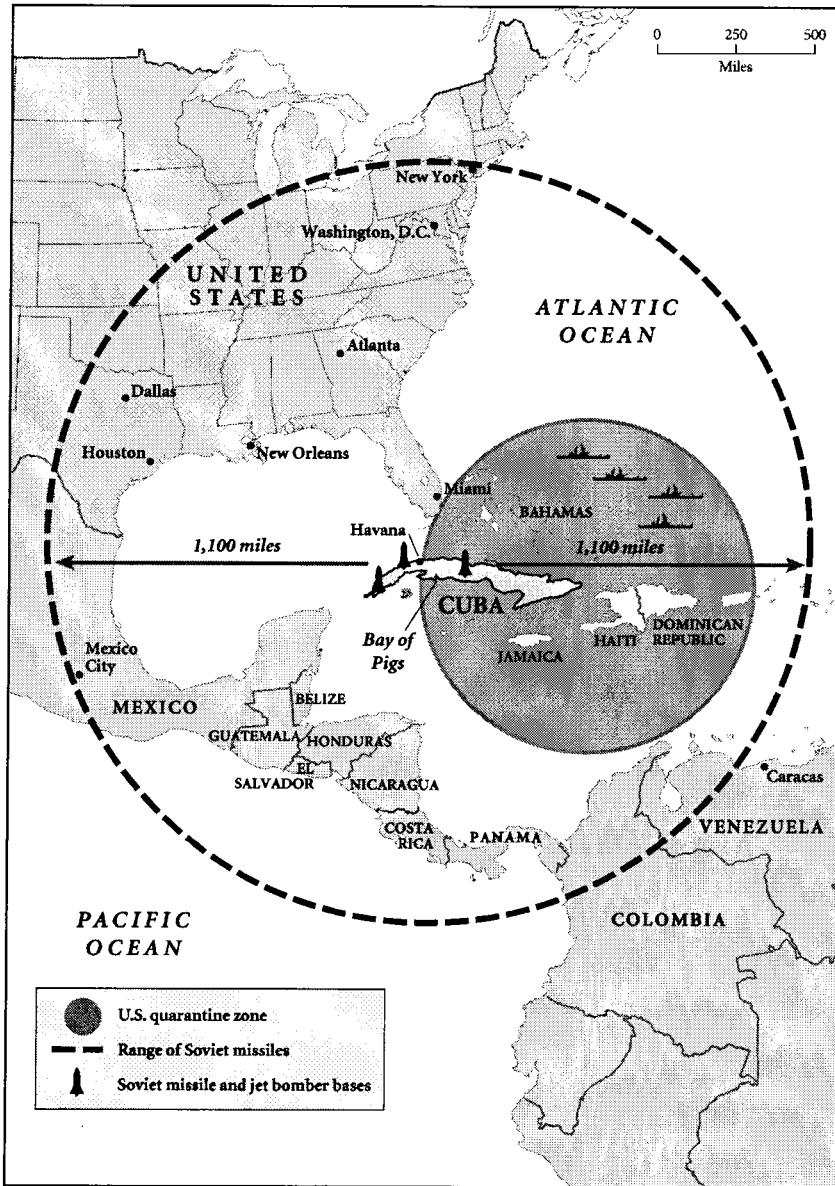
July 27, 1953

### Document Analysis

1. On what date did North Korea first invade South Korea?
2. Who supported North Korea? Who supported South Korea?
3. North Korea only invaded when the Russian leader Stalin gave his approval. From what you know about Stalin, what was his motive?
4. Why might Communist China have decided to help North Korea?
5. How does this document demonstrate the American policy of containment?

## Document D

Source: Map created from various sources.



### Cuban Missile Crisis Timeline

**January 1959:** Cuba becomes communist under Fidel Castro.

**April 1961:** Bay of Pigs invasion with US support fails. Castro remains in power.

**May 1962:** Soviets secretly begin shipping 40,000 troops, 60 missiles and 158 nuclear warheads to communist Cuba.

**October 15, 1962:** US spy planes find evidence of medium range nuclear missile sites being rapidly installed in Cuba.

**October 23:** US announces a quarantine against ships carrying offensive weapons to Cuba.

**Oct. 24:** Numerous Soviet transport ships stop dead in water just outside the quarantine line.

**Oct 25:** Soviet SS-4 nuclear missiles become operational.

**Oct. 28:** Soviets begin to remove missiles, crisis is avoided.

**April 1963:** In a quiet agreement with Soviets, US removes missiles from Turkey.

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### Document Analysis

1. What was the date of Fidel Castro's communist takeover in Cuba?
2. What is a quarantine? (Note: The Soviets had to look the word up.)
3. Using only information from the map, tell the Cuban Missile Crisis story.
4. How does United States action in Cuba demonstrate the policy of containment?