

Friday April 14, 1950



[Sun Rise](#) 0559 1903
[Moon Rise](#) 0435 1613
[Moon Phase](#) 6% 27 days

Weather

[Korean Climate](#)

Mean Temp 16.4C 61.52°F at Taegu

Heavy Overcast

[1950 Pacific Typhoon Season](#)

[Korea Temps - 1950-1953 - Station 143 \(Daegu\)](#)

Overview

April 14, 1950 (Friday)

- The influential British comic book *The Eagle* was launched.
- Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński and the other bishops of the Polish Episcopal Conference (Adam Stefan Sapieha and Zygmunt Choromański) signed an accord with the Government of Poland, independently of the Vatican, with church and state pledging not to interfere with the other.
- [The National Security Council](#) presented a revised version of [NSC-68](#) to President Truman.
- **Born:** Francis Collins, American geneticist, Director of the National Institutes of Health, and former leader of the Human Genome Project; in Staunton, Virginia
- **Died:** Ramana Maharshi, 70, Hindu spiritual leader
- **Died:** Frances Seymour Fonda, 44, the estranged wife of actor Henry Fonda, and mother of future actors Jane Fonda and Peter Fonda, committed suicide by cutting her throat. She left a note that ended with the words, "I am sorry, but this is the best way out." Mr. and Mrs. Fonda had been considering a divorce since December, though no action had been filed. That evening, Henry Fonda appeared as scheduled for the Broadway performance of the title role in the play *Mr. Roberts*.

The CIA weekly summary report warns of: COMMUNISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

Indochina

Thailand

Malaya

Burma

Indonesia

The Philippines

[\[note\]](#)

NSC-68 is issued.

[Documents/NSC-68\(full_text\).pdf](#)

[Yesterday Overview](#)
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[National Security Council Report 68 \(NSC-68\)](#) was a 58-page formerly-classified report issued by the United States National Security Council on [April 14, 1950](#), during the presidency of [Harry S. Truman](#). Written during the formative stage of the Cold War, it was top secret until the 1970s when it was made public. It was one of the most significant statements of American policy in the Cold War. NSC-68 largely shaped U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War for the next 20 years.

See [Documents/NSC-68\(full_text\).pdf](#)

Historical Background

By 1949, events had reinforced the need for better coordination of national security policies: the [North Atlantic treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) was formed, military assistance for Europe was begun, the Soviet Union detonated an atomic bomb, and the Communists won control in China over the Nationalists. The United States Department of State seized the opportunity to review US strategic policy and military programs, overcoming opposition from [Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson](#) and his allies in the Bureau of the Budget. Accounts of the deliberation on "NSC-68" indicate that the Defense Department representatives on the committee initially resisted proposals that would exceed the existing \$12.5 billion ceiling on defense spending.[1]

The report, known as NSC-68, was requested by President Truman on [31 January 1950](#), following a feasibility study of both the US and the USSR acquiring thermonuclear weapons; he directed the secretaries of State and Defense "to undertake a reexamination of our objectives in peace and war and of the effect of these objectives on our strategic plans." The first report was submitted on [7 April](#), and then passed on to the NSC for further consideration.[2]

NSC Study Group (Known)

[Paul Nitze](#), Chair
John P. Davis
Robert Tufts
Robert Hooker
[Dean Acheson](#)
Chip Bohlen
[Major General Truman Landon](#), Joint Chiefs Representative
Samuel S. Butano
[George F. Kennan](#)

Originally, President Truman did not support NSC-68 when it was first brought to him in 1950. He believed that it was not specific about which programs would be affected or changed and it also didn't go well with his previous defense spending limits. Truman sent it back for further review until he finally approved it in 1951.[3]

The document outlined the de facto national security strategy of the United States for that time (though it was not an official NSS in the form we know today) and analyzed the capabilities of the Soviet Union and of the United States of America from military, economic, political, and psychological standpoints.

The NSC-68 described the challenges facing the United States in cataclysmic terms. "The issues that face us are momentous," the document stated, "involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself." [4]

Content and meaning

Although Kennan's theory of containment articulated a multifaceted approach for U.S. foreign policy in response to the perceived Soviet threat, NSC-68 recommended policies that emphasized military over diplomatic action. Kennan's influential telegram advocated a policy of containment towards the Soviet Union. In NSC-68, it can be defined as "a policy of calculated and gradual coercion." That said, the NSC-68 called for significant peacetime military spending, in which the U.S. possessed "superior overall power" and "in dependable combination with other like-minded nations." It calls for a military capable of

- Defending the Western Hemisphere and essential allied areas in order that their war-making capabilities can be developed;
- Providing and protecting a mobilization base while the offensive forces required for victory were being built up;
- Conducting offensive operations to destroy vital elements of the Soviet war-making capacity, and to keep the enemy off balance until the full offensive strength of the United States and its allies can be brought to bear;
- Defending and maintaining the lines of communication and base areas necessary to the execution of the above tasks; and
- Providing such aid to allies as is essential to the execution of their role in the above tasks.

NSC-68 itself did not contain any specific cost estimates. The programs would cost, by estimates, a significant portion, perhaps more than the 20% of GDP [citation needed] the United States was already committing to defense. It was evident that the limits the President had previously set on defense spending would not be compatible with NSC-68.[5] NSC-68 required that the United States must increase defense spending to as much as \$50 billion per year from the original \$13 billion set for 1950.[6] However the specific costs were left to subsequent groups in the NSC to analyze and budget.

Internal debate

NSC-68 drew some criticism from senior government officials who believed the Cold War was being escalated unnecessarily. When the report was sent to top officials in the Truman administration for review before its official delivery to the President, many of them scoffed at its arguments. Willard Thorp questioned its contention that the "USSR is steadily reducing the discrepancy between its overall economic strength and that of the United States." Thorp argued:

"I do not feel that this position is demonstrated, but rather the reverse... The actual gap is widening in our favor."

He pointed out that in 1949 the US economy had increased twofold over that of the Soviet Union. Steel production in the US outpaced the Soviet Union by 2 million tons, and stockpiling of goods and oil production far exceeded Soviet amounts. As for Soviet military investment, Thorp was skeptical that the USSR was committing such large portion of its GDP:

"I suspect a larger portion of Soviet investment went into housing."

William Schaub of the Bureau of the Budget was particularly harsh, believing that "in every arena," the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, the stockpiling of atomic bombs, the economy, the US was far superior than the Soviet Union. Kennan, although "father" of the containment policy, also disagreed with the document, particularly its call for massive rearmament (FRUS, 1950, Vol. I).

Truman's position

President Harry S. Truman, even after the Soviets became a nuclear power, sought to curb military spending. However, he did not reject the recommendations of NSC-68 out of hand, instead returning it to circulation and asking for an estimate of the costs involved. In the ensuing two months, little progress was made on the report. By June, Nitze had practically given up on it. But on June 25, 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel north.[7] With the Korean War begun, NSC-68 took on new importance. As Acheson later remarked: "Korea... created the stimulus which made action."[8]

Public opinion

The Truman Administration began a nationwide public relations campaign to convince Congress and opinion setters of the need for strategic rearmament and containment of Soviet communism. It had to overcome isolationists, including [Senator Robert A. Taft](#), who wanted less world involvement, as well as intense anti-Communists such as [James Burnham](#) who proposed an alternative strategy of rollback that would eliminate Communism or perhaps launch a preemptive war. The State Department and the White House used the North Korean attack of June 1950 and the see-saw battles during the first few months of the Korean War to steer congressional and public opinion toward a course of rearmament between the two poles of preventive war and isolationism.[9]

Historical debate

NSC-68 is a source of much historical debate as is the escalation of the Cold War. NSC-68 was an important part of an overall shift in American foreign policy to a comprehensive containment strategy that was confirmed by successive administrations. Analyses ranges from Michael Hogan's belief that NSC-68 portrayed the threat "in the worst light possible" to providing an accurate picture of a genuine and growing threat.

Conclusion

The strategy outlined in NSC-68 achieved ultimate victory, according to this view, with the collapse of the Soviet power and the emergence of a "new world order" centered on American liberal-capitalist values.[10] Truman officially signed NSC-68 on [September 30, 1950](#). It was declassified in 1975.[11]

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[Notes for Friday April 14, 1950](#)