

GEORGE F. KENNAN'S STRATEGY OF CONTAINMENT: AN ASSESSMENT OF KENNAN'S
COHERENCE AND CONSISTENCY

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Abstract

This thesis examines George F. Kennan's coherence and consistency when he formulated the strategy of containment. Kennan's work went through different stages which depended on the political context it was set in as circumstances evolved and the position he held. The aim is not to criticise Kennan but understand whether he remained consistent and coherent and why changes occurred. When Kennan sent the Long Telegram and delivered lectures at the National War College, the strategy had not been structured. In 1946 and early 1947, containment was not a strategy, it was still an idea. The Long Telegram provided him with the opportunity to move to the National War College to develop and structure a strategy. The invitation in 1947 to enter the official bureaucracy as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff did not demand that Kennan create a strategy but he was able to use it as an opportunity to build the strategy he had been advocating which was to contain Soviet expansion through the economic rehabilitation of Western Europe, Germany and Japan. Kennan remained consistent with his recommendations for a political-economic containment, specifically avoiding any military intervention. Kennan became trapped by the X article, as it distorted his views, making it appear that he was contradicting his original approach to containment. Kennan attempted to fight back against the misunderstanding of this article by focusing on political-economic policies, but it became clear that he was losing his influence and struggling to implement a coherent strategy. The extension of the containment strategy beyond strategic areas, the rejection of Program A, along with the continued division of Europe and the more militarized tone of the containment strategy stopped Kennan from implementing a coherent containment strategy. By 1953, Kennan and his containment strategy had been defeated.

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INTRODUCTION

George F. Kennan joined the Foreign Service in 1925 and was considered to be a leading authority on Russian affairs. The experience gained ensured that by the mid 1930's he was one of the most qualified Russian experts who worked at the US embassy in Moscow. Following professional clashes with Joseph E. Davies, the Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Kennan considered resigning but decided to accept the Russian desk at the State Department in Washington. From 1938 Kennan was posted first to Prague and then Berlin, It was during 1944 whilst he was based in London working as a Counsellor of the US delegation to the European Advisory Commission, that his frustrations with the State Department began to develop believing that his position was not being utilised. A few months into this post Averell Harriman, the new Ambassador to the Soviet Union, appointed Kennan as the Deputy Chief of the US mission in Moscow. Kennan grew further frustrated and disillusioned believing that Harriman and Senior Policymakers in Washington were ignoring his opinions on the Soviet Union. This would later change when the Treasury Department requested an explanation of Soviet behaviour following its refusal to support the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

The thesis will examine whether George F. Kennan was able to implement a coherent and consistent strategy. Kennan became a leading figure during the early Cold War and is considered to be the chief architect of the containment strategy. He had many different roles during the Cold War, changing between the roles of an advisor, diplomat, policy planner, critic and historian. The

aim is not to criticise Kennan and his work but to analyse how these roles determined his approach to strategy, therefore, affecting the strategy's coherence and consistency. One argument made by Gellmann is that there were two George Kennan's, the first was the Cold Warrior, referred to as Mr X and the second described as the peace monger due to his contribution to debates on nuclear weapons. Gellmann argued that there were no direct contradictions in Kennan's thinking, what appeared to be contradictory in reality was not. Hixson in opposition to this perspective examines what is viewed as contradictions within Kennan's thinking; arguing that the containment strategy developed and implemented by Kennan was the first step toward liberation. The perceptions that were later held by both his colleagues in the administration and the general public were actually created by Kennan himself.¹ These various roles ensured that there was no single George Kennan and this affected the entire strategy.

The containment strategy advocated by Kennan has been debated and is surrounded by much controversy. The historiography regarding this subject is important because there have been different assessments of Kennan's work where each has discussed the impact that he had on the Truman administration at different stages of his career. These different stages include the Long Telegram, lectures given at the National War College, to his role as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. Kennan would continue to play a role in influencing foreign policy after resigning

¹ Barton Gellman, *Contending with Kennan: Toward a philosophy of American Power* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), xii-xiv; Walter L. Hixson, *Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 31

from his official position, developing and discussing his views through debates and the publication of his work. Each of the roles he performed represented the separate characters of George Kennan. Despite the different characters and roles Kennan had throughout his career, he would continue to call for the implementation of a political and economic containment strategy focused on the key areas vital to US security. There have been numerous debates that have supported and questioned this argument.

In 1946, Kennan gained the attention of Senior Policymakers in Washington when he sent the Long Telegram to the Secretary of State James Byrnes. In this telegram, Kennan provided a detailed analysis of recent Soviet behaviour, where he attempted to set out a strategy he believed the US should follow. The telegram provided Kennan with the opportunity needed to voice his opinions and concerns to the influential group of officials within Truman's administration. Kennan later commented that "Here was a case where nothing but the whole truth would do. They had asked for it. Now, by God, they would have it."² The dispatch had a significant impact on senior officials in Washington and marked a significant change to the view held within the State Department. The telegram received the direct support of the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, who wanted the administration to adopt this approach and assisted in highlighting Kennan by distributing the Long Telegram within the official circles. Kennan would continue to develop strategy through his acceptance of Forrestal's invitation to work at the National War College as the First Deputy of Foreign Affairs. Changes occurred to the containment strategy as

² George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 293

circumstances evolved and the political context it was set in altered. Kennan inspired changes to US foreign policy through the Long Telegram and the delivery of his lectures, encouraging officials to implement a new strategy. In 1947, it was Kennan's political circumstances which changed when he accepted a new position as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, enabling him to play a vital role in Policy Planning until 1949. Kennan had become an official within the bureaucracy, a role that became difficult as his recommendations were debated, challenged and on many occasions ignored. The position became increasingly challenging with the public presentation of the X article. The publication of this article and the subsequent revelation of who the author was re-shaped public perceptions, which led to the view that this was a prescription of official policy. Further changes in opinion occurred when Dean Acheson was made the new Secretary of State where Kennan found his recommendations were increasingly ignored and his influence was starting to decline. In 1949, Kennan's strategy was formally rejected by the Truman Administration. Kennan's frustrations continued to grow as the containment strategy was moulded by Senior Policymakers, who moved the strategy far beyond what he had initially outlined.

To begin this assessment, the thesis will examine Kennan's earlier work which was developed following the distribution of Long Telegram. There will be an examination of the Long Telegram, because this telegram gained the attention of the officials back in Washington.³ It outlines Kennan's earliest opinions discussing the threat of the Soviet Union and how he

³ George F. Kennan, "The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. The Long Telegram," February 22nd 1946, <<http://www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>> (01.04.2007)

thought the US needed to respond. It is important to analyse this document because it provided the opportunity to Senior Policymakers to reassess their approach and focus toward foreign policy. Following this analysis, there will be an evaluation of the lectures that Kennan delivered to the National War College between the years of 1946 and 1947. These lectures were delivered before the Secretary of State General Marshall made a request for him to lead the Policy Planning Staff, making these lectures an important source of evidence for the overall assessment. Kennan later went on to comment that many of the ideas that had been conceived during his time at the National War College were basic to his views on American policy from that moment on.⁴ These lectures provide information that show Kennan's early views regarding the Soviet Union and US objectives.

Following the analysis of Kennan's work in the early Cold War, the thesis will examine the Policy Planning Staff. It was in May 1947 that Kennan was requested to form and lead a new Policy Planning Staff. This thesis will examine the documents drafted by this team, which involves an examination of many of the recommendations made within the Policy Planning Papers because these had a direct influence on the final outcome and focus of US policy. They are vital to the overall examination because the main objective of the Policy Planners was to direct and influence foreign policy decisions. Many of these papers became the blueprints of the following NSC documents. Undertaking this examination will enable an assessment of the policies and the extent to which they were recommending policies that were in line with

⁴ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 309

Kennan's initial thoughts. The Policy Planning Papers provide an insight into how Kennan wanted the containment strategy to be structured and implemented by government officials.

Assessing the Long Telegram, Kennan's lectures and the early Policy Planning Papers, will provide an understanding of Kennan's early focus and thinking behind what would eventually become known as the containment strategy. This assessment will be compared with the X article published in July 1947, because this article received a significant amount of criticism and it has been suggested that it conflicted with Kennan's recommendations and created problems for the containment strategy he wanted to be implemented. The question that needs to be answered is whether the article signified a major change toward the implementation and focus of this strategy? One criticism that was made after the publication of the X article was that within this document Kennan had failed to limit the containment strategy to vital and strategic areas and it was thought that this type of foreign policy would over extend US resources. The issue of limiting containment to strategic areas will be an area of discussion in later chapters.⁵ This links to the assessment of Kennan's strategy towards Germany and Japan. In 1947, these had been outlined by the Policy Planning Staff as two specific areas key to maintaining long term US security. The reconstruction of both of these regions was considered to be highly important because their short and long term recovery was viewed to be a recovery that would contribute to a stable balance of power, whilst protecting US interests from Soviet expansionism. The policies

⁵ George F. Kennan, "Measures Short of War," September 16th 1946, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991); X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 25 No 4, July 1947

and recommendations provided for these two countries will be examined to assess their consistency to the outlined strategy, enabling us to prove whether this led to a coherent strategy.

The next section of the assessment will examine the changes that had occurred within the containment strategy. The evidence proves that as the strategy progressed it developed more of a militarised tone, which can be considered to be a significant shift away from the original, outlined strategy. The policies signifying this shift include the Truman Doctrine, the Atlantic Pact, (later known as NATO) and NSC-68. The evidence shows that a dramatic change had occurred and had impacted on the direction of US foreign policy. The strategy appeared to have a stronger focus on military aspects of policy, and was most likely the result of events which include the Berlin Crisis, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Korean War. These events created an exaggerated perception of Soviet aggression, which was subsequently followed by a militarised focus. The militarisation of containment intensified with the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb. There will be an examination of Kennan's response to these changes and the militarised response to perceived Soviet aggression; it will enable us to assess how this affected his overall consistency and coherence. It leads to the argument that the changes made to the containment strategy appeared to be a rejection of his ideas and policy recommendations, which finally led to his resignation from the Policy Planning Staff in 1949. Following his resignation, Kennan continued to work for the administration and it was during this period in the January of 1950 that he made a vital contribution to the debate on nuclear weapons, where he drafted a paper on the International Control of Atomic Weaponry. The containment strategy had become complex with the introduction of nuclear weapons, especially with the US

development of the Hydrogen bomb; these developments changed the world situation. Kennan recognised the changes occurring within the containment strategy and refocused his attention on the growing issue of nuclear weapons. It is this subject that is the focus of the next part of the examination.

The strategy of containment continued to be the dominant focus throughout the Cold War despite the change in administrations; the differences became noticeable in the direction that the strategy was moving in. The militarised tone was a reaction to the heightened tensions that had been created by developments made in atomic weaponry and US intervention in the Korean War. It meant that the new administration under Eisenhower had to make a decision on which approach they would take in US foreign policy. It is this subject that this assessment will examine because this was the final time that Kennan had an active role in developing and recommending a strategy. This role was carried out under the Eisenhower administration, where Kennan was requested to participate in a project called 'Operation Solarium.' Operation Solarium was a project Eisenhower had requested to be carried out to collate information and provide recommendations on how the US should respond to the Soviet threat. It is important to examine the approach that Kennan took whilst leading Task Force A because it will show whether his ideas were consistent after he had resigned from his official role in the administration. Kennan's most influential years were between the years of 1946 and 1949 due to his direct involvement in the formulation of strategy, however the work that he was involved in after this period is important to our overall assessment of Kennan's approach to strategy. This part of the examination will give a complete picture of whether he maintained the same views and made

recommendations that were following those he had originally outlined from 1946.

The aim of this thesis is to assess how coherent and consistent Kennan was toward the strategy of containment. It involves examining a large amount of evidence to provide a researched and balanced argument. There is no doubt that Kennan had a vital and direct influence on Policy Planning between 1947 and 1949. The Policy Planning Papers had the largest direct impact on the direction of foreign policy and it is from these recommendations and policies introduced by Kennan's staff that we will be able to assess if it followed a coherent approach. The issues surrounding European and Japanese recovery, the division of Europe, German reunification and atomic weaponry remained high on his list of priorities, and he continued to discuss the issues and concerns on these subjects throughout the Cold War. The aim is to develop an understanding of Kennan's strategy of containment. The thesis will conclude that at the start of his role as a Policy Planner he was able to influence the implementation of a coherent strategy that was consistent with his earliest work. Problems occurred with the publication of the X Article which received a significant amount of criticism due to the ambiguous language used that led to what Kennan considered to be misinterpretations. The role of a Policy Planner required Kennan to assess other areas of concern that fell outside the borders of those specified as vitally strategic areas. It was impossible for other areas to be easily dismissed, providing an explanation as to why US foreign policy became involved in issues that were not previously classified as vital to the containment strategy. Each situation was examined on an individual basis and therefore meant that the US would undoubtedly become involved in many international situations.

Kennan's lack of influence began to show as the direction of the strategy began to change. Kennan openly opposed the Truman Doctrine and NATO; his disagreements with the Secretary of State Dean Acheson on Germany and NSC-68 were the main issues that finally led to his resignation. The change to the focus of the containment strategy and the continued division of Germany and therefore Europe formalised the final rejection of his strategy. By 1949 his influence was notably declining and his voice no longer appeared to carry the same weight it had back in 1946, suggesting this was one reason for his inability to implement a consistent and coherent strategy. Kennan started with a consistent approach as he began developing the containment strategy; the thinking behind his strategy remained consistent during and after his time in the State Department. It is clear how he thought it should be implemented, but misinterpretations, perceptions and changes in his own thinking contributed to an incoherent strategy. As the strategy was constantly developed, it became clear that his ideas were slowly being rejected by higher officials most notably Dean Acheson, this again made it difficult for Kennan to implement the strategy in a coherent manner.

CHAPTER ONE: THE EARLY YEARS 1946-1947

George Kennan had not yet created a new strategy; the Long Telegram was the key document that brought Kennan to the attention of Senior Policymakers. It was this document that assisted Kennan's return to Washington where he was in a position at the National War College where he would have direct contact with policymakers and officials who were responsible for structuring and formulating US foreign policy. The position he accepted at the National War College provided the opportunity to develop his work without the pressure of being mandated to create a set strategy. Kennan strengthened his position during his time at the college, lecturing on subjects that enabled US perceptions of the Soviet Union to be re-shaped and moulded so it was seen as a growing threat. The lectures indicate the type of foreign policy Kennan was advocating and how he became a leading authority on this subject. The influence and respect he gained whilst at the college, led to an invitation to join the Truman Administration as the Director of Policy Planning Staff where he would influence the implementation and decision making in US foreign policy. Kennan had made the transition from a position of analysing the strategy, to one where he was responsible for formulating it.

In 1946, Kennan held no official position within the administration, and he had no direct contact with Senior Policymakers. It was during his post in the US embassy in the Soviet Union that a request was made by senior officials in Washington for the Embassy to provide an explanation of Soviet intentions and objectives, Kennan responded with what is now famously

known as the Long Telegram.⁶ This was the first occasion that Kennan had been requested to submit this type of document, he had attempted to voice his opinions on previous occasions but with little success. He sent the dispatch with the intention of providing a full explanation of the Soviet threat, which explains the length of the document. Prior to sending this telegram, Kennan had felt disillusioned to such an extent that he had considered resigning from his position at the US Embassy in the Soviet Union. The report was exactly what President Truman and his administration had been looking for, whilst it elevated Kennan to an influential position within the State Department. The Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal was particularly impressed with this telegram, ensuring that it became widely distributed within official circles in Washington. It provided Truman and his administration with the rationale needed to change the focus of foreign policy, where the key objective was to contain the threat of the Soviets.

This change as discussed by Hixson shows the power and influence that Kennan had begun to command through the force of his arguments and the power of his prose.⁷ The Long Telegram was well received among senior officials and it had a direct impact on their overall thinking regarding the threat faced from the Soviet Union. This telegram changed Kennan's role, moving from a position of providing the analysis to one that was responsible for setting out strategy for Senior Policymakers. One of the most important elements of the telegram is when it argued that the Soviets would aim to advance their power and weaken the power and influence of the Western World. This view was able to capture the officials attention and Whelan makes a

⁶ George F. Kennan, "The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. The Long Telegram," February 22nd 1946, <<http://www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>> (01.04.2007)

⁷ Walter L. Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 31

valid point stating that the real significance of the dispatch was probably due to the fact that Kennan brought into sharper focus the nature of the Soviet threat.⁸

The Long Telegram did not represent a new official strategy and at this point no official consensus for the Cold War had been established. Kennan held no real influence in Washington at the time of writing the telegram, and he was unaware of the impact the document would have on Senior Policymakers. The telegram was a continuation of the thoughts and opinions that had been formed through his experiences from working in the Embassy in the Soviet Union. The telegram attempted to highlight the threat the Soviet Union represented to the US and it enabled senior officials to re-evaluate the focus of US foreign policy. The telegram discussed the basic features, background and motivations of Soviet policy and was split into sections which outlined Soviet behaviour, whilst it provided an explanation of how this would impact on US foreign policy. Kennan emphasised that it was ideology that played a vital role in the Soviet Union and for this reason he believed the role of ideology should not be underestimated. He argued that the Soviet outlook meant that for the US there could be no peaceful co-existence and this was due to the traditional and instinctive sense of insecurity that was felt in the Soviet Union. Ideology was important to the Soviet government as it was this which provided them with the justification for their fear of the outside world and enabled them to rule as a dictatorship. Kennan argued that they used ideology as a means of maintaining their power and influence over the Russian people. The telegram went on to suggest that the aim of the Soviet Union was to advance Soviet power, whilst

⁸ Joseph G. Whelan, "George Kennan and his Influence on American Foreign Policy," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol.35 No 2, (Spring 1959): 200.

weakening the Western nations with Kennan summarising that;

We have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with US there can be no permanent *modus vivendi* that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state broken, if Soviet power is to be secure.⁹

Within the Long Telegram Kennan was insistent that this would not mean that the US would need to enter a general military conflict.

It does not work by fixed plans. It does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason, and it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw- and usually does when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige engaging showdowns.¹⁰

The telegram set in motion new thoughts about the direction of foreign policy. Kennan was advocating military strength not war, he did not believe that the US would need to involve itself in any military conflict as it was unlikely that the Soviet Union would risk war whilst it was faced with strong resistance from the West.

⁹ George F. Kennan, "The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. The Long Telegram," February 22nd 1946, <<http://www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>> (01.04.2007)

¹⁰ Ibid.

The aim of the Long Telegram was to outline the immediate threat and highlight the real issues the US were now faced with; the telegram was not intended to be a prescription of policy. At this stage no consensus had been established and Kennan was not responsible for formulating a strategy for US foreign policy. Gaddis agrees there was no strategy whilst Mayers believes Kennan was reiterating ideas that had been expressed for years.¹¹ What is understood is that the mood in Washington had significantly changed following the distribution of the Long Telegram; however despite this Kennan's thinking was still not fully and widely accepted. Following the submission of the telegram, Kennan was invited to return to the US to give lectures at the National War College. Kennan accepted the invitation, using the opportunity to develop his thinking further. This was not a policy making position, allowing him to freely develop his own ideas during this period, which enabled him to consolidate what he had already outlined in the telegram.

Delivering lectures at the National War College provided him with an audience where he could interact with top military and naval figures, about political and military policies. These lectures helped to influence the ideas and opinions of those responsible for shaping future policy. These lectures were extremely important at this period because the Cold War was still in its earliest stages and the Truman Administration had begun to establish their foreign policy strategy toward the Soviet Union, who they had begun to view as an aggressive nation. The National War College gave him the opportunity to help shape future foreign policy; it was also an environment

¹¹John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 21; David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemma's of US Foreign Policy* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 99

which was to influence his own thinking for years to come.¹² It was here that he began to develop and refine his thinking for what would later be known as the strategy of containment. The lectures that were delivered at the college are important to the assessment of this strategy because they enable us to understand some of his earliest views regarding the Soviet threat and how he thought the US should counter that threat.

The lectures Kennan delivered established him as a leading expert on the Soviet Union; it was during this period that his influence started to grow. Consistent with the Long Telegram, the lectures show that he still believed that it was ideology which had a key role to play in Soviet policy. In one particular lecture he argued that “the role of ideology in Soviet political psychology, while of tremendous importance, is not primarily that of a basic determinant of political action. It is rather a prism through which Soviet eyes must view the world.”¹³ This had been one of the dominant themes in the telegram and he continued this in these lectures. Following the discussion in the Long Telegram, which focused on military strength, Kennan gave a lecture in September 1946 entitled “Measures Short of War”. During this lecture he discussed the view that the US needed to use economic, psychological and political measures, to counter the Soviet threat and along with these measures the US needed to show a preponderance of strength. Its focus was on measures short of war, providing great insight into his continued thinking, which was consistent with the telegram. The focus of this lecture centred on US

¹² Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), xvii

¹³ George F. Kennan, “The Soviet Way of Thought and its Effect on Foreign Policy,” January 24th 1947, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 114

strength and how this strength needed to be a combination of political, economic and moral strength. Kennan did not suggest that the US should implement a military policy to counter communist expansion; he wanted the US to achieve economic recovery in key regions to combat this threat. What he did advocate was the need to maintain US strength because there was a requirement to maintain a strong military to ensure that key objectives could be met.

My personal conviction is that if we keep up our strength, if we are ready to use it, and if we select the measures short of war with the necessary wisdom and co-ordination, then these measures short of war will be all the ones that we will ever have to use to secure the prosperous and safe future of the people of this country.¹⁴

This indicates Kennan was not advocating for the Truman Administration to implement a military policy against the Soviet Union, but he accepted the need for the visibility of a strong military to show the Soviet Union that they were prepared to meet any of their threats to limit the likelihood of direct conflict. Kennan believed the US needed to implement a policy that would encourage change in the Soviet Union that was in the interests to both countries.¹⁵ There are similarities between the Long Telegram and these lectures and they show that there was consistency. There is no evidence to suggest that Kennan thought that Truman needed to follow a military policy. The main point that is clear in all of these sources is that the US possessed the

¹⁴ George F. Kennan, "Measures Short of War," September 16th 1946, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 17

¹⁵ George F. Kennan, "Structure of Internal Power in the USSR," October 10th 1946, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 38

power and ability to solve the issues without resorting to direct military conflict. What they needed to do was to show their readiness to use force against Soviet pressure if necessary.

Even though Kennan did not want the containment strategy to have a military focus, there is no doubt that he believed that these policies needed to be supported by the strength of the military.¹⁶ The establishment of the military was important so that US strength could be shown to act as a deterrent. At no time whilst positioned at the National War College did he argue that the foreign policy of the US should be focused exclusively on the military. The dominant focus in Kennan's early thinking was the belief that the Soviets were not looking to begin another war and did not intend on resorting to war to achieve their objectives. This was shown when he delivered the lecture on "Measures Short of War". The early lectures indicate that Kennan did not want the main focus of US foreign policy to be purely on military measures, because war was not the immediate threat. Instead he focused on Soviet intentions in which he opposed the idea that what the Soviets wanted was another war. This was a subject that he would later return to in his *Memoirs*.¹⁷ Kennan developed his thinking to a certain stage by 1947 where he was convinced that it was the Economic rehabilitation of Western Europe which should be the primary focus of foreign policy, and to achieve this Germany had to feature in the main plan.¹⁸ These lectures

¹⁶ George Kennan, "Contemporary Soviet Diplomacy" October 22nd 1946, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 60

¹⁷ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 303; George F. Kennan, "What is Policy?" December 18th 1947, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947*, Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 301

¹⁸ George Kennan, "Problems of US Foreign Policy after Moscow," May 6th 1947, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947*, (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 177

prove that Kennan did not expect the outbreak of war and consistently maintained that the US needed to meet the Soviet threats through political and economic measures, supported by the strength of the military. What these lectures help to demonstrate is the coherent thinking in Kennan's developing views on the Soviet threat. The lectures were a continuation of the Long Telegram and therefore show consistency in his approach. The early work of Kennan's was coherent as both of these opportunities were used to provide a full analysis of the Soviet threat where he was able to shape officials perceptions, encouraging them to follow the strategy he had started to develop. There was a transition in Kennan's approach when he was invited to join the administration in an official capacity as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. This role made him responsible for recommending strategy.

CHAPTER TWO: THE START OF POLICY PLANNING

Kennan's work at the National War College during 1947 was not a representation of US foreign policy, but an analysis of his view towards US-Soviet relations. The position he held enabled him to influence officials and re-shape the perceptions held within the administration. On May 5th 1947, the Secretary of State, General George Marshall invited Kennan to join the administration as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. The change in roles placed Kennan in an official position within the bureaucracy, with the responsibility of leading a team of officials who would assess, analyse and submit recommendations. The scope of the role was not intended to task Kennan with creating and outlining strategy, however he used the opportunity provided by the Policy Planning Papers to discuss specific international problems. It was this opportunity that led to the formulation of a new strategy which was structured around Containment. As the director of this team, it was Kennan who was able to directly influence foreign policy decisions as he submitted foreign policy recommendations through the use of telegrams, lectures and debates which marked a significant change from his previous non-official roles. Planners under the leadership of Kennan were tasked with analysing information and submitting Policy Planning Papers which had a direct impact on the formulation and implementation of official US foreign policy. There was no one particular document that fully outlined the complete strategy of containment; it was developed through the recommendations made through many of these different papers.

Consistent with the analysis in the Long Telegram, Kennan would continue to argue that the Soviets aim was to see the destruction of US strength.¹⁹ It was concluded that the Soviet Union would aim to achieve this objective through the exploitation of weaknesses within the Western world. Therefore, the immediate task of the Policy Planners was to assess the economic and political conditions of Western Europe and recommend methods short of war which would aim to achieve its economic rehabilitation. The long term aim was to restore the balance of power, whilst protecting US security and prestige. This became a key focus for the planners, which started the formulation of a new strategy.

On May 23rd 1947, the Policy Planners made their first official recommendations on Western Europe. These were focused on a short-term and long term plan, short term because the US were required to act immediately to prevent the communists exploiting the current situation. The long term plan was an extended plan that was aimed at complete European reconstruction and recovery. Kennan wanted US aid to be directed at restoring the economic health of the West, rather than combating the spread of communism. There needed to be a clear structure that would lead to an overall goal.²⁰ The recommendations made for Western Europe had a significant influence which led to the creation of the Marshall Plan. This was intended to be implemented as a political element of the strategy that focused on containing the spread of communism within Europe. This area had been devastated by war, and this plan offered the stability needed by

¹⁹ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 23, Review of Current Trends US Foreign Policy, 24 February 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States, General: The United Nations, United States Government Printing Office, 1976, (Hereafter FRUS), 1948: 1 Part 2 p. 528*

²⁰ The Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), 23 May 1947 *FRUS, 1947: 3 pp.223-227*

restoring the region economically and politically. Kennan used the influence held by his team as a means of implementing the strategy which he had developed whilst lecturing at the National War College in 1947. The plan was revealed to the public through a carefully drafted speech that was delivered by the Secretary of State General Marshall. The key features of this speech were taken directly from Kennan's recommendations, enabling the administration to make public a plan that was already well under development by Kennan and his Policy Planning Staff. The key objective was to ensure that this policy had a psychological impact on Western Europe, providing them with the confidence and strength to meet potential threats. Kennan's official transition into the administration did not change the focus or determination about how he thought the US should implement the containment strategy. As an official he used his position and influence to ensure that the Marshall Plan remained consistent with the approach he wanted strategy to take, using the opportunity to outline and direct a political and economic strategy.

A consistent approach was crucial to enable the Policy Planning Staff to formulate the containment strategy. Their recommendations, under Kennan's influence, show they wanted strategy to go beyond the objective of opposing communism. The result of these recommendations was the Marshall Plan, which attempted to go beyond this objective. The aim was to provide the stability needed to establish a balance of power, which would protect the security of both the US and its Western allies. The European Recovery Program was one of the most important policies that Kennan and his staff implemented during this period. It represented the economic and political containment that Kennan had wanted the administration to follow. The strategy remained coherent with a continued review and assessment of their approach, ensuring

that as the policy developed the objective remained focused on supporting the restoration of Western Europe rather than taking direct control of the region themselves. It was hoped that a political and economic strategy would have the most significant impact in strengthening the West to prevent communism from exploiting the weaker areas;

Our objective is to strengthen the determination of the free nations to resist the aggression of Soviet-directed world Communism, to increase their confidence that they can successfully do so, and to confront the Soviet Union with sufficient organized force to deter it from attempting further aggression.²¹

There was a structured approach to this phase of the strategy; their focus on Western Europe ensured that it was moulded as economic containment which Kennan had intended. It provided the opportunity for Kennan to show that the US could achieve its objective by creating economic policies that would strengthen the confidence to of their allies, which would result in their allies resisting opposition without resorting to military intervention.

The recommendations and assessments made in the Policy Planning Papers show there was agreement that the Soviets neither wanted nor expected a war to occur. At the beginning of his official career within the State Department, Kennan had argued that “The danger of war is vastly exaggerated in many quarters. The Soviet government neither wants nor expects war with us in the foreseeable future.” Kennan continued this discussion suggesting that Soviet moves to

²¹ Report Prepared by the Policy Planning Staff Concerning Western Union and Related problems, 23 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p.62

consolidate their power within the East were signs of a defensive move.²² During official meetings the discussions concluded that the Russians were war weary and would aim at achieving their objectives through ideological rather than military means. This enabled them to conclude that the Soviets were not working to a fixed timetable.²³ Like Western Europe, the Second World War had a devastating effect on the Russians which had not been fully understood or acknowledged by the West. The analysis carried out by the Policy Planners provided them with an understanding that another war was unlikely, meaning the Soviet Union would attempt to achieve their objectives through political means. Official papers concluded that another war would be devastating for all, and argued that “the policies of the United States should be directed to the promotion of conditions of peace, the prevention of armed aggression, and the countering of indirect aggression.”²⁴

These conclusions remained consistent with Kennan’s early views on the real nature of the Soviet threat. The issue surrounding the nature and focus of this threat was a reoccurring theme during the period he worked within the Policy Planning Staff and it remained a subject of continued discussion. The approach was always the same; they preferred the implementation of an economic strategy because of the benefits offered by this type of policy. The papers produced by the staff concluded that a foreign policy with a primary focus on military objectives was not the most effective and efficient way of meeting their key objectives, because the Soviets did not

²² Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 13 Resume of the World Situation, 6 November 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 1 pp.770-776

²³ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 7 July 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p.157

²⁴ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 50, 22 March 1949, *FRUS*, 1949:1 p.270

want to risk causing another war. There was acceptance that events such as the Berlin Crisis had created situations which made the possibility of war much greater. Kennan maintained that if the US highlighted its potential strength, the communist position within Europe would deteriorate making war unnecessary. It was understood that war could be caused through internal conflicts, but it was not inevitable.²⁵ Kennan was required to clarify this point on several occasions because it appeared his message was not clearly understood in the context that it was intended. The minutes of one meeting that Kennan attended show the attempts he made to rectify this misunderstanding:

Mr Kennan wished to clarify a point concerning previous statements made by Mr Bohlen and himself about the danger of war in Europe. They had not meant to imply that there was no danger of war nor threat of war. What they had meant to was that they did not consider that the Soviet Union had deliberately drawn up a program of aggression. There was a difference between planning aggression as a deliberate step of policy, and aggression as something following upon a situation from which it was impossible to withdraw.²⁶

Misunderstanding became a source of frustration for Kennan when the US and its allies in the West perceived the threat from the Soviet Union to be one that was focused on military aggression to achieve its objectives. It led to discussions and arguments regarding Soviet intentions and capabilities, which became a continuous theme throughout the Cold War.

Kennan's opinions differed to many of his colleagues, as he wanted strategy to be focused on

²⁵ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 42, 2 November 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 2 p.1240; Report to the National Security Council by the Department of State, NSC 20/2, 25 August 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.619

²⁶ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, 9 July 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p.177

Soviets intentions. Kennan found that he was in dispute with senior members of the administration, regularly objecting to the assumptions that were outlined by the military who argued that war with Russia was necessary.²⁷ Despite these clashes, Kennan remained consistent with the policy planning conclusions reached between 1947 and 1950, continuing to argue, in 1950 that “They will continue to conduct against us in the coming period the most intensive and savage type of political warfare, interspersing political, psychological, covert subversive, and limited military means as may seem to them suitable and advisable.”²⁸ Detailed analysis carried out showed that the Soviet intention was not to use military aggression to achieve their key objectives and for this reason the Policy Planners went on to use every means available to emphasise the economic threat and how economic policies were key to the success of Containment.

The Policy Planning Papers did not suggest the implementation of a military strategy; they were developing a political and economic strategy. Kennan understood the need to maintain military strength so that the US could counter any direct threats. There was acceptance that in order to implement the containment strategy, the US needed to maintain an outwardly strong position, with the support of a strong military division. The military fulfilled a vital role and it was unlikely that the US would have been able to implement the strategy without it. Maintaining a strong military capability showed allies and enemies their strength and therefore helped others

²⁷ Record of the Under Secretary’s Meeting, Department of State, 15 April 1949, *FRUS*, 1949: 1 p.283

²⁸ Memorandum by the Counselor (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 8 August 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 1 p.366

resist communist pressures.²⁹ This could represent a contradiction in Kennan's thinking because he had continued to argue against a military strategy, but Kennan did not advocate for the removal of the US military defence. Military strategy and military strength do not have the same meaning, so there is no contradiction. This theme featured in both the Long Telegram and the National War College lectures, where Kennan emphasised the need for the US to show the Soviets that they had sufficient force and were prepared to use it if necessary. The threat of military retaliation was to act only as a deterrent to the Soviets to prevent them from resorting to military force to achieve their objectives. The US found other means of conducting foreign policy after 1947 with the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council; these divisions were formed to conduct covert and overt operations, to provide alternative ways to achieve their objectives without resorting to direct military intervention.

The Truman Administration became concerned as the Soviets began to consolidate their control over Eastern Europe. The creation of the Policy Planning Staff under Kennan's direction did not mandate them to create strategy, but they used it as an opportunity to develop strategy. The assessment of the Policy Planning Papers provides an understanding of the strategy which Kennan and his staff developed. Consistent with Kennan's earlier work at the National War College, Kennan focused on what he considered to be the real threat, recommending that the key objective should be focused on Russian intentions. Kennan did not believe that the Russians wanted to cause another war, but would use the economic circumstances to widen their influence;

²⁹ Report to the National Security Council by the Department of State, NSC 20/2, 25 August 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1, p.622

therefore he advocated for the key element of this strategy to be focused on economic containment. The creation and implementation of the Marshall Aid Program in Western Europe was a key success for Kennan's economic containment strategy, assisting with the economic recovery of Europe, preventing communism from exploiting an already weak situation by limiting their expansion in this area. This became more noticeable as the Soviets began to consolidate their control over Eastern Europe.³⁰ The strategy achieved economic rehabilitation, through economic, political and psychological methods rather than military ones. Following an economic approach provided coherency and efficiency, whilst providing the confidence and strength to Western Europe. On Kennan's advice the same offer was made to Eastern Europe to include the Soviet Union with an assumption that this region would decline such an offer. The real objective of this was to place the political initiative with the US, they had never intended for the plan to be extended into Eastern Europe. The Policy Planning Staff under Kennan's direction were formed to analyse and provide recommendations to specific problems. They used the opportunity to steer US foreign policy to focus on achieving the containment of the political and ideological threat of the Soviet Union using economic and political methods.

³⁰Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS13 Resume of the World Situation, 6 Nov 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 1 p.771

CHAPTER THREE: KENNAN AND MR X

In the early days of the Policy Planning Staff there was coherence to the strategy that was implemented by the Truman Administration with its focus on economic containment; however, the publication of the X article in July 1947 entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” presented an issue with Kennan’s overall consistency on the strategy of containment. The intention was to keep the author of this article anonymous, but it was publicly revealed that Kennan was the author. The evidence has shown that the most likely origin of the X article came from a paper that was written by Kennan back in January 1947 whilst situated at the National War College. The paper was never published or presented as a speech, but its structure and content is similar to that of the X Article. Harlow and Maerz believe this paper is the most likely origin of Kennan’s analysis.³¹ The document was prepared in January 1947, prior to the creation of the Policy Planning Staff. It acknowledged that it was unable to provide a full portrayal of the Soviet way of thought which supports the argument that it was never intended to use X to publicly outline a doctrine or specific strategy. This cannot be seen as inconsistent as it was not written as an extension to the Truman Doctrine because this was not presented until March 1947. The problem with the X article was not in its conception but in its public presentation. The revelation of Kennan being the author had a direct impact on the perceptions of the public, who viewed this as an official policy. The difference between this article and the Policy Planning Papers was that they were written for two different audiences, one for official strategic planning and the other

³¹ Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 110

public propaganda. This resulted in a distortion to Kennan's strategic view of Soviet-American relations. The main criticism came from Walter Lippmann, who argued that this article was advocating a global policy of containment. The implications of which would mean that US foreign policy would have to contain Soviet expansionism in every area where communism showed signs of encroaching. Lippmann referred to the X Article as a "strategic monstrosity," arguing that the strategic conception was unsound due to its assumption that Soviet power was decaying. Lippmann pointed out that the article suggested the US needed to assume a leadership role, therefore arguing it was outlining a global strategy. The main points of the article caused concern for Lippmann, believing that this type of strategy would provide the Soviets with the strategic initiative, with the ability to challenge and make decisions on where and when. The major concern Lippmann had with this was the limitations to US military power.³²

There are inconsistencies when the X article is compared to Kennan's earlier work and the Policy Planning Papers. On close examination, the X article can be viewed as an extension of the Long Telegram, both discussed the belief that there could be no peaceful co-existence with the Soviets and that it was Soviet ideology that was the main driving force behind its personality. Ideology was a key theme in both documents, the X article commenting that the political personality of Soviet power was the product of ideology and circumstances and it was this which taught the Soviets to view the outside world as hostile. The X article went beyond what had been outlined in the Long Telegram making strong statements regarding Soviet behaviour and how the

³² Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in US Foreign Policy* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), 6-48

US need to respond. It argued that ideology was not the true driving force behind Soviet policy, because the Soviet leaders were preoccupied with the internal necessities of Soviet Power. The Soviet leadership needed an external enemy to justify fear of the outside world which would enable them to rule as a dictatorship. The article stated that the Soviets believed that “capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction.” It discussed the sense of insecurity felt by the Soviets, and how they wanted to see the destruction of any competing powers. The Soviets would only be stopped when it met some unanswerable force. They had no timetable with which to achieve their objectives, and therefore the article argued that the main element of US policy should “be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” and this should “be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” To achieve this X recommended that “this would itself warrant the United States entering with reasonable confidence upon a policy of firm containment, designed to confront the Russians with unalterable counter-force at every point where they show signs of encroaching upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world.” It was argued “that Soviet power, like the capitalist world of its conception, bears within it the seeds of its own decay and the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced.” It was hoped that the result of this would cause “either the break up or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power.”³³ There is some consistency between X and the Long Telegram, both documents detailing the Soviet threat and how it viewed the outside world as its enemy. However, it is important that we acknowledge the significant differences, for example the X article was written for a public audience; the objective to use this article as propaganda whilst ensuring that the author was not linked to official policy.

³³ X, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 25 No 4, July 1947 pp.566-582

The revelation that Kennan was the author distorted his strategic vision and led to misrepresentation.

The way in which the article was presented and the ambiguous language used within it created much controversy. It suggested that strategy needed to contain communism wherever it appeared, providing evidence that Kennan's strategic vision of containment was the implementation of a global policy. A global universal policy would have overextended US resources where it would have been unable to distinguish between vital interests. This was major concern for US foreign policy, because a global strategy would have potentially involved the US in issues that occurred all over the world. X portrayed the Soviet Union as an aggressive nation, something that Kennan had previously disagreed with. Whether Kennan intended to or not, this article implied that the US would need to take the role as the world leader in opposing communism. It suggested that any policy would be a long term global military policy; because it would need to meet the threat wherever it appeared which would need to be achieved over a long period of time. There was also no explanation or further discussion following the use of the term "counter-force". This article appears to represent an example of Kennan's lack of coherence in formulating strategy, however with Containment being introduced into the public arena it needed to be seen to project a strong stance against communist expansion which would act as a deterrent. In their official capacity, Kennan and his Policy Planners did not need to over-emphasise the Soviet threat, the Long Telegram had already provided the justification required by senior officials and the strategy of containment had been accepted in official circles. The purpose of the publication of X was to draw on public support and mould public perception. This had an

opposite effect from what had been achieved by the Long Telegram, X's publication trapped Kennan and his strategic vision.

The Lippmann critique of the X article made valid arguments and highlighted serious deficiencies within the article. The article significantly changed public perceptions, as the public viewed this as the official strategic vision. The language used within the article and the lack of a definition or explanation of the main points allowed misunderstanding to occur and the ambiguous tone of the words made Kennan vulnerable to a significant amount of criticism. The article appeared to advocate an extension to the Truman Doctrine which had Kennan had opposed due to its universal and military focus making it difficult to understand why Kennan would have recommended a global military foreign policy in this article. He also failed to provide a detailed explanation of the points made in the article and this led to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. Kennan became trapped by the publication of X after it was revealed that he was the author because of his official position as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff within the State Department. He was unable to respond to the criticisms without official approval, which did little to rectify the damage of the article and allowed further misinterpretation. X was not a true reflection of his view of the Soviet threat or his vision for a strategic policy, and he was unable to rectify public perceptions. Kennan used his memoirs as the opportunity he needed to comment on the deficiencies in the article which had led to the misinterpretations made by critics, such as Lippmann. Kennan argued that one of the main failures of his article was to define what he meant by the term Containment, in reflection he admits that he should have provided an explanation which showed he was trying to portray a strategy that would be seen as the "political

containment of a political threat.” There was recognition of his failure to distinguish between the key strategic geographical areas which he felt was a fundamental flaw in the article. He had previously objected to the Truman Doctrine for the same reason that it did not draw these distinctions. In the *Memoirs*, Kennan also comments that he never intended X to be a doctrine.³⁴ Scholars such as Miscamble have defended Kennan on this maintaining that the X Article was not a detailed prescription of policy and it did not outline what the US should do.³⁵ The article was not outlining official strategic policy; however the consequences of its publication contributed to an exaggerated perception of the Soviet threat, which encouraged a universal and more militarised tone toward strategy.

The X article trapped Kennan and misrepresented his strategic vision for the containment strategy, making it appear as though he was inconsistent and incoherent in his approach. The problem with the article was in its public presentation, it significantly impacted public perception of Containment and Soviet-American relations. Kennan was restricted by the official position he held within the bureaucracy, which prevented him from publicly responding to the criticism making it impossible to rectify until he left the official role. The major problem for Kennan was that the damage had already been done; the article appeared to publicly contradict the economic-political strategy Kennan had recommended in his lectures and Policy Planning Papers. The main points were publicly distorted in the article and had a lasting effect on shaping public

³⁴ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 357-364

³⁵ Wilson D. Miscamble “George Kennan: A Life in the Foreign Service,” *Foreign Service Journal*, Vol. 81 No 2, February 2004 <<http://www.afsa.org/fsj/feb04/miscamble.pdf>>(29.01.08), 24

perception of an aggressive Soviet nation, highlighting this as an immediate threat to the US and its allies. Senior officials preferred this perception, as it provided the rationale needed to implement an aggressive containment strategy. The consequences as a result of the publication of this article went on to limit the political-economic strategy Kennan wanted policy to focus on. This proved to be a source of frustration for Kennan as it continued to prevent the consistent implementation of his recommendations.

CHAPTER FOUR: STRATEGIC AREAS

Lippmann had critiqued the X article, interpreting the language used within it to view Kennan's containment strategy as a global policy that did not distinguish between the vital areas. The consequence of this criticism led to a conscious effort from Kennan and the Policy Planning Staff to keep foreign policy focused on all the areas that were considered the most immediate vital interests to the US. Closer analysis has shown that the Policy Planning Staff was concerned with creating a structured foreign policy for Western Europe. In May 1947, during a speech entitled "Problems of US Foreign Policy after Moscow", Kennan argued that US involvement in policies that provided support to Greece, Turkey, France, Italy and Central Europe did not mean that the US were or should be committed to providing help and support to the rest of the world.³⁶ The strategy moulded by Kennan and his staff had a direct impact on Western Europe, being unable to respond publicly to the critics of X, they went on to use official channels to fight back against the misunderstanding and misperceptions created by X.

Kennan believed there were five regions that were vital to maintain the balance of power and US security. The areas outlined included the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine Valley, due to its industrial areas, the Soviet Union and Japan. The first focus for the Policy Planning Staff was to assess the conditions in Western Europe, Germany and Japan. These were

³⁶ George F. Kennan, "Problems of US Foreign Policy after Moscow," May 6 1947, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947*, Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 198

considered to be strategic regions and show there was a coherent and consistent structure in his thinking. The strategy for Western Europe was to include the elements of a political, military and economic union to work towards a European Unity without which the plan proposed would have failed.³⁷ There were problems throughout Western Europe, in countries such as Italy, where they were pressured from communist groups, who were exploiting the weak economic conditions. It was viewed that the loss of this area would undermine and weaken the position of the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean. The strategy recommended followed a methodical approach where they examined countries on an individual basis providing evidence of their structured approach. The objective was to make recommendations that would work towards a containment strategy that would be directed at restoring the balance of power in Europe and Asia.³⁸ A key comment made by the Policy Planners was that “the most important and urgent element in foreign policy planning is the question of restoration of hope and confidence in Western Europe and the early rehabilitation of the economies of that area.” The implications and impact that a policy could have on the West provides an explanation of Kennan’s opinion that this region needed to be considered first.³⁹

The time and resources that were allocated to make an assessment of each of these key areas show there was coherence to the overall strategy. The papers formulated show an understanding that to rehabilitate Western Europe and Japan it was important that they ensured

³⁷ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 23 Review of Current Trends US Foreign Policy, 24 February 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.510 &514

³⁸ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS13 Resume of the World Situation, 6 November 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 1 p.771

³⁹ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), 16 May 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 3 p.220

that US resources were not overextended in other areas. The US was already overextended in parts of the Far East and the Policy Planners attempted to carry out a study on regions that had been listed as vital where they highlighted Japan as an area at the top of their agenda.⁴⁰

Examination of the policy recommendations support the argument that despite the errors that led to the misinterpretation in the X article, the key focus of the Policy Planning Staff was on the five vital regions. There was more detail and description in the policy papers than in the X article due to their intended audiences. Western Europe, Germany and Japan were considered to be the most important areas of foreign policy, losing these regions to communism would have had such damaging consequences on their entire strategy. Primary emphasis was always placed on the most strategic areas that were considered at risk because the domino effect would have impacted on the balance of power and the overall security of the Western world. Strategic areas were the key focus which was shown in 1948 when the Policy Planning Staff discussed US policy toward China, which could have seen resources extended much further. They did agree that they needed to create a policy in relation to the present course of events in China, however it was understood that “while the growing power of the Chinese Communists represents an important political development and a serious deterioration, from our standpoint, of the general situation in Asia, it is not likely to be catastrophic to United States interests.” It was understood by the Policy Planners that the means for influencing events in China were limited.⁴¹ This was a key example of distinguishing between the areas that were vital to US interests, China was not considered to be one of these. It was a structured approach which led to a consistency in the overall strategy.

⁴⁰ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 23 Review of Current Trends US Foreign Policy, 24 February 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 P523-525

⁴¹ Memorandum by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 39/1, 23 November 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 8 pp.208-210

Even though there were issues arising in many different regions, the Policy Planning Staff kept their focus on Western Europe and Japan, ensuring that their assessments were a true reflection of the international situation.

The recovery of Western Europe was centred on two key countries; Germany and Japan, these were viewed as the cornerstones to the overall restoration of stability within Europe and East Asia. “Their recovery was essential to the restoration of stability in Europe and East Asia.”⁴² The end of the Second World War had created a threat that the Russians would attempt to take advantage of the power vacuum that had been left by their collapse. The war had resulted in Germany being split into zones controlled by the Soviet Union and the US. In 1947, Kennan argued that the occupational policy in Germany needed to be reshaped to enable the Western zones to make a maximum contribution to the economic restoration of the West.⁴³ This country was seen by Kennan to be the key to European reconstruction, and the role of the German people in a European Union was considered to be of prime importance.⁴⁴ Germany needed to be kept free from communist control and integrated into the West. The strategy consistently saw Germany as the key element in the recovery of the West. Recovery could not happen without its participation.

In my opinion, it is imperatively urgent today that the improvement of economic conditions and the revival of productive capacity in the west of Germany be made the

⁴² George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968),368

⁴³ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) 16 May 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 3 p.221

⁴⁴ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 20 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p.8

primary objective of our policy in that area and be given top priority in all our occupation policies.⁴⁵

Whilst working at the National War College, Kennan had begun to argue that the US needed to include Germany in all future policies, believing this was the only way they would be able to achieve a complete European Peace Settlement. Germany was a key strategic area that needed to be reconstructed to help Western Europe as a whole.

The recommendations that Kennan provided on the occupation of Germany were to change toward the end of 1947, as he began to realise that the occupation of Germany was becoming more difficult and could not last indefinitely. It was recognised that the Soviets wanted the position to remain the same to enable them to maintain power over their allocated German zone.⁴⁶ The Berlin crisis highlighted the need for the US to be more flexible in their approach on policies towards Germany, where they began to recognise that if they remained unwilling to negotiate, the Soviets could potentially use this as propaganda against them. It would make it look as though it was the US that wanted to keep its forces in the centre of Europe and therefore keep it divided. If they showed a willingness to negotiate over this contentious issue it would demonstrate that the US was prepared to consider a new policy which would help reduce the tension in Europe.

⁴⁵ George F. Kennan, "Problems of US Foreign Policy after Moscow," May 6 1947, Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz, eds, *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College 1946-1947* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), 186

⁴⁶ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS13 Resume of the World Situation, 6 November 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 1 pp. 772-774

Kennan's approach to the issues surrounding Germany did begin to change toward the end of 1947. The possibility of a German settlement was in the process of being discussed. The change was with the strategy that Kennan wanted the administration to implement, no longer thinking that the existing policies in Germany were reliable. Kennan began to accept the idea that "some day our forces must leave Central Europe. Some day Soviet forces must leave."⁴⁷ He had begun to recognise that a European Recovery Program would not be possible without resolving the German issue. Germany was viewed as the vital key to any such European proposal. The problem was that Kennan found it difficult to persuade the Truman Administration and the rest of Europe. The devastation of war had left Britain and France scarred and they were in agreement that Germany needed to be split into zones, which they believed would prevent it from rebuilding its military strength. The strategy was altered with Kennan and the Policy Planners recommending a new approach, where they called for the US to focus on achieving German reunification, arguing that this could only be achieved with the complete removal of both Soviet and US military forces from the centre of Europe. Most importantly, the Planners believed that the division of Europe could no longer remain, as it was not in the interest of economic recovery for Western Europe. The removal of this division had now become Kennan and the Policy Planner's highest priority; they believed that they would not be able to remove this division without resolving the German issue.

⁴⁷ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Secretary of State and the Under Secretary of State, 12 August 1948, *FRUS* 1948: 2 p.1288

This marked a significant change in 1948, as Kennan started to argue against continued occupation. Despite moving away from his original arguments, this was the next step in achieving the long term strategy that had been set out where it was hoped that they would eventually bring about negotiations with the Soviets. The Lippmann critique of the X Article helped to influence Kennan's thinking on Germany; it was in this critique that Lippmann had recommended the removal of military forces and German reunification.⁴⁸ The international situation accelerated the change in strategy in which Kennan started to argue that the division could no longer remain. The new recommendations were presented by Kennan and the Policy Planners as Program A; it was designed to open a new path to enable negotiations with the Soviet Union. It was hoped that following a different direction would provide the US with the initiative. They accepted the difficulties that Program A would face, but understood the long term effect of such a strategy;

It is true that Program A is unlikely to be accepted at this juncture and therefore unlikely to constitute in itself a solution of the Berlin difficulty at the present time. It does however, provide one more channel of possible negotiation through which a solution can be sought and achieved if and when the Russians should wish to have such a solution.⁴⁹

The objective was to provide a doorway to enable the possibility for negotiations; therefore they needed to ensure that the situation remained as flexible as possible to enable the Russians to enter negotiations when they felt it was in their interests to do so.

⁴⁸ Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in US Foreign Policy*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947), 29-35

⁴⁹ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 37/1, 15 November 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 2 p.1321-1323

Program A called for the creation of a German government which would take on the task of reunification, it advocated the complete disarmament and demilitarisation of Germany, with a mutual removal of military forces. This compromise would have allowed the US to remove the Russians from Germany, whilst enabling them to meet the security needs of their Western European allies. Program A also called for an end to the payment of reparations. The Policy Planners believed that this was the type of policy needed to remove the sharp division that existed in Germany. Kennan believed that Program A could achieve the long term goal of removing the division of Germany and therefore Europe. The containment strategy had begun to take the form of a new shape as Kennan started to develop a new approach. This is significant when we compare this to his previous approach on the German issue. This particular program was a significant move away from the division that had been implemented; however Kennan remained consistent as he attempted to move the containment strategy forward to achieve the main aim of protecting US interests through the containment of Soviet expansionism. The new policy suggested was a coherent approach to resolve the issues faced in Germany.

Program A was undermined by the official bureaucracy due to the opposition it faced from the newly appointed Secretary of State Dean Acheson who did not agree with the policy or Kennan's recommendations. It became problematic from the moment it was presented in which the opposition met ensured that Kennan failed to get agreement on Program A. This policy highlighted the differing views held by Kennan and his other colleagues. Another issue was that the plan was leaked to the public, which caused a backlash from both Britain and France who immediately spoke out in opposition to such a proposal. This prevented him from implementing a

coherent strategy for Germany and the long term impact of this was that the containment strategy was unable to develop a consistent approach whilst hindering its development. Kennan had wanted this plan to strengthen Germany which in turn would strengthen Europe, but the administration decided that the London Program was the preferred approach to solve the German issue.

Whelan argues that disengagement appeared to be a policy that was the very anti-thesis of the containment policy.⁵⁰ It is difficult to agree with this because Kennan structured Program A hoping to implement a political response to the German political and economic problems, which would benefit Europe by removing the division. Program A would have avoided the military aggression that had been associated with the Berlin Crisis, whilst still protecting an area considered of vital importance. This was consistent with his earlier arguments as he created a program that was directly focused on Germany, due to it being listed as a vital region. He looked at the long term future security of Europe as well as the balance of power just as he had done when he wrote the Long Telegram. Program A was intended to be an extension of the success that had been achieved through the Marshall Plan. The European Recovery Program was in progress and was showing signs of success, but as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, he needed to progress the strategy and maintain the same level of success. Kennan failed to convince Acheson that his approach was the best way of achieving US objectives. Program A became a fundamental defeat for Kennan because he had not considered the negative reactions that would

⁵⁰ Joseph G. Whelan, "George Kennan and his Influence on American Foreign Policy," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol.35 No 2 (Spring 1959), 196

be generated from the document. In discussion later in his memoirs, he accepted that he had made miscalculations on the issues surrounding Germany when he had presented Program A, but he continued to argue that he was correct in believing that the result of not implementing Program A would lead to the continued division of Germany and Europe.⁵¹ Even though he did fail to get agreement on Germany, Kennan consistently centred many discussions on the subject of Germany and he went on to advocate in 1949 that the main aim was to restore Western Europe, and work towards the inclusion of Germany into Europe. He commented that “The United States Government regards the problem of economic recovery in Germany as part and parcel of the problem of general Western European recovery.”⁵² Kennan was convinced that the US needed to respond, he stood firm with his convictions, arguing that the government had never provided a firm long term policy for the future of Germany, and that “there is no solution of the German problem in terms of Germany; there is only a solution in terms of Europe.”⁵³ Kennan continued to recommend a coherent strategy but this was undermined by Dean Acheson as he spoke out in opposition to Program A ensuring its public and official defeat.

Kennan remained consistent with the policies he thought the US government should follow when he discussed the issue of Germany during the BBC Reith Lectures in 1957. The lectures that he presented helped to stir up public opinion at home and throughout Europe, but his influence was waning at this stage and he no longer had a direct impact on US Foreign Policy. As

⁵¹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968) ,447-449

⁵² Paper Prepared by the Chairman of the Steering Group of the National Security Council Sub-Committee on the German Question (Kennan), 7 February 1949, *FRUS*, 1949: 3 p.92

⁵³ Paper prepared by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), 8 March 1949, *FRUS*, 1949:3 p.96

a critic and scholar of US foreign policy, Kennan accepted that his role had changed, “What I have tried to suggest here is not what governments should do but what they should think about.”⁵⁴ What was interesting about the lectures he presented on BBC radio in 1957 is how consistent he remained, continuing to argue that the threat from the Soviet Union had been a combined political and military threat, but overall it was more political. In 1957, Europe was still divided, and allied military forces still remained in the region. Kennan, as he had believed at the beginning of his official role, remained convinced that Germany was the key to the wider problem faced in Europe;

It involves the German problem not only because it implies the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Germany, but because so long as American and other Western forces remain in Western Germany it will be impossible for the Russians to view their problem in Eastern Europe otherwise than in direct relation to the overall military equation between Russia and the west.⁵⁵

The US needed to look at ways to achieve a peaceful resolution, and that meant the deadlock needed to be removed. Kennan saw reunification as the answer, but the only way of achieving this was through mutual withdrawal. Kennan, as he had argued in 1948, believed that the division of Europe needed to be removed. The lectures caused much controversy and he later acknowledged that he had failed to realise the impact his lectures would have or the fear that it would arouse in Western Europe.⁵⁶ As a critic of foreign policy Kennan no longer had a direct impact on the Policy Planners but he continued to advocate the program that he had suggested in

⁵⁴ George F. Kennan, *Russia, the Atom and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), vii

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p.37

⁵⁶ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1950-1963* (London: Hutchinson and Co Ltd, 1972), 260

1948. There is consistency in Kennan's work, but no coherent strategy was implemented due to the lack of influence on government decisions and the fact that people still disagreed with the suggestion that reunification was the correct approach. Kennan was unable to change the opinions of those in authority who had the power to change strategy. The continued division of Europe represented a complete rejection of his strategy.

Similar to Germany, the situation in Japan at the end of 1947 had deteriorated to such an extent that the Policy Planning Staff classified this as an area of instability. They recommended that this area needed to be considered within US strategy arguing that the "most immediate and important problem in the Western Pacific is strategic."⁵⁷ It was during this period that Kennan developed his strategic vision and concept for protecting Japan. One of the main objectives was to work towards stabilising Japan so that it could be integrated into the Pacific economy.⁵⁸ The Truman Administration had been planning a peace treaty for Japan, which was something that Kennan was concerned about. In PPS 10 he argued that;

The Staff sees great risks in an early relinquishment of Allied control over Japan. It has no satisfactory evidence that Japanese society would be politically or economically stable if turned loose and left to its own devices at this stage. If Japan is not politically and economically stable when the peace treaty is signed, it will be difficult to prevent

⁵⁷ The Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. 14 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.531

⁵⁸ Memorandum by John. P. Davies of the Policy Planning Staff to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), 11 August 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 6 p.485

communist penetration.⁵⁹

The concern was that if Japan was left on its own where they were responsible for their own decisions, the weaknesses that existed would make them susceptible to Communist influences. Kennan wanted to ensure that senior officials fully understood that they could lose Japan and its strategic position to communist pressure if they went ahead with the planned treaty. Due to this potential risk, Kennan and his Policy Planners focused much of their attention on Japan as it was not thought that it could handle the responsibility of independence on its own. Therefore, the Policy Planners argued in 1947 that the occupation of this country had to continue. Their recommendations in 1948 were that the US government should not press to implement a peace treaty and that US forces should remain until the issues were resolved. They remained convinced that until the Russian situation changed in a positive manner and Japan's internal stability was secure would they then be able to look at the possibility of complete demilitarisation. Kennan became actively involved in these issues by speaking directly with General MacArthur; it was following this in 1948 that the occupation policy in place was seen to go through significant changes. Kennan later reflected on this time, stating, "I consider my part in bringing about this change to have been, after the Marshall Plan, the most significant constructive contribution I was ever to make in government."⁶⁰ It was due to this intervention that a reverse course was taken on Japan and the US administration decided not to sign the peace treaty. This part of the strategy was consistent with the approach that Kennan took toward German rehabilitation, Japan like Germany was deemed as vital to US security and the balance of power. It was not ready to be left

⁵⁹ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) PPS 10, 14 October 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 6 p.537

⁶⁰ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 393

without protection, as it would leave it vulnerable to possible communist expansion. The problem with the discussions surrounding the Japan issue was that they could not agree to what should happen next, so the policy recommendations did not progress any further.

The key focus of the strategy in Japan was to be economic, it was seen that “Economic Recovery should be the prime objective of United States policy in Japan for the coming period.” They believed they could achieve this by improving its trade to include the Far Eastern countries. Consistent with the German policy, Kennan went on to argue that the US should not take any reparations from Japan and should oppose any future plans to do this under any new peace treaty.⁶¹ The strategic plan was coherent with the overall containment strategy; they recommended and put plans in place to build on their confidence and strength. In the long term he wanted the US to achieve this, so that they could then resolve the greater issue of occupation. This continued to be an issue that was unresolved, commenting in 1950 that;

As for Japan, we have here the most important single factor in Asia. We cannot, in the long run, continue successfully to keep Japan resistant to Soviet pressures by using our own strength as the main instrument in this effort... If we insist of keeping troops in Japan, their presence there will inevitably be a bone of contention, and the communists will vigorously make capital of it.⁶²

The policies that Kennan recommended for Germany and Japan show that his strategy was

⁶¹ Report by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) PPS 28, 25 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 6 p.694-695

⁶² Memorandum by the Counselor (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 21 August 1950, *FRUS* 1950: 7 p.626

coherent as it was an extension of his early work. Discussions focused on these two countries, as these areas were seen as key to containing the Soviets. He particularly favoured following plans that would be focused on achieving the economic recovery of both of these countries because the economic rehabilitation of each of these was a continuation of the European Recovery Program. If they achieved this they could then attempt to reduce the occupational control. Kennan wanted the US to put confidence back into these strategic areas, to stop them falling to communist pressure. These areas were vital to US security and prestige, losing their sphere of influence was not an option, these areas had a large industrial potential, one which they did not want to fall into the hands of the communists. The strategy was also trying to fight against the propaganda which was being publicised by the Soviet government. Kennan continued his work after he left the administration and we can see that he remained consistent and worked on developing his key ideas. We can see from the examination that Kennan ensured that his Policy Planners were coherent and structured when recommending policies for the containment strategy. However, as a Policy Planner he was unable to influence a fully coherent strategy because Program A and recommendations for Germany were rejected by Dean Acheson and key allies meaning he was unable to remove the division of Europe. Kennan was able to bring about some changes in Japan, but was unable to introduce a policy on the same scale as the Marshall Plan. Despite this the examination of Germany and Japan has shown that these two areas were picked out as strategic areas where the economic recovery of each of these was seen as the key to provide strength and confidence which would protect US interests. It is understood that each of these was considered the key to a successful containment strategy.

One key criticism made regarding the X article was its failure to distinguish between vital strategic regions. The Policy Planning Staff were under constant pressure, making it difficult for them to keep focus on the specific strategic regions. This is where Kennan's containment strategy appeared to be contradictory and inconsistent at times because the strategy was required to extend beyond these vital areas. This was caused through the fear of the domino effect and the repercussions of this on US security and credibility, which created problems for Kennan, as he made attempts to stop the containment strategy moving toward a global commitment. The key objective for Western Europe was to prevent the region falling victim to communist pressure, however this did not resolve issues beyond these borders and Kennan as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff was expected to assess all international problems not only those considered as a strategic interest. The containment strategy moved beyond Western Europe with the need for the US to show its strength, knowing they could not publicly be seen to back down to what many perceived to be Soviet pressure. In early 1947, it was argued that Greece and Turkey should be considered a critical area for the US and that any failure of the US to act would have serious consequences.⁶³ The problems subsequently worsened, which led to President Truman's announcement in March 1948 that the US would provide support to Greece.

A communist success in the face of US aid to Greece would have serious widespread political repercussions in addition to its significance as one more advance under the limited objective strategy now pursued by the Soviets toward their objective of world-

⁶³ The Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson) 23 May 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 3 p.229

wide domination.⁶⁴

This was an indication of the difficulties faced by the administration, which prevented them from limiting strategy to key areas.

The Middle East became another region that was viewed as important to the US; the problems faced in this area were assessed and discussed at great length by the Policy Planning Staff. They recommended that the US should remain united with the British to keep the area free from Soviet control.⁶⁵ In 1948, following these conclusions Kennan outlined that the security of the Middle East was vital to US security.⁶⁶

Palestine occupies a geographic position of great strategic significance to the US. It is important for the control of the eastern end of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. It is an outlet for the oil of the Middle East; which in turn, is important to US security.⁶⁷

Like Western Europe, the Middle East was considered an important region. Kennan and his Policy Planners wanted to maintain the political, economic and social stability within this region. The situation in the Middle East had forced the Policy Planning Staff to review the military and political policies already in place. The US interest in the region meant extending the strategy,

⁶⁴ Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary of the Council (Souers) NSC 5, 6 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 4 p.4

⁶⁵ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS13 Resume of the World Situation, 6 November 1947, *FRUS*, 1947: 1 p.775

⁶⁶ Report by the Policy Planning Staff, PPS 23 Review of Current Trends US Foreign Policy, 24 February 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.520

⁶⁷ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Secretary of State PPS 19, 20 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 5 pp.546-547

committing US resources to an additional area of the world.

There were additional extensions to the containment strategy, which included US policy toward the satellite states in Eastern Europe. The Policy Planning Staff concluded that “Our overall aim with respect to satellite states should be the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of preponderant Soviet power from Eastern Europe without resort to war.”⁶⁸ This was another inconsistency as it contrasted with the strategy where the US would only involve its policies and resources in areas specified as vital. The direction of foreign policy had begun to change as policymakers moved toward a strategy that would work towards achieving the rollback of Soviet power and liberate areas of Eastern Europe. A meeting attended by Kennan in 1949 recorded the following comments;

Mr Kennan explained that when we studied the European situation two years ago the decision was to put into effect the Marshall Plan to help save Western Europe from communism. This objective has been achieved to a great extent. Our objective now must be to obtain the retraction of Soviet power from Eastern Europe. If we can do this, war should not be necessary.⁶⁹

The success of the Marshall Plan had achieved the containment of the Soviets in Western Europe, enabling the Policy Planners to look at future objectives. By 1949, the containment strategy was moving toward a new policy of liberation.

⁶⁸ Policy Planning Paper PPS 59, 25 August 1949, *FRUS*, 1949:5 p.25

⁶⁹ Record of the 36th Meeting, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, 1 March 1949, *FRUS*, 1949: 5 p.9

The containment strategy moved away from Kennan's control as US policy began to be dictated by the possible occurrence of the domino effect following concern that a communist takeover in any region would result in the loss of US credibility and prestige. It was believed that when one country fell to communism others would follow. With the pressure mounting, the Truman Administration did not want to be viewed as being 'soft on communism.' The concerns surrounding security and credibility continued to surface having a significant impact on Kennan's inability to put limitations on the regions that the US needed to provide protection and support, forcing strategy to move beyond the strategic areas. The strategy was intended to focus on Western Europe, Germany and Japan, but the Policy Planning Staff provided recommendations on situations occurring within Greece, Turkey, the Middle East and other Eastern European satellite countries, their analysis concluded that each were important to US interests due to the individual circumstances. Security, the domino effect, the balance of power and US credibility were thrust to the top of foreign policy concerns; each of these ensuring that Kennan's strategy was limited.

On closer examination this did not reflect an incoherent or inconsistent strategy. As the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Kennan was required to review and present recommendations on any issue which could potentially affect the security of US interests. Kennan was in a position where he was required to respond to the issues as they happened. This assessment agrees with Gaddis who argues that the five regions specified as vital were not the

only interests.⁷⁰ Kennan's intention was to recommend and implement a coherent strategy that would focus on the regions considered the vital interests of the US. It was unrealistic to think that a country like the US with its superpower status would not become involved in issues beyond these regions. This led to the creation of policies that went beyond the original strategy intended for containment. This ultimately led to inconsistency that was beyond Kennan's control.

⁷⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 31

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MILITARISATION OF CONTAINMENT

As the containment strategy developed, military considerations were prioritised in all decision making situations in US foreign policy. This concerned Kennan because he argued that if the US continued to place military policies at the heart of Soviet-American relations, there was a greater possibility it could cause the war that they wanted to avoid. This chapter will examine what became known as the militarisation of containment. An assessment will be made to gain a full understanding of how this led to inconsistencies in the containment strategy and how it restricted the impact that Kennan was to have.

The containment strategy that was implemented by the Truman Administration did not reflect the strategy recommended by Kennan. In March 1947, the announcement of the Truman Doctrine marked a change in the focus of foreign policy. The administration had adopted Kennan's ideas as outlined in the Long Telegram and his lectures, but this was the end of the similarities. The language used in President Truman's speech was sweeping, indicating a universal approach to the concerns of communist expansion, suggesting that they would meet the threat wherever it appeared. This doctrine was created prior to the formulation of the Policy Planning Staff and its creation was in response to the situation in Greece and Turkey. Kennan was still lecturing at the National War College during this time and was not an official member of the administration; he was however invited to contribute to the early discussions, where he agreed that the US needed to provide support to Greece and Turkey. Later comments made in his

memoirs show that he thought that the main aim of any policy formulated for these two countries would be primarily economic, but this was not to be the case. Kennan interpreted the doctrine to be one that would provide mainly military aid.

I suspected that what was intended primarily was military aid, and that what had happened was that the pentagon had exploited a favourable set of circumstances in order to infiltrate a military aid program for Turkey into what was supposed to be primarily a political and economic program for Greece.⁷¹

Kennan did not want foreign policy to evolve into a military program. Harper has commented that Kennan's notion of containment was conditioned by his desire to bring military power under political control.⁷² The sweeping and universal focus of the speech led to his immediate rejection of the doctrine, particularly its implications because it was not consistent with the approach he had advocated. The doctrine appeared military in nature, and when it is compared with Kennan's lectures it went against the recommendations he was advocating. He particularly did not view the Soviet threat as militarily aggressive and concluded that a military policy was unnecessary.

When the Policy Planning Staff were created in May 1947, Kennan wanted to ensure that the first objective was to correct the misconception created by the announcement of the Truman doctrine. The recommendations made by the Policy Planners stated that the US needed to take specific steps to rectify this misconception. The doctrine had left an impression in some minds

⁷¹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 317

⁷² John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan and Dean G. Acheson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 187

that the US approach would be a “defensive reaction to communist pressure” and that the doctrine was a “blank cheque” providing economic and military aid wherever the communists were believed to have gained success.⁷³ Kennan was opposed to the military having the leading role in the strategy of containment. The Policy Planning Papers were structured carefully to ensure they did not suggest that the threat faced needed to be met with primarily military force. Kennan carefully composed these papers to ensure they did not lead to further misinterpretation. He remained in opposition with the creation of the Truman Doctrine, insisting that it represented a military universal doctrine. The administration continued to have a different view to Kennan’s Long Telegram on how to resolve the problems in Greece, they planned to utilise military methods to meet the Communist pressure. Kennan in contrast to their approach remained consistent with his earlier comments questioning whether this approach was the most suitable way to meet their objectives.

Kennan would continually emphasise that the US should avoid a military union, it was accepted that military aspects had a vital part to play in US foreign policy, but it was not intended to be the key focus. Whilst the possibility of creating a union with the US allies was being considered, Kennan advised the Secretary of State that a “Military union should not be the starting point. It should flow from the political, economic and spiritual union-not vice versa.”⁷⁴ Like the Truman Doctrine, the plan to introduce the Atlantic Pact was in contrast to his earlier

⁷³ The Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan) to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), 23 May 1947, *FRUS* 1947: 3, p.229

⁷⁴ Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 20 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p.7

recommendations. There was concern as the Atlantic Alliance marked another change in the direction that foreign policy appeared to be taking, adding to the representation that a different strategy was being implemented by the Truman Administration. The decisions taken by the administration ensured that strategy was focused on military objectives, something that Kennan was openly opposed to. During the early negotiations, Kennan voiced his reservations to the implications and impact that it would have on foreign policy. For Kennan, the Atlantic Pact and the Arms Program misled the public as he believed it provided a false representation of what the US really wanted to achieve. It forced people to view “the Russian threat as just a military problem rather than as a part of a broad political offensive.”⁷⁵ Consistently he maintained that the Russians wanted to achieve their objectives by political means arguing that the military alliance should only be used to play a role of intimidation stating;

A North Atlantic Security Pact will affect the political war only insofar as it operates to stiffen the self-confidence of the Western Europeans in the face of Soviet pressures. Such stiffening is needed and desirable. But it goes hand in hand with the danger of a general pre-occupation with military affairs, to the detriment of economic recovery and of the necessity for seeking a peaceful solution to Europe’s difficulties.⁷⁶

It was in the same paper that he concluded that the most viable option was through economic recovery and internal political stability. A military policy needed to exist to a certain extent, but Kennan did not want it to be the main aspect of foreign policy. He did not want the pact to appear

⁷⁵ Draft Memorandum by the Counselor (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 17 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 1 p.164

⁷⁶Memorandum by the Director of the Policy Planning Staff (Kennan), 24 November 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 3 p284-285

as though it suggested that war was inevitable.⁷⁷ This would undermine everything that the Policy Planning Staff wanted to achieve in Western Europe. The creation of this alliance shows that Kennan could not exert the same influence that he had on the direction and implementation of the Marshall Plan.

The events that occurred impacted on decisions made which led to the creation of the Atlantic Pact. This allowed the Soviet Union to be seen as aggressive, willing to use military force to achieve their objectives. However, in opposition to this view, Kennan remained certain that events in Czechoslovakia and Berlin were a reaction to the success of the Marshall Plan and the future plans to set up a separate German government; therefore he argued that the proposed alliance was unnecessary.⁷⁸ For Kennan, this was proof that the containment strategies put in place were working as intended. The eventual establishment of this alliance represented Kennan's lack of influence in the decision making process. However, Kennan did remain coherent with his original thinking which had been careful to avoid a military focus. It is understandable that he disagreed with the creation of this alliance because it was allowing the strategy to take a more militarised tone, just as the Truman Doctrine had done previously. The Truman Doctrine and the establishment of the Atlantic alliance showed the disagreement between the strategy favoured by Kennan and the strategy favoured by the department. His ideas had started to clash with the military branches of the government and this was making him and his opinions unpopular. This was a change to the influential position he had built up whilst at the National War College and at

⁷⁷ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1950-1963* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1972), 140

⁷⁸ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 401-404

the beginning of his role as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. Kennan did not feel that the alliance was needed as the political economic containment strategy he had implemented was showing signs of success. The proposal of this alliance, along with the Truman Doctrine, showed that Kennan could only exert so much influence; the final decisions did not rest with him. The proposal and decisions to implement a new alliance for the overall strategy was out of Kennan's control. It was here that the strategy was showing significant signs of inconsistencies, but it is understood that this was something that he could not prevent. The strategy that Kennan had been attempting to implement, that of a political, economic strategy were starting to resemble something else completely. As a scholar and critic, Kennan later reflected on these events and he argued that the Soviet crackdown on Czechoslovakia and the Berlin Blockade were reactions that were caused by the implementation and success of the Marshall Plan and NATO. The idea that they were looking for world domination which had created the negative, hostile and militarised attitude toward the Soviet Union had no substance.⁷⁹

As the containment strategy developed it became the administrations reliance on military policies that created problems for Kennan. It prevented him and his staff from implementing a coherent containment strategy. It was not that Kennan was completely opposed to military policy; he was realistic in that he accepted that the US needed to have their policies supported by a certain amount of strength. The difference between Kennan and his colleagues was that the government had allowed the Soviet Union to be viewed as a military threat, which had led to the

⁷⁹ George F. Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion, Soviet-American Relations in the Atomic Age* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984), 36& 81

more militarised tone. The militarisation of containment highlighted that the Truman Administration had begun to focus their strategy on the capabilities of the Soviet Union rather than their intentions. NSC 7, written in 1948, outlined that the main objective of the Soviet Union was the domination of the world.⁸⁰ This view was held in large sections of the government in which Kennan was opposed to. On certain occasions there was agreement with Kennan's ideas, an example of this was the examination of Soviet intentions something Kennan had always focused on. In 1948, they had agreed that the Soviet Union would not intentionally resort to military action to achieve its objectives.⁸¹ However, despite this recognition the discussions always returned to the subject of their capabilities, it was this which helped to change the focus of US foreign policy. The Korean War highlighted the issue of intentions and capabilities. Kennan had agreed with the decision to enter the Korean War, which went against his non-military approach, but he later claimed in his memoirs that he had agreed to this believing entry to be for limited means to restore the status quo.⁸² Kennan went on to make the following comments regarding the Soviets involvement in Korea;

The Soviet Communists did not launch the Korean operation as a first step in a world war or as the first of a series of local operations designed to drain U.S strength in peripheral theatres. They simply wanted control of South Korea; saw what looked to them like a favourable set of circumstances in which to achieve it now or time might run out on them. They did not think it likely that we would intervene militarily, and thought that if we did

⁸⁰ Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Souers) NSC 7, 30 March 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.546

⁸¹ The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State, 1 April 1948, *FRUS* 1948: 1 p.551

⁸² George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1950-1963* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1972) , 23

try to intervene we would get there too late.⁸³

Later in 1950, Kennan continued to insist that the Soviets wanted to avoid hostilities with the US that they would use all methods that would not lead to an outbreak of general war. The evidence suggests that a major problem was the administration analysed and prioritised Soviet capabilities over its intentions, Kennan looked at this subject from a different perspective arguing that the Soviets, being economically unstable would not want a war with the West. Kennan was unable to convince the administration of Soviet intentions due to particular events that occurred such as the explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Berlin crisis and the Korean War, all indicated the opposite of Kennan's arguments. These events influenced the opinions of the Senior Policymakers which prevented Kennan from implementing a coherent strategy as he was unable to influence the final decisions that were taken by the administration.

The Korean War saw the implementation of the policy document NSC-68, its primary recommendation was the build up of US military. If war had not broken out in Korea it is highly doubtful that this policy would have been implemented. The document marked one of the most important shifts in US foreign policy; again the most important factor for the containment strategy became the military focus. Kennan had resigned as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff in 1949 and this particular policy marked a firm rejection of the strategy he had recommended. NSC-68 argued that the Soviet Union was "animated by a new fanatic faith... and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world." It was seen that "the

⁸³ Memorandum by the Counselor of the Department (Kennan), 8 August 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 4 p.1224

fundamental design of those who control the Soviet Union and the international communist movement is to retain and solidify their absolute power.” The document concluded that the Soviets main aim was to destroy the US, meaning the US would need to take on the responsibility of a world leadership role. It was pointed out that this could potentially lead to war, where it stated that “the capabilities of the Soviet world are being exploited to the full because the Kremlin is inescapably militant.” It was argued that this was because the Soviets were developing the military capacity to support its design for world domination. This analysis led to containment becoming a military strategy, its main focus concentrated on the role of the military arguing that without it the strategy would have been no more than a policy of bluff.⁸⁴ The new Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Paul Nitze, concluded that the US military capability was inadequate for what was required to implement containment. The Soviets had started to build up their military capabilities and it was viewed that the US were beginning to fall behind. The recognition that the US were no longer the superior military force led to recommendations of increasing US military capabilities to meet this threat.

On examining NSC-68, we understand that the Truman Administration had rejected Kennan’s containment strategy; it was moving in a different direction. Kennan consistently argued against these types of policies, previously arguing that he did not want the strategy to be focused on military policies. However, there is incoherence in some of his work that he had previously carried out for the administration. NSC 20/4 was a vital document, its analysis

⁸⁴ A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary (Lay), NSC 68, 14 April 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 1 pp.234-292

contributed to the conclusions drawn on in NSC-68; it is difficult to understand how Kennan could be critical of this policy. The first section of NSC 20/4 points out that; “communist ideology and Soviet behaviour clearly demonstrate that the ultimate objective of the leaders of the USSR is the domination of the world.”⁸⁵ It concluded that the Soviets were building up their war potential in anticipation of war, which was now seen as inevitable and the capabilities the Soviets had made it dangerous for US security. The document did follow some of Kennan’s original thinking as it commented that the Soviets were not intentionally planning armed action, but that war could be caused through miscalculation so the US achieve its objectives by methods short of war. Some of the strategy recommended through NSC 20/4 did remain the same as Kennan’s earlier work however, there were many inconsistencies. Kennan had previously insisted that the containment strategy should not be a global or military policy but the recommendations made in NSC 20/4 suggested the opposite. It is difficult to see the strategy recommended by Kennan as one which was coherent. Strategy was formulated from the recommendations and assumptions made by Kennan and the Policy Planning Staff, this would have had a direct impact on how decisions were made, the inconsistency between earlier papers and NSC 20/4 explain the possible reasons for the change in direction of strategy.

The exaggerations made by the US administration, led people to perceive the threat coming from the Soviet Union as an aggressive threat. Kennan had wanted to avoid this perception and one of the reasons he eventually decided to resign from the State Department was

⁸⁵ Report to the President by the National Security Council, NSC 20/4, 23 November 1948, *FRUS*, 1948: 1 p.663

due to the change in the direction and implementation of the containment strategy. Containment had become more militarised and his objections and suggestions regarding certain policies had begun to clash with his colleagues. Kennan did have a specific strategy in mind whilst he was part of the Policy Planning Staff and the objections he raised on the military aspects of the strategy show this was not what he had wanted to be implemented. The issue with this argument is that Kennan showed an inconsistency when he wrote NSC 20/4. By 1950, the strategy no longer resembled the economic political containment strategy Kennan had wanted, it was this change along with constant clashes in views with the Secretary of State Dean Acheson which brought about his resignation. Despite the incoherency in some of the official analysis Kennan carried out, he insisted that military containment was not the right strategy for the US because he was convinced that events and circumstances meant war was not wanted by the Soviets. The problems Kennan experienced did not rest with his own inconsistencies but with his lack of influence in his official role.

Kennan would continue to argue that the Soviet Union did not want war but the militarisation of containment continued to increase with new developments made in atomic weaponry. It was nuclear weaponry that turned out to be one of the most important issues that Kennan would discuss. In examining his work, it is easy to think that his opposition to nuclear weapons started after he left the State Department, however this has shown not to be the case. In his memoirs he comments on his early years in the National War College, where he mentions that “There could be no greater protection for our own people against atomic attack than the deterrent

effect of overwhelming retaliatory power in the hands of this country.”⁸⁶ The containment strategy that had been formulated and implemented had begun to evolve in to something different as perceptions and capabilities began to inevitably change. For Kennan, the containment strategy was evolving, and needed to look to contain the use and development of nuclear weapons. The question here is how much of an impact he made on the administration regarding this issue. By 1950, NSC-68 had been created and the hydrogen bomb was in development. For Kennan, the proliferation of nuclear weapons intensified the focus on military policies and objectives. This signified a change in the thinking that Kennan had originally held on nuclear weapons, but this had been a gradual change, that had occurred consistently with development. After the atomic bomb was tested by the US at the end of the Second World War, it became clear that the US now held the superior force because no one else had developed this type of weaponry. Kennan commented in 1946 that the US now held a monopoly on atomic weapons, but argued that “atomic energy has changed nothing in the basic attitude and objectives of the Soviet Union with respect to us.”⁸⁷ His opinions would change whilst he was a member of the Policy Planning Staff, when witnessing the changes that occurred in the international situation. The approach taken by Kennan on the issue of atomic weapons in the early days as a Policy Planner show that he was not alarmed by the existence of these weapons. They were not considered an immediate risk or threat to the US as they were the only ones to hold this capability.

A change occurred in 1949 to the views and approach toward the issue of atomic

⁸⁶ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968) , 311

⁸⁷ Mr George F. Kennan to the Under Secretary of State (Acheson), 18 July 1946, *FRUS*, 1946: 1, p.861

weapons. The perception was that the US had fallen behind the Russians in conventional weaponry, due to this there was concern that the US was in danger of allowing their policy to become tied to the development and use of the atom bomb.⁸⁸ The change in these views on developing atomic weapons had been caused by the public announcement in 1949 that the Soviets had been successful in the explosion of their first atomic bomb. The decision had also been taken from the recommendations in NSC-68 that the US would develop the Hydrogen bomb. These developments and change in capabilities were to spark a new debate regarding the international control of atomic weaponry. Kennan wrote a report on this issue in the January of 1950, the aim of which was to assess the situation with the constant development of these weapons, he commented that he considered “it to have been in its implications one of the most important, if not the most important, of all the documents I ever wrote in government.”⁸⁹ The paper was coherent, as it gave a clear and precise view of what kind of threat the US now faced. The paper was different to the previous Policy Planning Papers he had written, as its intention was not to provide the final recommendations or resolution to this issue. What the document did was provide a detailed discussion on this subject. One of the key points made in this paper was that “it is not questioned that some weapons of mass destruction must be retained in the national arsenal for purposes of deterrence and retaliation.” It was accepted that some needed to be retained because not retaining them would have left the US in a vulnerable position. If the Soviets continued developing the weapons at the same time that the US was removing them from its arsenal. As he had previously insisted in all other policies aimed at containing the Soviets, Kennan continued to argue that for ideological and practical reasons the Soviets wanted to avoid

⁸⁸ Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, 3 November 1949, *FRUS*, 1949: 1 p.573

⁸⁹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950*, (London: Hutchison and Co Ltd, 1968), 472

nuclear war.⁹⁰ There was little change in his thinking; he knew that the deterrent effect placed the US into a strong position. This document was detailed, arguing that US policy should not become dependent on these weapons, and this meant that the US needed to rethink its levels of conventional weaponry. In the document there was not a call to remove these weapons completely, he wanted to prevent their use unless absolutely necessary, but there was an acceptance that the US could not abandon these weapons altogether.

One of the main concerns was whether the balance of power for the US had been significantly altered because the Soviet Union now possessed the nuclear capability. Kennan argued that “The probability of the eventual development of the weapon by others was not only one of the basic postulates of the original US position but actually its entire motivation.” For Kennan the concern now lay with the H-bomb because it now complicated an already intense situation.⁹¹ The threat of a possible attack where atomic weapons would be used became greater and the administration showed more of a willingness to rely on these weapons much more than they had done previously. Kennan’s conviction was coherent as he continued to persuade the government to only stock this type of weaponry for deterrent reasons whilst ensuring that a policy of no first-use was implemented. Kennan was passionate about the increased danger that came from the stockpiling of nuclear weaponry. The problem that he experienced was that he was unable to convince the administration that these concerns needed greater attention. As had happened with his objections toward the strategies for Germany, NATO and NSC-68, they

⁹⁰ Memorandum by the Counselor (Kennan) International Control of Atomic Energy, 20 January 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 1 pp.29 & 35

⁹¹ Draft Memorandum by the Counselor (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, 17 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950: 1 p.161

rejected his opinions. Kennan had considered the paper on the International Control of Atomic Weaponry to be one of the most important papers he had written, but he was unable to get them to introduce a consistent and coherent policy on nuclear weapons. The administration had reacted to the idea that the Soviets now had the capability to attack using nuclear weapons.

Kennan had a coherent approach to discussions on nuclear weapons, much of his work on this subject was written when he became a scholar and critic of US foreign policy. In this position he was consistent with the opinion that war was not inevitable. During the BBC Reith Lectures he was to discuss this;

What flows from what I have said is not that one should give up unilaterally the nuclear deterrent, or even that one should desist from the effort to strengthen the NATO forces in Europe. What flows from what I have said is only that war must not be taken as inevitable; that one must not be carried away by the search for absolute security; that certain risks must be assumed in order that greater ones may be avoided, and that NATO must not be strengthened in such a way as to prejudice the chances for an eventual reduction, by peaceful negotiation, or the danger of an all out war.⁹²

The BBC Reith lectures provided Kennan with the public forum in which to air his opinions and discuss the real threat of such weapons. However, despite these lectures Kennan was unable to have a direct impact or influence government thinking. Instead the lectures had a negative impact for Kennan as they created a large amount of criticism. This was another rejection, but this

⁹² George F. Kennan, *Russia, the Atom and the West* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 97-98

rejection did not prevent Kennan from voicing his concerns. The issues surrounding the development of nuclear weapons became a continuous feature of his work, showing he had a consistent view about how the US should approach the situation. The problem was with his inability to directly influence US strategy, but his lectures ensured that this subject was still at the top of the agenda. As his work continued to discuss this issue he worried that nuclear war could be started by accident or miscalculation. With the military now relying on the nuclear weapon it was thought that this could potentially bring destruction through the proliferation of such weapons or by accident.⁹³

The explosion of the Soviet atomic bomb and US decision to develop the H-bomb changed American-Soviet relations. As the threat grew more immediate; Kennan focused much of his work on atomic weaponry. There was a consistency with his opinions, but he failed to make a direct impact on the official decision making. Kennan was coherent and consistent with how the US should meet this growing threat; however the militarisation of containment and the introduction of nuclear weapons as the key military focus stood to acknowledge another firm rejection of his ideas and opinions.

⁹³ George F. Kennan, *The Cloud of Danger: Current Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 202

CONCLUSION

Kennan had an important impact on US foreign policy between 1946 and 1949 and it was during this period that he had the most influence on the implementation of the containment strategy. There have been many assessments and interpretations of Kennan's strategy of containment. This assessment has attempted to examine the overall coherence and consistency of this strategy and has been able to conclude there was not a single George Kennan which was dependent on the different roles he had during the Cold War. This affected the consistency and coherency of his containment strategy. In 1946, the Long Telegram attracted the attention of Senior Policymakers within Washington such as the Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, because the document gave them the reason and motivation to alter their foreign policy objectives towards the Soviet Union. This assessment has outlined that Kennan saw the expansion of Soviet communism as a threat to the interests and security of the United States. The evidence that has been examined has shown that Kennan was not outlining a specific strategy when he wrote the Long Telegram. The telegram did however bring him to the attention of officials in Washington, paving the way for his return and eventual move into the official bureaucracy. Even when he delivered lectures at the National War College, his ideas were still in the earliest stages of development. It was through these lectures that he outlined his thoughts and views on the direction of US foreign policy. At this time Kennan started to develop what would soon become known as the containment strategy. It is important to understand that his ideas were not the official line of strategy within the State Department; however they had a significant impact on his

audience. The Long Telegram and the lectures delivered at the National War College help us to understand some of Kennan's earliest ideas and enable us to assess the early development of Kennan's analysis and how effective he was at reshaping perceptions of the Soviet threat.

These documents were essential to this assessment, because they enabled us to understand the views that Kennan had prior to entering the State Department as an official Policy Planner. The Long Telegram and the lectures delivered at the National War College are examples of consistency with Kennan's ideas and arguments. The political circumstances and context had changed and from here Kennan was able to begin developing and setting out strategy. Kennan consistently argued that ideology provided the Soviet Union with the reason they needed to fear the outside world and to justify their rule under a dictatorship, it did not drive their foreign policy. It was determined that the threat from the Soviet Union was a political-economic threat; therefore the US needed to meet this threat using political and economic methods, as it was reasoned that like the US the Soviet Union did not want to become involved in another war. From this coherent thinking, Kennan suggested that the US should focus its main efforts on the rehabilitation of Western Europe, Germany and Japan. These were the main issues affecting his line of thought and it was from here that he began to develop a strategy.

The official audiences that Kennan was able to influence whilst working at the National War College led to an invitation to become the Director of the Policy Planning Staff. Kennan was not mandated to create strategy, but used the opportunity when assessing specific problems to develop the new containment strategy to ensure it represented an economic and political approach. The initial focus for the Policy Planners was Western Europe, where they assessed the

long term and short term goal of economic rehabilitation. This led to the implementation of the Marshall Plan which was coherent with the ideas Kennan had developed at the National War College. It was consistent with Kennan's earlier work because it was an economic policy that was intended to have a psychological impact whilst avoiding military conflict. The success of this program was the representation of a coherent strategy.

The publication of the X article appeared to outline the contradictions and inconsistencies in Kennan's thinking. The main issue with the article was in its ambiguous language which resulted in widespread misinterpretation. Kennan had not written the article with the intention of it being publicly viewed to be official policy and he did not want it to be interpreted as a global military containment strategy. The article had originally been drafted before he became the Director of the Policy Planning Staff; the problem was not in its conception but how it was presented. The article was issued as a public presentation but the revelation that Kennan was the author led to its immediate criticism as it was perceived as the official strategic plan. The article helped to contribute to the perceptions that the Soviet threat was an aggressive one. It distorted Kennan's vision as it made his strategy of containment look incoherent contradicting his idea that the threat should be contained by economic and political methods. One main criticism of the X Article was that Kennan was not focusing the containment strategy on strategic areas. This assessment has examined this argument and it has been proven that Kennan attempted to focus on the issues affecting Western Europe, pointing out the areas that were seen as vital. The article was presented to the public and needed to project a strong stance against communism to deter any future threats. It was not a true reflection of Kennan's vision, and strategy continually faced concerns over the domino effect, US security and credibility. The X article trapped Kennan

making it difficult for him to fulfil the vision he had for containment.

Kennan fought back against the misunderstanding that was caused by the X article focusing on key strategic areas that included Germany and Japan. These areas were seen as important to the rehabilitation in Western Europe and Asia. The European Recovery Program was one of the most successful policies the Policy Planning Staff was able to implement. This was implemented when Kennan's influence was at its highest. Policy on Germany could be seen as an incoherent policy because in 1948 he changed his approach by recommending demilitarisation and reunification. This was in fact a coherent policy, because it was in line with the implementation of the Marshall Plan. Kennan adapted his thinking to allow for further rehabilitation, he started to accept that the division of Europe could no longer remain if there was to be full recovery and he accepted that to achieve full recovery the division of Germany needed to be resolved. Program A was undermined and rejected by Dean Acheson which meant the division remained and prevented Kennan's strategy developing any further. Kennan had lost the influence he had once held and this had an impact on the coherent strategy he wanted to implement. The evidence that has been examined recognises that Kennan continued to argue the same points on Germany after he left official Washington and this was shown when he participated in the BBC Reith Lectures. This was consistent, but he no longer held a leading role in Policy Planning. The issue surrounding Japan was also important to the Policy Planners and like Germany they made recommendations about how the US should build Japan's stability. Germany and Japan were a continuous theme of Kennan's strategy, showing his consistent approach.

Kennan's strategy became trapped by universalism as the strategy of containment went much further than what was originally intended. Additional areas experiencing economic, political and military problems which were outside the strategic regions were considered to be vital to US interests and security. The Policy Planning Papers provided recommendations on issues in the Middle East, Greece, Turkey and other Satellite Eastern European countries. As a Policy Planner, Kennan was expected to look at other interests apart from the strategic ones, but this made his strategy incoherent and inconsistent. The strategy was out of his control as it was required to act on any situation where communism appeared to be advancing. This had been supported with the publication of the X article. The strategy Kennan wanted to implement was further undermined as the direction and tone of containment began to change. It began to take a more militarised tone, which was shown through the implementation of the Truman Doctrine, the Atlantic Pact, NSC-68 and the developments in nuclear weaponry. Kennan helped to contribute to this change with the recommendations made in NSC 20/4, which shows some contradictions in his thinking, but the assessment of his work shows Kennan disagreed with this type of strategy. He continued to argue against such policies, but he was unable to prevent these policies from being introduced. His ideas remained consistent but he was unable keep implementing the political-economic containment that he had consistently advocated.

Kennan continued to discuss containment, Soviet-American relations and nuclear weapons after he officially left the State Department. After resigning from his position as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff, Kennan was requested by President Eisenhower to be actively involved in a project known as Operation Solarium. The objective was to provide a detailed assessment which would enable the administration to make a decision on the most

suitable approach to take in foreign policy. The Eisenhower Administration had been left with the legacy left by the Truman Administration in which the main focus had been the implementation of the containment strategy. Eisenhower needed to structure US foreign policy to what they viewed as their key objectives. Kennan no longer held a leading position in the government; however his voice still carried which was shown with the request to contribute to this project where he was given the task of leading the first group known as Task Force A. The Eisenhower Administration wanted to evaluate all methods to ensure they implemented the most suitable strategy. Task Force A recommended that Eisenhower follow the containment strategy that had been structured by the Truman Administration. The problem with this recommendation was that between 1949 and 1950, Kennan had opposed the way the containment strategy was being implemented. President Eisenhower and John Dulles made the decision not to adopt Kennan's recommendations in full. Instead they collated all the recommendations made by each individual group to help formulate a new strategy.

The objectives that were outlined by Task Force A were coherent with the strategy implemented by the Truman Administration, both wanted to protect the security of the US and prevent further Soviet expansionism. A consistent element of Kennan's discussion focused on the inevitability of war. "The continued maintenance of US military strength to meet and deter Soviet threat will be proposed, War is not inevitable. It need not be regarded either as most likely or probable."⁹⁴ The Task Force stressed that the US had to stop giving the impression that war was

⁹⁴ Notes taken at the First Plenary Session of Project Solarium, 26 June 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954: 2 p.388

destined to happen. There were risks of war occurring through misunderstanding or miscalculation, but this risk was not particularly high. One of their recommendations focused on the US achieving the exploitation of the Soviets through the use of covert and overt methods.

The Task Force wanted the reunification of Germany to form part of the strategy due to the wider implications it would have for the rest of Europe. It was argued by Kennan and his team that a stable policy on Germany would lead to the reunification of Europe. This was consistent with the views that Kennan voiced back in 1947-1948, where he had called for economic expansion to help the war devastated region. What was coherent with this approach was the call for the US to promote economic expansion, indicating they wanted to see the creation a program that would be an extension to the European Recovery Program. The Task Force wanted to see a strategy that would take a stronger position on the unification of Germany arguing that there had been a lack of direction on this issue due to the lack of agreement in the government. “The future of Germany is, in large part, the determinant of the future of Europe. A new approach to the problem of German reunification is recommended which can exploit and intensify present Soviet internal stresses and achieve, in due course, the first major roll back of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe.”⁹⁵ This was coherent with the views Kennan had on Germany back in 1948. It is important to this assessment to see that he still believed Germany was the key to solving the short and long term problems in Europe. These beliefs ensured that he would continue to voice the opinion that the country needed to be reunified, it needed a military

⁹⁵ Summaries Prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium Presentations and Written Reports, Undated, *FRUS*, 1952-1954: 2 p. 406

force, and occupational forces be removed. There is one difference here between the recommendations made by the Task Force and the containment strategy that Kennan had implemented as a Policy Planner, which was the idea that the US should look to roll back Soviet power. This indicated that the Task Force were recommending that the strategy be turned from containment to liberation. This was inconsistent with the policy implemented back in 1947 as no rollback policy had ever been recommended by Kennan or the Policy Planners between 1946 and 1949. This type of approach would have contradicted the original strategy of containment, the original strategy was looking to prevent Soviet expansion; they had never intended to extend their objectives and push them out of the satellite areas. The comments made by the Task Force could be interpreted in different ways; it could mean they wanted to actively rollback Soviet power from East Germany or the other interpretation could mean the rollback from the remainder of Eastern Europe. This represents another example of the potential misinterpretation of Kennan's opinions along with the language that was used.

As a Policy Planner, Kennan had spent much of his time recommending policies that would protect areas considered to be of vital interest. It has been discussed that Germany was still considered to be a vital area just as it had in been in 1947. The Task Force, like Germany highlighted Japan as an important area. Other consistencies included discussions on China which had become a communist state, showing how much the world situation had changed. The Truman Administration had already viewed China as a hostile state and the Task Force continued to stress the same point. To champion China's power the Task Force suggested the policy in Japan to "be

directed toward making that country a main bulwark of free world in the Western Pacific.”⁹⁶ It was acknowledged that Japan would need to trade with China to enable a build up their economic strength. Helping Japan build up its strength economically was considered vital arguing that if the communists took control of Southeast Asia, US security interests would be at risk. The Task Force questioned NSC 153/1 which was interpreted as a document that suggested the US would be committed to intervene everywhere.⁹⁷ They wanted the armed forces to be maintained to protect the security of the US and ensure the defence of the strategic areas. This was to be achieved by building up economic and military strength, and exploiting Soviets vulnerabilities through political, economic and psychological means.⁹⁸ The aim was to avoid a general war. If they maintained US strength and the strength of the free world they expected Soviet power to deteriorate, which links back to Kennan’s comments in the Long Telegram and the X article. In building up and maintaining strength over a period of years they expected Soviet power to deteriorate or relatively decline so that it was no longer a threat. Consistently Kennan continued to argue that the Soviets ideological commitment was to destroy Western Capitalism. From this view the Task Force recommended that the US needed to protect its security, and prevent further expansionism.

There were no significant differences between Kennan’s early thinking on containment and the recommendations suggested by the Task Force. One difference was that it was

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.409

⁹⁷ Notes taken at the First Plenary Session of Project Solarium, 26 June 1953, *FRUS*, 1952-1954: 2 p.389

⁹⁸ Summaries Prepared by the NSC Staff of Project Solarium Presentations and Written Reports, Undated, *FRUS*, 1952-1954: 2 p.399

commented that the US needed to assume the strategic offensive. In doing this they would be providing the strategy with new confidence and flexibility. The recommendations made by the Task Force show that that they wanted future policy under Eisenhower to be a continuation of the containment strategy that had been originally outlined by Kennan and the Policy Planning Staff. Kennan continued to believe that the Soviets did not want war. They recommended that US strategy focus on the reunification of Germany whilst assisting with the economic recovery of Japan, showing that their focus was on the protection of US vital interests to maintain their strength. This shows Kennan remained consistent, but the only problem was inability to influence the Senior Policymakers.

Kennan attempted to remain consistent and coherent with his strategy of containment, which he developed in the Long Telegram and the lectures given at the National War College. In his official role as the Director of the Policy Planning Staff he was able to develop strategy to ensure it was implemented as he had recommended, representing a political-economic containment. The later work he wrote as a scholar and critic of US foreign policy remained consistent, which is shown with his involvement in Project Solarium and the public presentation of the Reith lectures. Economic-political containment, Western Europe, Germany, Japan, nuclear weapons, and the exaggerated perceptions of the Soviet threat were a continuous theme in his work. However, in conclusion the assessment has shown that Kennan failed to implement a coherent strategy because there were obstacles in the way. The X article was misinterpreted, which trapped him and made it difficult to implement his political-economic containment. Kennan failed to convince senior officials to limit the containment strategy to what he had

considered to be the main strategic areas that were of vital interest to US security. These contradictions in his strategy contributed to an incoherent policy, as strategy moved beyond containment. The rejection of Program A, the continuing division of Europe, and the militarisation of containment prevented Kennan from implementing a coherent strategy. Kennan lacked the influence and faced opposition internally from senior officials, representing the end of Kennan's official position in the administration. Kennan continued to remain consistent with recommendations for strategy which was shown in Project Solarium in 1953, but it also represented the defeat of Kennan's strategy as it moved from containing Soviet expansionism to the rollback of the Soviets. The strategy had moved beyond containment.

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