

Containing Russia

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

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It's longstanding US policy. In his March 18 address on Crimea, Putin was right saying:

“(W)e have every reason to assume that the infamous policy of containment, led in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, continues today.”

Western nations are “constantly trying to sweep us into a corner because we have an independent position, because we maintain it, and because we call things like they are and do not engage in hypocrisy.”

“Everything has its limits,” he added. “(I)n Ukraine, our Western partners crossed the red line.” They “act(ed) irresponsibly and unprofessionally.”

Putin had the courage to say what needs to be heard publicly. Containing Russia is longstanding US policy. It reflects US hegemonic ambitions. It risks a potential belligerent East/West confrontation.

As early as 1917, Washington and Britain wanted the new Soviet state destroyed. Three months before WW I ended, Britain led a multi-nation force.

At the time, Lloyd George was Prime Minister. Churchill was UK Minister of War and Air. Woodrow Wilson was US president.

Thousands of US marines were involved. They invaded Russia. They intervened against Bolshevik forces. They remained until April 1920.

So-called “preventive war” failed. At the same time, “Red Scare” propaganda was intense.

Political scientist Murray Levin called it “a nation-wide anti-radical hysteria provoked by a mounting fear and anxiety that a Bolshevik revolution in America was imminent – a revolution that would change church, home, marriage, civility, and the American way of Life.”

Newspapers hyped fear. Xenophobia raged. Industrial Workers of the World (IWW Wobblies) were demonized.

Latter-day mainstream media called them “radical threats to American society” inspired by “left-wing, foreign agent provocateurs.”

Labor strikes they led were called “crimes against society,” conspiracies against the government,” and “plots to establish communism.”

Dozens of Wobbly members were arrested. They were convicted. They got long prison

terms. The IWW was never the same again.

The infamous 1917 Espionage Act and 1918 anti-anarchist Sedition Act were enacted. Law Professor David Cole said Wilson “targeted alien radicals.”

“(He) deported them for their speech or associations. (He) ma(de) little effort to distinguish true threats from ideological dissidents.”

In 1918, the abusive Palmer raids followed. They continued into 1921. Wilson’s Attorney General Mitchell Palmer ordered them. He targeted Wobbly members and other left-wing groups.

He launched J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI career. It began in the Department of Justice Bureau of Investigation’s newly created General Intelligence Division. In 1935, it became the FBI.

A year earlier, the Special Committee on Un-American Activities was established. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) succeeded it.

From the mid-1950s through the early 1970s, Hoover’s infamous COINTELPRO (counterintelligence) program targeted political dissidents, alleged communists, anti-war, human and civil rights activists, American Indian Movement members, and Black Panther Party ones, among others.

In their book, “[Agents of Repression](#),” Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall said:

“(T)he term came to signify the whole context of clandestine (usually illegal) political repression activities...”

They included “a massive surveillance (program via) wiretaps, surreptitious entries and burglaries, electronic devices, live ‘tails’ and bogus mail.”

It was done to induce paranoia and “foster ‘splits’ within or between organizations.”

Other tactics included:

- “black propaganda” through leaflets or other publications; it was “designed to discredit organizations and foster internal tensions;”
- “disinformation or ‘gray propaganda’ ” for the same purpose;
- “bad-jacketing” to “creat(e) suspicion - through the spread of rumors, manufacture of evidence, etc.” to turn some members against others violently;
- “harassment arrests (on bogus) charges;” and
- “assassinations (of) selected political leaders.”

This writer vividly remembers December 4, 1969. Chicago police murdered Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark while they slept. They did so in cold blood.

In November 1968, J. Edgar Hoover ordered FBI agents “to exploit all avenues of

creating....dissension within the ranks of the BPP (using) imaginative hard-hitting counterintelligence measures aimed at crippling" the organization.

He targeted independent voices challenging America's imperial agenda. Soviet Russia supporters were prime targets.

Post-WW II, containing Russia became official US policy. US diplomat/ambassador to Soviet Russia/presidential advisor George Kennan (1904 - 2005) was "the father of containment."

He was a core member of so-called foreign policy "Wise Men." His advice inspired the Truman Doctrine. More on it below.

His 1946 "Long Telegram" from Moscow and 1947 "Sources of Soviet Conduct" claimed its government was inherently expansionist.

Containing its influence in strategic areas vitally important to America had to be prioritized, he argued. Cold War policies followed. Kennan was instrumentally involved.

In February 1948, his "[Memo PPS23](#)" said:

"(W)e have 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. (It makes us) the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships (to let us) maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national society."

"To do so we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives."

"We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world benefaction...."

"We should dispense with the aspiration to 'be liked' or to be regarded as the repository of a high-minded international altruism."

"We should (stop talking about) unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization."

"The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans (ideas and practices), the better."

In July 1947, his so-called "X" article [headlined](#) "The Sources of Soviet Conduct."

He urged "counter(ing) it "effectively." He stressed "containment, saying:

"The main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies."

He quoted Lenin saying:

"Unevenness of economic and political development is the inflexible law of capitalism. It

follows from this that the victory of Socialism may come originally in a few capitalist countries or even in a single capitalist country.”

“The victorious proletariat of that country, having expropriated the capitalists and having organized Socialist production at home, would rise against the remaining capitalist world, drawing to itself in the process the oppressed classes of other countries.”

He said Soviet power reflects “innate antagonism between capitalism and socialism.”

“We have seen how deeply that concept has become imbedded in foundations of Soviet power. It has profound implications for Russia’s conduct as a member of international society.”

“It means that there can never be on Moscow’s side a sincere assumption of a community of aims between the Soviet Union and powers which are regarded as capitalist.”

“It must inevitably be assumed in Moscow that the aims of the capitalist world are antagonistic to the Soviet regime, and therefore to the interests of the peoples it controls.”

Antagonism remains, said Kennan. “And from it flow many of the phenomena which we find disturbing in the Kremlin’s conduct of foreign policy: the secretiveness, the lack of frankness, the duplicity, the wary suspiciousness, and the basic unfriendliness of purpose.”

Russians will be “difficult to deal with” for a long time, he stressed. In November 1948, NSC 4 outlined “US Objectives with Respect to the USSR to Counter Soviet Threats to US Security.”

NSC 7 followed. It covered “The Position of the United States With Respect to Soviet Dominated World Communism.” It said:

“(A) defensive policy cannot be considered an effective means of checking the momentum of Soviet expansion.”

“Defeat(ing)” communism was considered “vital to the security of the United States.” It argued Washington should organize and lead a “counter-offensive” aimed at undermining Soviet strength.

It should “develop, and at the appropriate time carry out, a coordinated program to support underground resistance movements in countries behind the iron curtain, including the USSR.”

Kennan’s 1948 “Inauguration of Political Warfare” explained his ideas on how to conduct it. He discussed covert and overt strategies.

He included political alliances, economic policies, and encouraging underground resistance initiatives. He encouraged establishing “Liberation Committees” across Europe. He supported policies short of war.

“In the long run,” he said, “there can be only three possibilities for the future of western

and central Europe. One is German domination. Another is Russian domination.”

“The third is a federated Europe, into which the parts of Germany are absorbed but in which the influence of the other countries is sufficient to hold Germany in her place.”

“If there is no real European federation and if Germany is restored as a strong and independent country, we must expect another attempt at German domination.”

“If there is no real European federation and if Germany is not restored as a strong and independent country, we invite Russian domination, for an unorganized Western Europe cannot indefinitely oppose an organized Eastern Europe.”

“The only reasonably hopeful possibility for avoiding one of these two evils is some form of federation in western and central Europe.”

In March 1946, Churchill spoke at Fulton, MO-based Westminster College. He delivered his famous “Iron Curtain” speech. He titled it “The Sinews of Peace.”

He helped change the way Western nations viewed communist Eastern ones. In pointed language, he said:

“Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are its limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies.”

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.”

“Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe.”

“Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.”

Many analysts consider his speech the beginning of the Cold War.

In March 1947, Truman’s Doctrine pledged “support (for) free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

He aimed to keep Greece and Turkey from going communist. His policy applied globally. He initiated America’s National Security State strategy.

Establishing NATO followed. So did policy papers like Kennan wrote. Peace didn’t last long. Truman attacked North Korea. More on this below.

In April 1950, a Paul Nitze-supervised Joint State-Defense Department Committee National Security Memorandum No. 68 (NSC-68) was about containing Soviet Russia.

Inflammatory language called it an enemy “unlike previous aspirants to hegemony...animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own (wishing to) impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world.”

It claimed it at a time America was the only global superpower. Soviet Russia was devastated by WW II. Many more years were needed to regain normality. It threatened no one.

IF Stone's "[Hidden History of the Korean War](#)" explains a much different account than popularly believed.

In 1952, Monthly Review co-founders Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy wrote in the preface:

"This book...paints a very different picture of the Korean War - one, in fact, which is at variance with the official version at almost every point."

Stone's investigation into official discrepancies led him "to a full-scale reassessment of the whole" war.

Publisher Claude Bourdet wrote his own article titled "The Korean Mystery: Fight Against a Phantom,"? saying:

"If Stone's thesis corresponds to reality, we are in the presence of the greatest swindle in the whole of military history."

It's "not a question of a harmless fraud but of a terrible maneuver in which deception is being consciously utilized to block peace at a time when it is possible."

Stone called it international aggression. Huberman and Sweezy agreed. In August 1951, they said:

"(W)e have come to the conclusion that (South Korean president) Syngman Rhee deliberately provoked the North Koreans in the hope that they would retaliate by crossing the parallel in force."

He did so at Truman's behest. Multiple South Korean provocations gave him the war he wanted. Millions perished. Northern areas were turned to rubble. More wars followed.

"The northerners," said Huberman and Sweezy, wanted Korea unified, not war. They "fell neatly into the trap." Truman took full advantage. He instigated conflict.

Stone believed it saying:

"(W)e said we were going to Korea to go back to the status quo before the war, but when the American armies reached the 38th parallel they didn't stop."

"They kept going, so there must be something else. We must have another agenda here, and what might that agenda be?"

The same one he later learned initiated Washington's Southeast Asian war and others. Permanent war is official US policy. Containing Russia continues today. More on this below.

Post-WW II, the Marshall Plan (European Recovery Program) had little to do with so-called "huge gestures of (US) benevolence."

Economist Walt Rostow helped implement the plan. He called it one part of an "offensive to strengthen the area still outside Stalin's grasp."

In December 1947, then Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs William Clayton said if aid wasn't provided, "the Iron Curtain would then move westward at least to the English Channel."

While implementation was being discussed, he said America "hold(s) in (its) hands the powerful weapon of discontinuance of aid if contrary to our expectations any country fails to live up to our expectations."

Economic Stabilization Bureau head Chester Bowles was candid, saying:

"The real argument for the Marshall Plan is a bolstering of the American system for future years."

The plan was named for popular General George Marshall. Post-war, Truman's popularity fell sharply.

Putting his name on it risked public anger enough perhaps to get congressional rejection.

Marshall played the game. He pitched the plan. He delivered canned speeches.

He disingenuously claimed it was to relieve "hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos." It was about saving capitalism from communism and Stalinist influence.

Containing Russia remains official US policy. It's back to the future. The Cold War never ended. It morphed into new form.

Putin is public enemy number one. He's vilified more intensively than Soviet era leaders. In 2007, during his first term as president, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov discussed containing Russia, saying:

"The very (notion) appeals to instincts of the past. It not so much attests to the lack of imagination, but rather that for some individuals almost nothing has changed since the end of the Cold War."

"These people propose imposing the structure of international relations which took shape long ago in the Western alliance, to the present moment."

"The motives that dictated this policy of containment are making themselves felt at this new historical stage, as well."

"What kind of Russia should be contained," he asked? "What can be the goal of 'containing Russia' today?"

"A Russia that has renounced an ideology of imperial and other 'great plans' in favor of pragmatism and common sense."

"How can a nation, which has placed emphasis on its domestic development and is now progressing remarkably well, be contained?"

"Russia's consolidation through creative work has naturally been translated into the strengthening of its international positions. Russia's foreign policy is nothing more than the continuation of its domestic policy."

“We have realistic and understandable aspirations, namely: the maintenance of international stability as a major condition for our further development together with the natural evolution of international relations with the goal of achieving freedom and democracy.”

Washington and Moscow are geopolitical opposites, he added. Therein lies what’s at issue. Russia’s peace and respect for national sovereignty priorities are at odds with America’s imperial agenda.

Heightened tensions risk an East/West confrontation. Irresponsible US policy risks possible global war. If initiated there’s no turning back. Humanity’s fate hangs in the balance.

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