

# Russian Security State

## GOVT-5519 / IPOL-3519 / REES-5519

### Lecture 18. Origins of the Cold War

Yuri M. Zhukov  
Associate Professor  
Georgetown University

November 5, 2024

## Today's objectives

1. *Consider:* how a wartime alliance turned into a global peacetime rivalry
2. *Take stock:* how USSR tried to “catch up and overtake” USA
3. *Analyze:* whether Cold War 1.0 was preventable

# Sources of U.S.-Soviet Mistrust

## The World in 1945

## How did WWII end?

1. Germany:
  - a) Soviets in Berlin
  - b) Hitler commits suicide
2. Japan
  - a) atomic bombs
  - b) Soviet declaration of war

## Immediate legacy of WWII

- a) destruction, rubble
- b) 65-85M dead
- c) collapse of German, Japanese puppet regimes
- d) collapse of colonial institutions
- e) global power vacuum



Figure 1: Pid zavalamy



Figure 2: Lost empire

## Previous postwar settlements

1. Congress of Vienna, 1815
  - a) end of Napoleonic Wars
  - b) 5 European great powers  
(Austria-Hungary, France, Russia, Prussia, UK)
2. Paris Peace Conference, 1919
  - a) end of WWI
  - b)  $2\frac{1}{2}$  European great powers  
(France, UK, Italy)
  - c) 2 non-European powers  
(US, Japan)
  - d) 2 missing great powers  
(Germany, USSR)



Figure 3: Vienna



Figure 4: Paris

## What's different about 1945?

1. No peace conference
2. Marginalization of Europe  
(UK 'junior partner' to US)
3. 2 formerly peripheral powers now dominant  
(USA, USSR)
4. No 'grand' postwar plans
5. USA & USSR have starkly different views of world



Figure 5: Yalta



Figure 6: Potsdam

## WWII legacy for Washington

1. Relatively low costs of war
  - a) ~ 405,000 casualties  
(1700 civilian)
  - b) WWII not an existential struggle
  - c) no full mobilization
  - d) casualty avoidance
2. Economic prosperity
  - a) standard of living increased
  - b) unemployment down
  - c) wages, savings up
  - d) industry eager to meet high global demand



Figure 7: Happy Days?

## Postwar US interests

1. Free trade
2. Free movement of commerce  
(Atlantic Charter)
3. Economic recovery in Europe
4. Institutions for promotion of US  
interests around globe  
(United Nations)



Figure 8: World opportunity

## WWII legacy for Moscow

1. Extremely high costs of war
  - a) 28M casualties  
(> 17M civilian)
  - b) WWII = existential struggle
  - c) total mobilization
  - d) disregard for casualties
2. Economic devastation
  - a) damage to infrastructure
  - b) damage to crops, factories
  - c) major cities destroyed
  - d) famine of 1946-47
  - e) no post-WWII baby boom



Figure 9: Wrecked lives



Figure 10: Wrecked country

## Postwar Soviet interests

1. Security
2. Security
3. Security



Figure 11: Costliest victory

## Allies in War, Enemies in Peace

## Original Sin

1. “Second front” in WWII
  - a) Stalin presses for ‘second front’ in June 1941
  - b) but no allied landing in West Europe until June 1944
2. Military reasons for delay
  - a) strategic emphasis on Mediterranean, N Africa
  - b) lack of landing craft, forces for cross-channel invasion
  - c) US casualty sensitivity, domestic politics

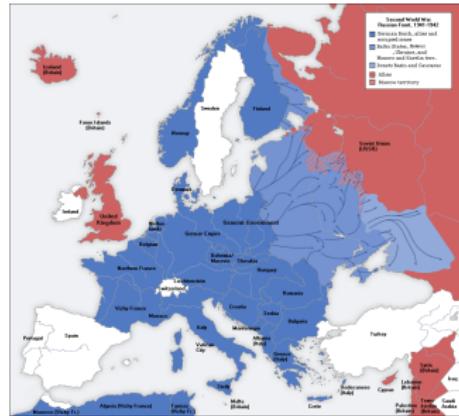


Figure 12: Alone together

## Soviet perceptions of delay

1. “Let them destroy each other”
  - a) military reasons are b.s.
  - b) real reasons are political
  - c) prewar conflicts with West
    - US, UK intervention in Russian Civil War, 1918
    - US doesn't recognize USSR until 1933
    - anticommunism in US, UK
  - d) US wartime aid (Lend Lease)
  - e) but US, UK still seen as “free riding” on Soviet war effort



Figure 13: Better late never

## Help wanted Position filled

1. After Normandy
  - a) by 1944, Soviets believe they can defeat Germany alone
2. Red Army in 1945
  - a) 11.3M troops
  - b) 24,500 tanks
  - c) mastery of offensive warfare
  - d) “unstoppable” march to Berlin
3. Military consequence of delay
  - a) Soviets occupy most of Central, East Europe
  - b) Soviets first to reach Berlin



Figure 14: We got this



Figure 15: Really, we're good

# Fighting the Cold War

## Origins of Containment

## Soviet-occupied Europe in 1946-1947

1. Baltics → USSR
2. Koenigsberg → Kaliningrad, USSR
3. East Poland → USSR
4. East Prussia → Poland
5. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria → communist
6. Yugoslavia, Albania → communist
7. Greece → civil war



Figure 16: A new map

## A New Order

1. What comes next?
  - a) Soviet security calls for 'buffer zone' in Europe
  - b) democratic governments in CE  
Europe ≠ pro-Soviet governments in CE Europe
  - c) debate in West: is Soviet behavior driven by security or ideology?
2. Stalin's speech to voters, 1946
  - a) blames WWII on capitalism
  - b) any bargains with capitalist states "bound to fail"



Figure 17: What he want?

## Kennan's Long Telegram

1. What kind of state is USSR?
  - a) is USSR capable of reaching bargains, sticking to them?
  - b) Kennan: 'no'
2. 'Sources of Soviet Conduct'
  - a) Soviet insecurity has domestic, not external causes
  - b) external threat needed to justify domestic repression
  - c) insatiable desire for security
  - d) no grand bargains possible



Figure 18: George Kennan

## Solution: containment

1. Third Way (not war, not appeasement)
  - a) ends: prevent future spread of Soviet power
  - b) means: long-term, inter-generational policy of containing USSR
2. Translation into policy
  - a) NSC-68: global containment (challenge USSR everywhere)
  - b) Eisenhower/Dulles: “rollback” (reverse Soviet gains, not just prevent them)
  - c) Kennan was critical of both



Figure 19: Bipolar world

## Solving the German problem

- a) German sovereignty dissolves
- b) 4 occupational zones  
(Soviet, US, UK, French)
- c) Allies divided over how these zones  
should be managed

## Fissures form

1. US interests
  - a) fear that communism will spread
  - b) US interest in prosperous,  
pro-Western regimes
  - c) German economic recovery  
essential to US plan
2. Soviet interests
  - a) German recovery anathema to  
Soviet interests
  - b) Stalin wants Germany weakened,  
incapable of action vs. neighbors



Figure 20: Germany, 1945



Figure 21: Bear hug

## Origins of NATO, Warsaw Pact

### 1. Timeline

- a) 1948: German currency crisis
- b) 1948: USSR blockades Berlin
- c) 1949: NATO established
- d) 1955: W Germany joins NATO
- e) 1955: Soviet Union forms Warsaw Pact with aligned countries

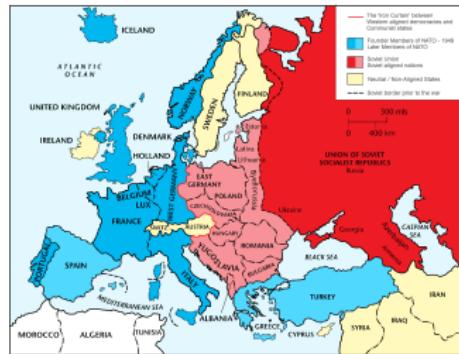


Figure 22: Europe, 1955

## What if?

The Cold War could have been prevented if...

1. Operation Overlord (**D-Day landings** in Normandy) had occurred in 1942 instead of 1944.
2. There was a clear **Soviet-American wartime agreement** on the postwar partition of Germany.
3. The U.S. had given Stalin an **ultimatum in 1946**: "Get out of Eastern Europe or we'll throw you out!"
4. **Stalin was overthrown** and replaced by a different Soviet leader.
5. No, it's **impossible**. The world's two strongest powers will always compete for security.

## Soviet Military Organization

## Fighting the 'Long War'

1. Soviet challenges
  - a) USSR enters Cold War with major disadvantages
  - b) WWII economic devastation
  - c) lower economic development
  - d) lower troop quality
  - e) political system that stifles initiative, innovation
  - f) multiple insurgencies at home
2. Soviet military model
  - a) adopted by communist bloc, many developing states
  - b) still common in ex-USSR, China, Africa, Arab states



Figure 23: Marching forward

## Command and Control

- a) highly centralized
- b) highly detailed orders  
(opposite of German approach)

### 1. Advantages

- a) 'coup-proof'
- b) cuts costs in training,  
communication

### 2. Disadvantages

- a) little flexibility
- b) underdeveloped NCO corps



Figure 24: Brass

## Economic Strategy

1. Permanent war economy
  - a) ensure rational, serial production
  - b) prioritize heavy industry
  - c) underinvestment in light industry, consumer goods
  - d) defense spending at 15-30% of GDP (US: 5-12 percent of GDP)
2. Other cost-savings
  - a) low-maintenance equipment
  - b) stockpiling munitions
  - c) investment in smaller navy ships, cruise missiles



Figure 25: Guns vs. butter

## Catch Up and Overtake USA!

1. Soviet military power
  - a) maintained active peacetime force of 2.6 - 6M troops
  - b) additional 20M+ in reserve
2. Soviet-US balance in 1985
  - a) 1.6:1 advantage in ballistic missiles
  - b) 4:1 advantage in tanks
  - c) 2.5:1 advantage in vehicles
  - d) 5:1 advantage in artillery
  - e) 1.1:1 advantage in aircraft
  - f) 2.4:1 advantage in warships

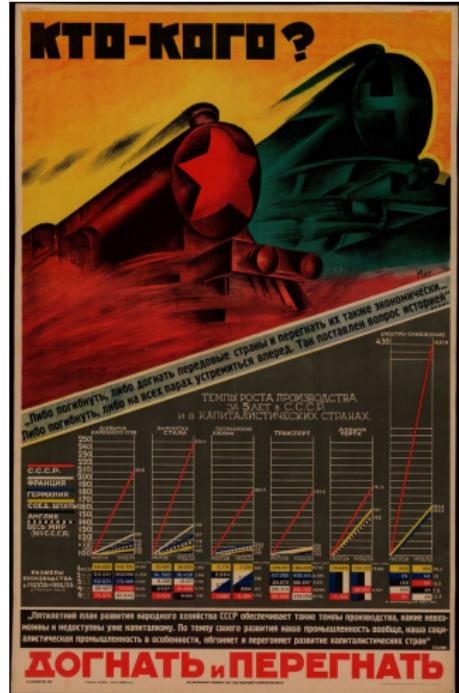


Figure 26: Race is on

## Taking stock: did the Soviets “catch up and overtake”?

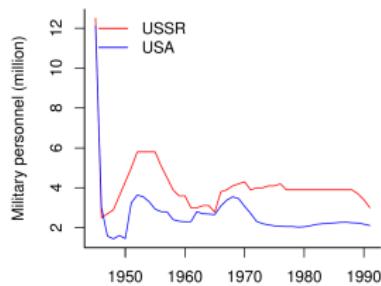


Figure 27: Mil personnel

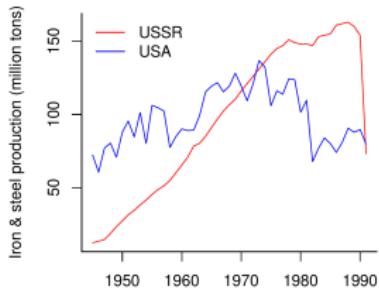


Figure 29: Iron & steel

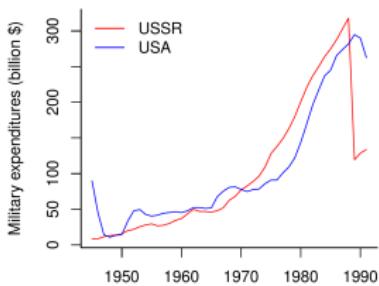


Figure 31: Mil spending

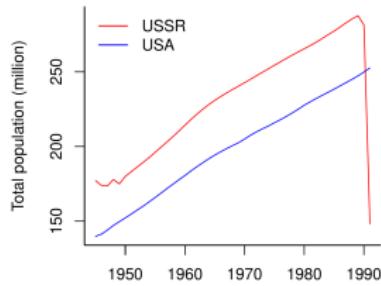


Figure 28: Population

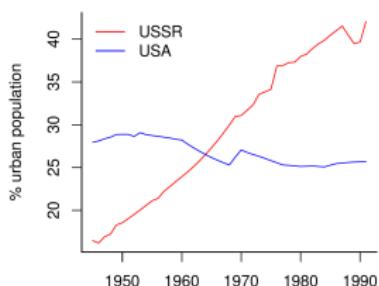


Figure 30: Urbanization

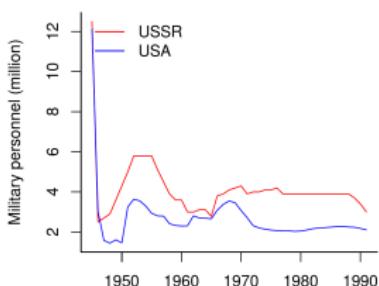


Figure 32: CINC score

*Discussion:*

Was the Soviets' emphasis on “guns not butter” the right strategy?

Would the Soviets' numerical advantage have mattered in a “hot war”?

# NEXT MEETING

*Nuclear Weapons and Strategy* (Th, Nov. 7)

Thinking about the unthinkable.

- Why did the Cold War stay 'cold'?
- Is limited nuclear war possible?
- How did the Soviets' understanding of nuclear deterrence differ from the U.S.?