

# To What Extent Was the Marshall Plan Implemented in 1948 For Ideological Reasons?

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## Section 1 Identification and evaluation of sources

This investigation explores the research question: 'To what extent was the Marshall Plan implemented in 1948 for ideological reasons?' The Marshall Plan was passed in 1948 and was an economic recovery plan for Europe, which was devastated following the Second World War. It has been seen as an economic extension of the Truman doctrine as an economic weapon to gain ideological influence in Europe. It has also been seen as an altruistic act by the US.

The relevance of a speech by Secretary of State George Marshall, published in the Department of State Bulletin of Jan 25 1948<sup>1</sup>, is that Marshall was the key player in drafting and in the subsequent implementation of the Marshall plan. His speech outlines the rationale for the plan, and is thus significant to my research question. A value of the origin is that Marshall was a key figure in devising the plan, and would fully understand the reasons for its implementation. A value of the date is that it was made two months before the Senate passed the plan, and offers an insight into the official reasons given at the time. A value of purpose is that it aimed to make clear US motives, and the content includes specific examples of how the US would benefit from the plan. The speech was also for an international audience and therefore the language of the content is diplomatic and reveals what the US wanted the international community to believe it's intent was.

A limitation of the origin is that Marshall was the main advocate of the plan and therefore would be subjective in presenting his aims. As secretary of state, he had to present positive motives for a US audience engaged in a confrontation with the USSR. As the speech was given at a time when Marshall was still campaigning for the plan, the purpose is to persuade congress and the American public of its benefits, and to gain support for the proposal. The context alludes to the real danger of the 'epidemic' of USSR influence in Europe, and suggests Marshall was inciting "fear" as a tactic to gain public support.

A value of Thomas Bailey's book "America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day"<sup>2</sup> published in 1950, is that the author is considered a reputable expert on this topic and was a professor at Stanford University.<sup>3</sup> Another value of the origin is that the book was published in 1950, giving Bailey the benefit of some hindsight. A value of purpose is that it was written for educational use, therefore Bailey could attempt to offer an objective

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 10, [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=LkvSAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA10&lpg=PA10&dq=it+is+idle+to+think+that+Europe+should+remain+open+to+american+business&source=bl&ots=7s1-gokYFs&sig=cKyrMyCeKQOHDV\\_CNQBoq6T-OL0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihrPWH073PAhVJLsAKHW8PBsUQ6AEIJzAD#v=onepage&q=it%20is%20idle%20to%20think%20that%20Europe%20should%20remain%20open%20to%20american%20business&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=LkvSAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA10&lpg=PA10&dq=it+is+idle+to+think+that+Europe+should+remain+open+to+american+business&source=bl&ots=7s1-gokYFs&sig=cKyrMyCeKQOHDV_CNQBoq6T-OL0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihrPWH073PAhVJLsAKHW8PBsUQ6AEIJzAD#v=onepage&q=it%20is%20idle%20to%20think%20that%20Europe%20should%20remain%20open%20to%20american%20business&f=false)

<sup>2</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 339, <https://www.questiaschool.com/library/636777/america-faces-russia-russian-american-relations-from>.

<sup>3</sup> Walter H. Waggoner, "Professor T.A. Bailey of Stanford Dies," *New York Times* (New York), July 29, 1983, accessed September 9, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/29/obituaries/prof-ta-bailey-of-stanford-dies.html>.

perspective. The content of the source is detailed, in-depth and references a range of US sources and archives.

A limitation of the source is that Bailey was working at a time when the Cold War was emerging. As publication was in 1950, key sources in the US would still be classified and the Soviet archive was inaccessible. It was written during the McCarthy period when anything deemed 'un-American' could lead to persecution or prosecution. Bailey may be influenced by the context he is living in. The purpose of the book is to cover US-Russian relations over a broad time span, therefore it may lack depth on the Marshall Plan. The language of the content suggests it could be subjective, describing the Marshall Plan as the US "holding the fort" against communism.



## Section 2: Investigation

On the 5th June 1947, General George Marshall gave a speech at Harvard University, which would eventually lead to the Marshall Plan, known as the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948. The plan passed congress on 3rd April 1948. Historians have debated the motives behind the act. This essay assesses the role of ideology and the fear of communism in motivating congress to act, as suggested by historian Thomas A. Bailey.<sup>4</sup> The role of self-interest, or “dollar imperialism”, seen as key by Noam Chomsky, who deems it a plan to “export and promote” American business<sup>5</sup>, and the role of European leaders in requesting US economic assistance are also explored.<sup>6</sup>

It could be argued that the Marshall Plan passed congress in April 1948 due to ideological reasons. Dean Acheson, as Under Secretary of State from 1945- January 1949, revealed in his memoir, that the Truman Administration was concerned that “the whole world structure was gone, and the struggle to replace it would be directed from two ideologically irreconcilable power centres”<sup>7</sup>. Historian Melvyn P. Leffler argues that the post war deterioration in Europe could have fostered communism; and the Marshall plan aimed to prevent opportune Soviet Union expansion.<sup>8</sup> General Marshall himself stated, in his speech at Harvard in 1947, that the main purpose of the Marshall Plan was to ensure “the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist”<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the ideological confrontation in Europe had intensified by 1947.<sup>10</sup> On July 2nd 1947, the Soviets stated their reluctance to take part in a Paris Conference to discuss European economic assistance. However, Czechoslovakia, in the Soviet sphere showed interest in Marshall’s aid proposal, Stalin stated that Czechoslovakia's position on Marshall aid was “intolerable” as it was an economic tool to gain ideological control.<sup>11</sup> In a coup in February 1948, communist regimes were formed in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in a direct response to US ideological pressure.<sup>12</sup> According to historian Chiarella Esposito, the communist coups were a key turning point in the Cold War as they

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 339, <https://www.questiaschool.com/library/636777/america-faces-russia-russian-american-relations-from>.

<sup>5</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, ed. Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (New York: The New Press, 2002), 39, accessed May 9, 2016, [http://www.aaronswartzday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Understanding\\_Power\\_The\\_Indispensable\\_Chomsky.pdf](http://www.aaronswartzday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Understanding_Power_The_Indispensable_Chomsky.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> William I. Hitchcock, *The Marshall Plan and the Creation of the West* in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, vol. 1, *The Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 157.

<sup>7</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present At The Creation: My Years In The State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969), 726.

<sup>8</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984): 364, DOI:10.2307/1862556.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks (February 21-June 5, 1947)* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), 283, <http://questiaschool.com/read/37108316/the-fifteen-weeks-february-21-june-5-1947>.

<sup>10</sup> Igor Lukes, “12: The Czech Road to Communism,” in *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, ed. Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 250, <http://questiaschool.com/read/25239109/the-establishment-of-communist-regimes-in-eastern>.

<sup>11</sup> Lukes, “The Czech,” in *The Establishment*, 251.

<sup>12</sup> Donald H. Norton, *The Essentials of European History*, revised ed., vol. 6, *The Essentials of European History* (Piscataway, N.J.: Research and Education Association, 1990), 151.

“launched the Marshall Plan”.<sup>13</sup> It was only this evidence of the expansion of communism in Eastern Europe, that persuaded Congress to pass the plan with an initial allocation of \$6,098,000,000 to be used as aid for Europe. Historian Thomas A. Bailey argues that the US implemented the Marshall Plan “to hold the fort against communism”.<sup>14</sup>

However, it could also be argued that the Marshall Plan was primarily motivated by economic self-interest. The historian Alan Milward, in his book “The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51”, challenged the common conception that the Marshall Plan was the main factor behind European post-war economic recovery, and argues that it benefited the US economically more than Europe<sup>15</sup>. By late 1947, Britain and France had both achieved industrial production levels superior to their pre-war levels, without the need for Marshall aid.<sup>16</sup> The Marshall plan was not established until April 1948, which suggests that it was not entirely responsible for the European post-war economy.<sup>17</sup> US aid only began arriving between May and June 1948. The Danish government believed that it was aimed at helping the US to prevent its own economic recession, by increasing US exports to Europe.<sup>18</sup> Historian William I. Hitchcock argues that “the overall European picture was threatening American economic interests”.<sup>19</sup> Even after aid arrived it had a limited impact. Between July 1948 and June 1949, Marshall aid constituted a mere 2.4% of Britain’s GNP, while in Italy and Germany, the aid totalled just 5.3% and 2.9% respectively.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in accordance with Section 115, clause b, part 6 of the Foreign Assistance Act, Marshall Aid recipients were obliged to deposit sums of money in their local currency “equal to the dollar value of imports provided by the Marshall Plan”.<sup>21</sup> In total, \$8.6 billion was collected in the form of “counterpart funds”.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the Economic Cooperation Administration pressurised the French into establishing deflationary policies.<sup>23</sup> Thus, aid given by the US was insufficient to produce a European recovery; the Europeans initially requested \$28.2 billion over the course of four years, but that was seen as “out of the question”<sup>24</sup>, and the amount was reduced to \$13 billion.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, most of the ‘aid dollars’ remained in the

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<sup>13</sup> Chiarella Esposito, *America’s Feeble Weapon: Funding the Marshall Plan in France and Italy, 1948-1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 29, <http://questiaschool.com/read/102611973/america-s-feeble-weapon-funding-the-marshall-plan>.

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, *America Faces*, 339.

<sup>15</sup> John Agnew and Nicholas Entrikin, “Introduction: The Marshall Plan as Model and Metaphor,” introduction to *The Marshall Plan Today: Model and Metaphor*, ed. John Agnew and J. Nicholas Entrikin (London: Routledge, 2004), 2, <http://questiaschool.com/read/108516925/the-marshall-plan-today-model-and-metaphor>.

<sup>16</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*, 159.

<sup>18</sup> Vibeke Sørensen, *Denmark’s Social Democratic Government and the Marshall Plan, 1947-1950*, ed. Mogens Rüdiger (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2001), 49, <http://questiaschool.com/read/117935267/denmark-s-social-democratic-government-and-the-marshall>.

<sup>19</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*, 155.

<sup>20</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*, 160.

<sup>21</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony: State Power, Labour and the Marshall Plan in Britain* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Publishers, 2000), 40, <http://questiaschool.com/read/101528739/manipulating-hegemony-state-power-labour-and-the>.

<sup>22</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony: State Power, Labour and the Marshall Plan in Britain* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Publishers, 2000), 40, <http://questiaschool.com/read/101528739/manipulating-hegemony-state-power-labour-and-the>.

<sup>23</sup> Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Vickers, *Manipulating Hegemony*, 43.

US. 25% of wheat products imported to Europe were “required” to be milled in the US.<sup>26</sup> Marshall indicated in his speeches that there was an aspect of US self interest behind the Marshall Plan warning that Europe may not “remain open to American business” without the plan.<sup>27</sup> The US also benefited from repayments of Marshall aid. In 1953, it was agreed that Germany would repay \$1.1 billion back to the US. Most of the repayments were paid by June 1971, the last payment was made in 1983.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, It could be argued that the Marshall Plan was an act of US altruism. Dean Acheson expressed this idea in his memoir, stating that Europe was on the verge of “headlong destruction”, and “millions would have died” if no action had been taken.<sup>29</sup> It was clear that the Europeans desperately needed economic aid in 1947. At a conference held in Paris, Ernest Bevin, George Bidaut and Vyacheslav Molotov discussed a response to Marshall’s speech of June 5th.<sup>30</sup> Only Molotov was hostile towards aid, Bevin and Bidaut expressed great enthusiasm.<sup>31</sup> Even the reluctant Danish government, after a bad harvest in 1947, requested aid from the US.<sup>32</sup> On 12th July 1947, Bevin and Bidaut formed the Committee of European Economic Cooperation<sup>33</sup>, where European states could agree specific requests for US aid.<sup>34</sup> Aid provided by the US positively impacted European economies, and was crucial in resolving Europe’s dollar shortfall in 1947<sup>35</sup>. During a speech to the House of Commons in January 22 1948, Ernest Bevin stated that “ the time is ripe for a consolidation of Western Europe”.<sup>36</sup> The aid increased confidence in democratic European governments and stabilized their economies.<sup>37</sup> In France, it was used to support the “Monnet Plan”, and to acquire raw materials for use in industrial production.<sup>38</sup> Heavy industrial output soared by 42% in 1952, and exports equalled import levels.<sup>39</sup> By 1951, total GNP in Europe had risen by 32.5% from its level in 1947, to approximately \$159 billion. Trade between

<sup>26</sup> Diane B. Kunz, "Marshall Plan Commemorative Section: The Marshall Plan Reconsidered: A Complex of Motives," Foreign Affairs, May/June 1997, accessed April 30, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/1997-05-01/marshall-plan-commemorative-section-marshall-plan-reconsidered-complex#>.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 10, [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=LkvSAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA10&lpg=PA10&dq=it+is+idle+to+think+that+Europe+should+remain+open+to+american+business&source=bl&ots=7s1-gokYFs&sig=cKyrMyCeKQOHDV\\_CNQBoq6T-OL0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihrPWHo73PAhVJLsAKHW8PBsUQ6AEIJzAD#v=onepage&q=it%20is%20idle%20to%20think%20that%20Europe%20should%20remain%20open%20to%20american%20business&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=LkvSAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA10&lpg=PA10&dq=it+is+idle+to+think+that+Europe+should+remain+open+to+american+business&source=bl&ots=7s1-gokYFs&sig=cKyrMyCeKQOHDV_CNQBoq6T-OL0&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihrPWHo73PAhVJLsAKHW8PBsUQ6AEIJzAD#v=onepage&q=it%20is%20idle%20to%20think%20that%20Europe%20should%20remain%20open%20to%20american%20business&f=false).

<sup>28</sup> Timothy W. Guinnane, *Financial Vergangenheitsbewältigung: The 1953 London Debt Agreement*, report no. 880, 20, July 2015, accessed may 10, 2016, [http://aida.econ.yale.edu/growth\\_pdf/cdp880.pdf](http://aida.econ.yale.edu/growth_pdf/cdp880.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present At The Creation: My Years In The State Department*(New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969), 231-32.

<sup>30</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,157.

<sup>31</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,157.

<sup>32</sup> Sørensen, *Denmark's Social*, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,158.

<sup>34</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,158.

<sup>35</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,160.

<sup>36</sup> Ernest Bevin, "Address Given by Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons," speech presented at House of Commons, London, January 22, 1948, [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), accessed May 8, 2016, [http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfd204c/publishable\\_en.pdf](http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfd204c/publishable_en.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,160.

<sup>38</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,160.

<sup>39</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,161.



European states also increased.<sup>40</sup> In addition, Marshall aid arguably “kickstarted” the West German economy, as Historian Charles S. Maier suggests the aid acted as “lubricant in an engine”, in a structure that would have otherwise buckled.<sup>41</sup> In fact, Germany experienced the “Wirtschaftswunder” in the 1950’s, as production tripled, exports also increased six fold.<sup>42</sup> The London Debt Agreement of 1953, suggests that the US was not driven by self interest, and was willing to make considerable economic sacrifices for the sake of a European recovery, as it cut the German debt by 50%, and repayment was extended by 30 years.<sup>43</sup> Economist Barry Eichengreen believes the Marshall Plan was “essential and altruistic in its development of the fragile European economies”.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion US ideology was a key causal factor in the implementation of the Marshall plan. The US fear of the threat posed by Soviet communism spreading in Europe had intensified, and the Czechoslovak coup of 1948 was the ideological catalyst for the plan passing congress. However, there was also an element of economic self-interest, as the plan ensured that the US economy would not suffer a post war recession and guaranteed access to Europe’s markets. Nevertheless, considerable aid was evidently needed and requested by European leaders, including Bidaut and Bevin, and there was a dynamic of attrition in the US’s long term support of an economic recovery in Western Europe.

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<sup>40</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,172.

<sup>41</sup> Charles S. Maier, *The Two Postwar Eras and the Conditions for Stability in Twentieth-Century Western Europe*, report no. American Historical Review 86(2),342, 1981, accessed May 12, 2016, [https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4727674/maier\\_2postwar.pdf?sequence=2](https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/4727674/maier_2postwar.pdf?sequence=2).

<sup>42</sup> Hitchcock, the marshall plan and the creation of the west to *The Cambridge*,163.

<sup>43</sup> Guinnane, *Financial Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> John Agnew and Nicholas Entrikin, "Introduction: The Marshall Plan as Model and Metaphor," introduction to *The Marshall Plan Today: Model and Metaphor*, ed. John Agnew and J. Nicholas Entrikin (London: Routledge, 2004), 2, <http://questiaschool.com/read/108516925/the-marshall-plan-today-model-and-metaphor>.

### Section 3: Reflection

Through this investigation, I have begun to understand the challenges historians face in their work. For my secondary sources, I looked at works of reputable and experienced historians such as Thomas A. Bailey, a Stanford Professor's "America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day", and Alan Milward's "The Reconstruction of Western Europe". I learned how political views and historical context can influence the accounts of historians. Bailey, working in America during the McCarthy period in the 1950s believed the plan was in fact US altruism, and a way to combat the aggressive expansionism of the USSR.<sup>45</sup> While Historian Alan Milward, writing during a 'revisionist' period of historiography on this period, argues in line with the prevalent perspective on US Foreign policy predominant in the 1970s and 1980s, that the plan was a case of "dollar imperialism".<sup>46</sup>

In addition, issues with the limitations of primary sources were also made clear to me. I utilized speeches and documents from US and British national archives, including Ernest Bevin's speech to the House of Commons in January 1948. Primary sources often only presented the political and official stance regarding the plan at the time, Bevin warns of the threat posed by the spread of communism<sup>47</sup>, and would present a view that would gain 'popular' and public support for Marshall aid.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, although US archives are accessible, private communiqués and meetings were not available to me and therefore, my analysis is limited to the use of evidence available. Melvyn P Leffler's work was published in 1984<sup>49</sup>, when sensitive American sources were classified, and the Soviet Archive was inaccessible; access to these sources may have completely changed a historian's perspective.

Finally, my own perspective on the plan was influenced by my cultural background and education in international schools in Jordan and England. Therefore, I was more open to the idea of 'dollar' imperialism as a US motive as I have been taught and have read about US interference in other states in the post-war period. I also had to omit evidence and was unable to develop arguments, such as the role of US domestic political interests as a factor in passing the Marshall Plan. Historians may also have this challenge when writing their historical accounts.

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<sup>45</sup>Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Day* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950), 339,

<sup>46</sup>John Agnew and Nicholas Entrikin, "Introduction: The Marshall Plan as Model and Metaphor," introduction to *The Marshall Plan Today: Model and Metaphor*, ed. John Agnew and J. Nicholas Entrikin (London: Routledge, 2004), 2, <http://questiaschool.com/read/108516925/the-marshall-plan-today-model-and-metaphor>.

<sup>47</sup>Ernest Bevin, "Address Given by Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons," speech presented at House of Commons, London, January 22, 1948, [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), accessed May 8, 2016, [http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfbd204c/publishable\\_en.pdf](http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfbd204c/publishable_en.pdf).

<sup>48</sup>Ernest Bevin, "Address Given by Ernest Bevin to the House of Commons," speech presented at House of Commons, London, January 22, 1948, [www.cvce.eu](http://www.cvce.eu), accessed May 8, 2016, [http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfbd204c/publishable\\_en.pdf](http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/9/7bc0ecbd-c50e-4035-8e36-ed70bfbd204c/publishable_en.pdf).

<sup>49</sup>Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984): 364, DOI:10.2307/1862556.



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