

Question: Contrast the Kennan approach to relations with the Soviet Union with that of the NSC-68.

Answer: Kennan's code was regional, while the NSC-68 forwarded a global strategy that perceived the Cold War as a fundamentally ideological and irreconcilable confrontation. Kennan acknowledged the particularities of Russian history. In contrast, the NSC-68 was less sensitive to regional diversity and saw the Soviet Union as part of a unified, monolithic adversary. The following policy prescriptions demonstrate these differences.

Kennan:

- Containment through economic means; American capitalism as something the Soviets would seek to emulate in the future. Soviet economic system is weak.
- Advocated use of local troops.
- Diplomacy as central to the strategy of containment. U.S. policy should not contribute to Soviet paranoia by antagonizing them.
- Proposed selective containment in order to deny the Soviets key areas; these points of containment can shift.
- The Soviet Union was only a threat if they attempted to upset the balance of power in the international system.
- US military means for containing the Soviets are limited in scope.
- Rebuild Europe and Japan to restore the balance of power and act against Soviet interests, so that there is a form of equilibrium in the international system.

NSC-68

- Containment through proactive military means.
- Called for a major commitment of U.S. forces
- Diplomacy is unimportant, and negotiation is impossible. A forward U.S. policy will intimidate the Soviet leadership.
- Complete containment of the Soviet Union—exclude any and all influence.
- Saw the Soviet Union as constant military threat—Cold War was a fundamentally ideological confrontation.
- U.S. military means are unlimited in combating this threat.
- U.S. should not maintain a balance of power, but constantly and actively strive to frustrate the Kremlin design.