

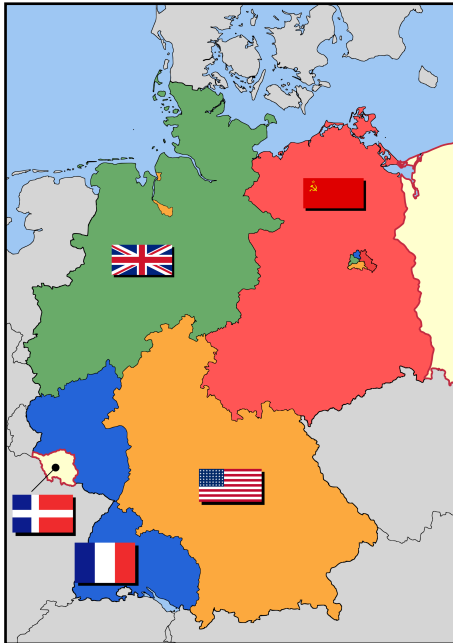
D. The World Police Power Emerges Once and For All: The Truman Doctrine (1947)

1. The incomparable role that today's United States plays in human affairs as the "world police power" was a long time in the making.
2. After the first small step taken in the Spanish-American War, the first major break with the early American tradition of political separation came in World War I, and despite an attempt to return to earlier ways, World War II catapulted America into the role of saving the world from itself yet again.
3. Then, having done so, the United States found itself in a new situation to which it felt compelled to respond by *policing* the world.
4. As part of the war effort against imperial Japan and its ally Nazi Germany, the United States had forged a temporary alliance with Russia. America and Russia had no basis for an alliance other than sharing a common enemy. (Russia had adopted a form of government called "*communism*," a form of dictatorship in which no individual has the right to the "pursuit of happiness," but rather all property is controlled by the government.)
5. With Germany completely defeated in Europe and Japan completely defeated in Asia, the United States and Russia had achieved their common war aims, and their opposite priorities became clear. The United States had liberated western Europe; instead of liberating eastern Europe, however, Russia conquered its peoples and forced them to accept communist governments.
6. At that point the United States was faced with a great dilemma. Having fought an enormous war to liberate the world from the empires of Germany and Japan, could America simply retreat back to its borders, and allow communist Russia to impose a different kind of empire on Europe, and possibly much else of the world?
7. Faced with this situation, president Harry Truman made a momentous decision: America's military would begin a new mission: to police the world. It would be *permanently* stationed around the world, to prevent communism from being imposed by force anywhere else.
8. The key passage of the **Truman Doctrine** is "*I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures...I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.*"

E. The Truman Doctrine in Action

1. With United States taking on the role of protecting Europe, Russia wanted to know if America was serious, and just how far it would go.
2. Germany had been divided by its conquerors into multiple zones. Russia had been assigned one of those zones, surrounding the capital city of Berlin, which had also been divided between the four major powers that defeated Germany.
3. Since the Russian zone completely surrounded Berlin, the Russians believed they might be able to force their former allies out by blockading the city.

4. They shut down all road and rail traffic into the city, to see whether or not they could get their allies turned rivals to leave the city.
5. The United States responded by enacting the *Berlin Airlift* in **1948**. This kept the city of Berlin alive for a year, and proved how far America was willing to go to protect Europe from Russia.



The occupation zones of Germany (map left) included an eastern zone under Russian control, and the city of Berlin inside of that zone, divided between the major allies. When Russia blockaded Berlin by land, the United States conducted the almost unimaginable feat of keeping the city alive by supplying it exclusively by air. The Berlin Airlift proved how far America was willing to go, to protect Europe from Russia.

6. Russia was forced to back down, and suffered a major blow to its prestige. America, on the other hand, had become Europe's heroic savior.
7. To cement this protective role, the United States agreed to the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* in **1949**.
8. NATO is a defensive alliance between the United States and Canada on one side of the Atlantic ocean, and western Europe on the other side. It has stood since **1949**, and was successful in its mission.

#### F. Police Actions in Korea and Vietnam

1. In **1949**, just as Western Europe's fate was being secured, China became a communist country, after a long civil war.
2. This represented a frightening prospect for the world, and the United States became much more concerned about the fate of East Asia.

3. At the end of World War II, Russia has invaded Japanese-held northern Korea, and was assisting Korean communists to create a new government there, while the United States was trying to create a competing government in southern Korea. Just like in Germany, the two occupation zones were dividing a country that had once been united.
4. In **1950**, the communists in the North invaded southern Korea, with the intention of imposing their government on the whole country. America responded by a police action that is known as the **Korean War (1950-3)**.
5. As the war raged on, China committed a million troops to help the communists, and America eventually tired of the conflict, not having a clear mission, and certainly not being driven by a pressing self-defense need. An armistice (a truce) was agreed upon and Korea was divided into two countries—North Korea and South Korea—which technically remain at war to this day.
6. Following a communist revolution in Cuba, in which the United States opted not to intervene, a communist takeover of Vietnam (in Southeast Asia) seemed imminent, and the United States against decided to act as the world police.
7. When American ships patrolling in international waters off of the coast of Vietnam in what is called the Gulf of Tonkin were apparently attacked by Vietnamese gunboats, the American government decided to send troops to Vietnam for the “maintenance of international peace and security in SouthEast Asia.” The result of this decision is known as the **Vietnam War (1964-73)**.
8. Again, since no demonstrable threat to the rights of Americans existed, there was no clear purpose involved in fighting a war in Vietnam where both sides were basically Vietnamese, and the United States grew increasingly demoralized as the war dragged on. American troops withdrew from Vietnam in 1973 and the country was taken over by a communist government. It was a pitiful defeat for the “world police power.”



The **Korean War (1950-3)** ended with Korea divided into two countries with a military stand-off at the 38th parallel.