

## **Visualizing Dynamic American Foreign Policy with News Maps in the early Cold War Period**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the methods and maps used by American news journal cartographers to portray the complex and changing international political world of the early Cold War period. It argues that American news cartographers used specific mapmaking techniques to describe the immediate post-WW II political world, but these techniques were outdated scarcely five years later as Cold War hostilities eclipsed Allied amity and cooperation. News cartographers generally had to design maps that illustrated the rapid transition from a brief period of American isolationism immediately after WW II, to the long lasting interventionism characterized by the Containment Policy and the Marshall Plan by 1950. Mapmakers did this by altering their use of map projections, text labeling, positioning of landforms, coloring, place names, etc.*

*American news maps of the world published immediately after WW II conveyed a sense of national geographic and political isolationism. Mercator, or flat, projection maps were favored for their portrayal of the oceans as wide barriers between America and the rest of the world. Global geopolitics was often portrayed in multilateral terms while American foreign policy interests briefly returned to a sort of Monroe Doctrine stance. Generally, the world was seen as divided between three, four or five „worlds“ to denote Allied hegemonic areas. Maps generally treated Britain, France and the Soviet Union the same on maps as postwar imperial powers with colonial troubles that threatened to draw America into the fray.*

*By 1950 the Cold War was well under way which prompted a shift in America's foreign policy, and its world view as expressed in news maps. Gone were isolationist maps, replaced by maps promoting Containment and international intervention. Now news maps capitalized on Air Age map projections that described the earth as a closed sphere, not a flat plane. Polar projection maps, especially of the North Polar Region, revealed to Americans how close the Soviets were across the Arctic Circle. Also, Containment maps*

*color-grouped all industrial nations in terms of Cold War bipolarity, or as „Two Worlds.“*

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