

Why was the cold war named that history essay



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The Cold War was a time after World War II when the USA and the Soviet Union became rivals seeking world influence. Immediately after the fall of Hitler's Germany the Soviet Union was seeking to have a dominant influence on Eastern Europe while Western democracies were determined to stop that. This rivalry grew to form two major protagonists, NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization versus the Warsaw Pact. NATO comprised of USA, Great Britain, France, West Germany while the Warsaw Pact comprised of pro-Soviet countries, i. e. the USSR, and all countries controlled by the USSR. In some aspects, the Cold War was simply a rivalry between capitalism and communism.

By the 1950s, the world had only two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States. These two superpowers each possessed nuclear weapons which they used to denounce and threaten each other. Due to the possession of these nuclear weapons, the two principals were afraid of fighting each other directly thus the name Cold War. If they chose to fight directly it could have been referred to as a Hot War. Therefore this indirect war (Cold War) involved the two superpowers supporting conflicts in different parts of the world, use of words as weapons and trying to make each other look foolish.

Why was the United States seen as the “winner” in the Cold War? How was this accomplished without nuclear war?

The US was seen as the winner in the Cold War because at the end it remained as the solo world superpower, as its rival the Soviet Union collapsed.

The US achieved this success by firstly actively resisting Soviet military initiatives wherever they appeared. The US realized that the Soviet's increasing military might would be a problem so they embarked on modernizing efforts within the US new missiles, command structures and control systems (Powers, p2). In addition to that they went further by pursuing intimidating military technology such as the Strategic Defence Initiative or 'Star Wars' (Tirman, para2). These efforts maintained the credibility and strength of the US threat to use nuclear weapons in the event of war.

Secondly, the rapid expansion of US military spending also threatened Moscow with bankruptcy. Increased spending on strategic forces accompanied by a willingness to challenge Soviet allies and clients around the globe e. g. in Afghanistan, Central America and Africa collectively increased political and financial pressure on the Soviet Union which already was facing ballooning defence budgets (Powers, p2).

Thirdly, the American policy of containment, diplomacy, foreign aid, trade and the communications revolution played a major role (Tirman, para3) encouraged the free movement of people and ideas. It is argued that Western pressure for human rights encouraged dissidents throughout the Soviet empire and gave birth to a robust underground resistance literature (Powers, p2).

What are the major lessons of the Cold War? How are those lessons impacting decision making today?

The major lessons from the Cold War were the need for effective institutional structures, co-operative internationalism and mobilization of political will (Evans, 2007). For example during the Cold War, the U. S. national security system overcame all types of challenges from the Soviet Union and was thus able to triumph. This ability is important to America's future security.

Another important lesson America learnt from the Cold War was the importance of leadership. Here we are referring to that kind of leadership that we all are aware of and lament when it is not there for example that of Truman and Marshall after World War II.

For most decision makers today the lessons learnt from the Cold War have for instance encouraged them to allocate more resources to peace making and maintenance efforts such as investing in the UN. The US has also seen the need to invest heavily in military technology so that U. S. military actions, when necessary can be executed remotely and precisely with minimal need to mobilize the American society to any significant extent.

What lessons have not been taken into account in modern American foreign policy decisions? What risks are associated with repeating the mistakes of the past?

The US is still an isolationist nation. The country's commitment to the idea of personal freedom that is manifested through its democracy and free market capitalism cannot be matched by any other nation yet the US seems determined to drive other nations down a similar path. This coupled with a low appreciation of the role of nationalism within certain countries makes it

difficult for American foreign policy to be highly effective especially in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The risks associated with repeating mistakes such as the lack of appreciation for the role of nationalism in different countries include bungled up Wars such as Iraq, which only heightened Islamic fundamentalism.

How can the “ War on Terror” be characterized as a by-product of the Cold War? Can the lessons of the Cold War provide a strategy for victory in the current conflict?

The War on Terror could be characterized as a byproduct of the Cold War in the sense that after the collapse of the Soviet Union the US being the remaining superpower has sought to flex its dominance and influence only to be met by various radical Islamist movements who like the communist movements of the past are fuelled by nationalism.

Lieven (2001) likens the War on Terror to the Cold War. He predicts that it will be a similarly long struggle in which ideological, political, and socioeconomic campaigns will be as important as military campaigns. He further continues to argue that to achieve any kind of long-term success, the United States will have to combat not only the terrorist groups themselves, but also the wider movements that give them support and shelter. Cooperative internationalism, effective institutional structures and mobilization of political will shall all be key ingredients just as they were in overcoming the Cold War (p1).