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[War](#), [Cold War](#)



Abel Girma IB History Mr Greenough March 2013 " An unnatural alliance that was bound to fall apart after the defeat of the common enemy. " To what extent does this statement explain the origin of the Cold War? World War II ended in May 1945 when the Allied troops met in Berlin, marking the defeat of the Nazi government. The US and USSR cooperated during the war to defeat the Axis although each had prewar tensions and differing ideologies which were reflected by disagreements over plans for post-War Europe at the crucial conferences of Yalta and Potsdam, resulting in their unsurprising split. The statement therefore accurately describes the origin of the Cold War while an emphasis on the importance of disagreements over post-War plans for Europe is lacking. Historical animosity existed between the USA and the USSR as early as the foundation of Soviet Russia which contributed to the unnatural nature of their alliance. Indeed, from 1918-1920 the Western intervention in the Russian civil war proved to the communists that a friendly relationship with the West was not to be expected. While their relationship seemed to be improving in 1933 with the development of diplomatic ties, the Soviets' decision to sign the Molotov-Rubbertrop pact with the Nazis in 1939 endangered their relationship. It was only when Nazi Germany invaded Western Russia in 1941 that a necessary yet superficial alliance was formed between the USSR and the West in order to defeat the common enemy. Moreover, US grievances against the USSR during World War II further intensified the weak alliance between the two nations. The US and the UK were always considerably wary of Stalin as he cooperated with Hitler from August 1939 to June 1941. Furthermore, the fact that Stalin refused to invade Japan until the end of World War II angered the US who were

determined to destroy any threats from Japan. In addition, The US and UK governments disapproved of Communism and the theory of spreading revolution, which threatened Democracy and Capitalism. Thus the unnatural Grand Alliance did not offer the Western world much more than a helping hand to defeat Nazi Germany. This fact made it very likely that the alliance would deteriorate following the defeat of the Axis. Similarly, the USSR felt bitterly about their allied counterparts. In fact, the Soviets resented the Western Allies' delay in opening a second front to divert Hitler until summer 1944, Normandy invasion. Moreover, with approximately 27 million casualties in the war, the USSR demanded over \$10 billion dollars in lend-lease aid from the West which was not granted to them immediately. Hence, Stalin did not feel that a true alliance was in place and always felt suspicious about the world outside of his borders. The fact that the West also hampered the expansion of Communism did not appeal to the soviet leader who was ambitious in spreading Communism to his neighbors. So, the mutual distrust and grievances were an important factor that called for a break down of the alliance following the defeat of the common enemy. Nonetheless, it was at Yalta and Potsdam that the irreconcilability of these differences were truly exposed. In February and August 1945 respectively, the Yalta and Potsdam conferences were the two major conferences that determined the future of the Grand Alliance. Indeed, Stalin pushed for a Europe with communist friendly eastern European states and an indeterminately wakened Germany. Meanwhile, the West called for the spread of democracy in Europe and the establishment of nations that would adopt capitalist-friendly systems which was declared in the Atlantic Charter early in 1941. Thus the disagreements

at these crucial conferences foreshadowed the inevitability of the collapse of the alliance from 1945 to 1948. Indeed, following the Potsdam conference both the USSR and the USA took key steps that would infuriate the other and subsequently provoke the Cold War. Stalin's "Salami tactics" in Eastern Europe consisted in Communizing neighboring states and creating governments controlled by Moscow. While this tactic worked in places such as Bosnia and Poland, the coup in Czechoslovakia was pivotal in the steps that the USA would take to counter Soviet actions. Indeed, the Truman Doctrine in March 1947 and the Marshall Plan in 1948 were two ways in which the West would contain the spread of Communism until the "Iron Curtain" and rebuild a Europe in ruins while creating essential economic ties with European countries. This "scramble for Europe" was the first major development in the Cold War as both the USA and the USSR were officially political rivals and were competing to realize their contrasting visions for Europe. While contrastive postwar plans and policies were the immediate cause of a split between the US and the USSR, the accumulation of grievances between the two would preclude any long-lasting alliance. Because both emerged as superpowers of such radically different beliefs, they were virtually destined to find themselves on a collision course, the Cold War. The statement therefore sums the cause of the Cold War to a considerably accurate extent although it neglects the significance of postwar actions by the members of the unnatural Grand Alliance.