

Individualism and the cold war



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The main reason for the cold war was because the Americans could not accept the lifestyle that the Soviet Union decided to live as communists. The cold war was heavily rooted in American individualism and trying to impose our values on the Soviets. Americans value individualism. They believe in a society that associated with capitalism, and a thriving economy. They also believe that everything is possible and attainable with hard work and determination. The main priority is being individualistic. This is to make sure that everyone is in control of the way their own life will turn out.

Soviets that followed communist believed in “ social organization. ” They believe in equality and liberty through force. All property is public domain and each person works and is paid based on abilities and needs. Americans were not willing to tolerate other people having to live like this. Aside from the cold war overseas, Americans also had internal fears that fellow citizens were turning communist. The fear during the 1920s became known as the Red Scare. Marxism, created by philosopher Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, is an economic system that criticizes capitalism.

Many often think of Marxism as a type of socialism. Marxism is the foundation that communism is built on which says that one should live in a “ socialist, classless society” (Marxism). Marx and Engels wrote a book entitled “ The Communist Manifesto,” which encourages the working class to overthrow the upper class. He makes a point of saying that Marxism is against capitalism because it is an exploitation of the working class. He believed that a socialist economy would work far better with a big population than would a capitalist economy. Another important idea of Marxism is historical materialism.

Marx believed that history was shaped by people's materialistic ways of living. A person's will to survive is shown by their want to acquire things to keep on living. Marx and Engels were the first to predict that industrial capitalism would lead to overproduction, wars of expansion, and economic depressions. This was proven by the Great Depression in 1929 (Carnes, Garraty 681). The United States is a nation deeply rooted in Hobbes and Locke ideas. These ideas are ones that differ a lot from Marxism. Locke believes that owning property is a well deserved and important natural right.

Locke believes that by a man " adding his labor to the earth, it becomes private property. Lockean ideas focus on a government's job of protecting individual liberties such as private property. This helps to prevent a state of nature. On the other hand, Marx believes that the " abolition of private property" is the best policy. He believes that laborers get no property while the upper class get all the property yet sit around and do nothing. Property is just an exploitation of the working class. Marx theories have heavily influenced how communists think.

Unlike communists, the US follows Locke's ideas. In the bill of rights, there is an amendment that says private property will always be protected from the government. When the Russian Czar was overthrown by the Bolsheviks and a communist government was put into place, the main ideology behind their thinking was Marxism. Private property was owned by all the people essentially to make sure that all the laborers are not being exploited. Although Hobbes and Marx share common ground that individualism is not the best option, they still have their own differences.

The Red Scare occurred during the 1920's and this was a time when there was a fear of communism within the United States. There was said to have been thousands of anarchists secretly living within our nation. The idea of Red Scare came up again during the 1940s and started the idea of McCarthyism. Senator Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin was the person that was partially responsible for the fear instilled in American citizens thinking that communists lived among them. McCarthy appeared on television making countless accusations of many people ranging from politicians to actors.

He made it a point to tell the citizens that the United States government was not properly dealing with communism. Although all these accusations were made, McCarthy was never able to adequately back up these claims. Aside from McCarthyism, which is now a term used for "unsubstantiated accusations," the US Government set up a committee called the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to do investigations. One major case was the case against Alger Hiss. He was an American government official who was accused and tried for espionage and served a 5 year sentence.

The creation of committees specifically dedicated to finding those that may be communist spies in the United States shows exactly how far the paranoia in our country went. McCarthy never had a single piece of evidence to expose the people he wrongfully accused but people were quick to jump and agree with him out of their own fear. McCarthy was able to convince thousands that what he was saying was true because of the status of his targets which made it more believable. Just because of all the mass hysteria that was happening overseas involving communism helped make him more popular and gain a fan base around these accusations. The reason people

were so worried was “ the reality of Soviet military power, the attack on Korea, the loss of the nuclear monopoly, and the sometimes true stories people would hear about spies. ” Although there may have been some communists lurking around the United states, many believe that the citizens may have blown things way out of proportion. At the time, the United States was still the most powerful nation in the world. The fear that some Americans held was completely unrealistic.

The citizens saw communism spreading to other countries and became scared that it would soon reach the United States. There may have been some communists in the United States but most likely not many. The ones that were in the nation would have been properly dealt with by the federal officials. Soviet and Russian espionage have invaded our country and gotten away with some valuable information but never to a point where it couldn't be handled. At the time of the paranoia, Truman in fact tightened protections to ensure that nothing else that was in the United States confidence was obtained by the Soviets again.

Communism may have entered into the United States but it was never to a point where it was out of control. Americans were so afraid that their individualism was going to be taken away that they convinced themselves into thinking that. The reason for American troops to even fight in the cold war was because they were not okay with other countries not operating like the United States. The Cold War was mostly rooted in the fact that Americans felt that their individualism was being threatened.

Americans blow things out of proportion when they feel threatened. The United States involvement in the Cold war wasn't particularly necessary because the US wasn't involved but because Americans could not understand the Soviet mindset, they set out to reform them and make them think like Americans so there would be no threat to the way Americans thought. The United States just wanted to help people realize that there was a way to live individually and freely without the dependence of a dictator or social organization.

The United States entered the war for their own benefit. They were out to prove that they were the superpower; they were the economically stable nation and had all the powerful nuclear weapons. The United States got involved to prove that they were economically, politically and an all around more developed nation than all the other countries. Americans reaction to the Cold War was way too strong just because of the simple fact that Americans are individualists and anything that threatens that is a problem.

Often when one feels like they are being threatened, things tend to get blown out of proportion and that is exactly what happened with the American citizens. For example, in recent times, some may argue that the reaction to Al- Qaeda was too strong and that it was way too much of an overreaction. The average American individualist would say that the United States did not act quick enough and harshly enough because when the twin towers were crashed into, that was a sign that their individualism was being threatened. Other outsiders may say that the United States acted too harshly.

As individualists, Americans don't understand the way other close minded people think. The main reason for our involvement with Soviet Russia was because they wouldn't share the same views with the United States on how a nation should be run. They believed in collectivism while the United States believed in individualism. Although the time has changed, one thing that doesn't change is the fact the Americans will always be individualists and will always put themselves first. It is hard to understand something that is not of one's own values.