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Development of the Cold War, in the five years between 1945 and 1950, could be argued as taking place for a number of reasons and due to various individuals. It could be easy to simply site Stalin as the main reason responsible for it's outbreak and growth, clear through his approach on communist expansion, use of Red Army and inability to uphold agreements.

However for a war of any kind to develop there is always more than one party involved and the USA and it's president Truman could also be said to have contributed to the developing of Cold War, arguably being equally aggressive as Stalin - taking an Iron fist on dealings with Russia through policies such as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, as well as his direction over the US involvement in the Korean War.

However issues such as Britain and Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech, as well as the birth of McCarthyism in America, can also be seen as hindering relations between the two superpowers of the Cold War and therefore playing a role in it's development. Whether Stalin was to blame for the Cold War can also be judged and evaluated through the use of sources, offering a number of interpretations, from extreme Orthodox and Revisionist views to the more diplomatic reasonings of the post revisionist stance.

It is correct to say that development of the Cold War, between 1945 and 50, was definitely impacted and heightened through provocative, and at times, aggressive actions on foreign policy, taken by Stalin. An example of Stalin's confrontational actions, in terms of foreign policy, is his part in the events of the Yalta and Potsdam, 1945, conferences; two meetings which were

intended to sort through post war issues and reach a place of peace and calm for the allies.

The issue of Poland was the one least simple to solve due to Stalin's insistence on the fact that it should be put in Soviet hands as they were responsible for releasing it from Nazi occupation. The West were reluctant to concede on this issue, not wanting another full blown Communist convert, and as a result it was agreed that Stalin would be given a majority of Poland but not the entire country, and only on the condition he upheld free elections there and in Eastern Europe.

Agreements were made, however Stalin's antagonistic character and inability to keep to those arrangements were made clear at Potsdam in July 1945 - especially highlighted by new American president, Harry Truman, a man of a much harsher nature than his predecessor Roosevelt. Stalin was not taking the agreement of free elections seriously and was actually positioning communist individuals into important government roles, through Eastern Europe and Poland as a means of spreading influence.

This purposeful spreading of influence by Stalin is echoed in source T, taken from John Lewis Gaddis, a more orthodox interpreter of the Cold War, in his text 'The Cold War [2005]' - he identifies Stalin undeniably wanted to "dominate that continent [Europe] as thoroughly as Hitler." The comparison to Hitler implies that Stalin's aims were of an aggressive, dominative nature and to be wary of by the allies.

It supports the idea that Stalin was looking to convert Poland to communism, thus explaining his reluctance to uphold free elections as agreed at Potsdam, <https://assignbuster.com/how-far-do-you-agree-with-essay/>

and suggesting Western powers had a right to be defensive and take harsher action in their dealings with the USSR. Another example of Stalin's provocative stance on foreign policy was the use of his Red Army to impose and spread communism throughout Eastern Europe.

By the end of the Second World War the Red Army was stationed in many large areas of Europe, being in a position of extreme dominance given the political and military vacuum that existed after the war, and their sheer size of eleven million, at its height in May 1945. Gaddis recognises in source T that the army had been so strong during the Second World War that Stalin admitted in 1947, that " had Churchill delayed opening the second front in Northern France by a year, the Red Army would have come to Paris. The fact that the Red Army had been confident enough to infiltrate the capital of France, one of the key power players of Europe, was a huge threat and annoyance to the West, causing a lot of anxiety and tension. Source U, a source published in 1996, from two Russian individuals, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, takes on a generally post-revisionist interpretation of the Cold War, though appearing at times to be sympathetic to Stalin crossing into Revisionist waters - the source states that he did not want to take a course of " unbridled, unilateral expansionism" over Europe.

This idea is hard to believe when looking at the course in which Stalin did indeed take. Though the Red Army never spread through France, it did manage to do so in many areas over Europe such as, Hungary, Romania and Albania. This was achieved by setting up pro-communist governments and applying pressure to allow communist politicians to hold key posts, such as interior minister, therefore allowing elections to be manipulated to ensure

communists controlled the levers of power in what appeared to be democratic coalitions.

Stalin also sought to infiltrate Eastern European governments and strengthen their communist parties by forcefully encouraging them to merge with other, bigger, socialist groups, who later found 'merge' to actually equal takeover. Stalin's aggressive and successful spread of influence cannot be denied as a huge factor in provoking the West and creating cold war, evident through the mere fact that by 1947 every state in Eastern Europe, except Czechoslovakia, was controlled by a communist government.

Finally another key example of Stalin's aggressive foreign policy is his part in the events of the Berlin Blockade. As agreed at Yalta, a post war Germany and Berlin were split into Western and Eastern zones; recognised that this could not be a long term solution, the West wanted to rebuild Germany and create a stable democracy and economy - Stalin on the other hand was more concerned with making Germany pay to the full extent.

Source S, an extract of Geoffrey Roberts' 'Stalin Wars', reinforces the fact that Stalin's view and inability to agree with the West over the German question, " was formed by... dread of the re-emergence of a powerful and aggressive Germany. " Though in context, the source's point does not put blame on Stalin for his over-defensive stance on Germany, it does definitely suffice as mounting evidence of his inability to move forward, his stubbornness and lack of diplomacy.

Continuing disagreements over the economic future of Germany meant that the West decided to introduce a new currency, the deutsche mark, to help

economically prosper their zones, including Berlin, without informing the east. Stalin was extremely angered by this and on June 24, 1948, he took action by severing all road, rail and canal links with West Berlin, as well as shutting down power stations resulting in great suffering amongst the city. Airlifts managed to keep western Berlin from starvation and destruction and Stalin eventually conceded, however the damage was already done.

Stalin had spitefully retaliated to the West's new German currency, evidence to Gaddis's point that his 'goal was not to restore a balance of power in Europe' - he did not act on admirable intentions and did not appear to want to rebuild Europe and Germany. Though the USA had indeed made the wrong decision in not informing the USSR of their new currency, it can be argued they at least wanted to help their zones - Stalin's actions in cutting of power stations and transportation links helped no one. With this in mind it is fair to say his actions in the blockade greatly contributed to Cold war and frosty superpower tensions. Stalin's confrontational approach to foreign policy was clearly a driving force in cold war and his role cannot be denied nor overlooked. However there are always two sides to a story, and though it could be argued the USA were provoked into a harsher stance in the period of 1945-50, through Stalin's aggressive expansion, it cannot be denied that the callous actions of Truman also contributed to the development of Cold War.

Truman was a noticeably harsher leader than Roosevelt, evident in USSR foreign minister Molotov's recount of his first meeting with him in which Truman was said to have spoken to him using 'the language of a Missouri mule driver.' Truman intended to make it clear to the Soviet Union that Yalta <https://assignbuster.com/how-far-do-you-agree-with-essay/>

commitments must be kept and that communism was not going to be compromised and sympathised with like it had been up until that point. The Potsdam conference was a clear indicator of Truman's nature and his lack of tolerance for communism and Stalin's aggressive ruling.

Four days following the conference the first atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, an action which Truman intended would end the war with Japan, and had failed to inform Stalin of, being a great insult to him and the USSR. The second bomb on Nagasaki was a second blow, the USSR uniformed again and angry that they did not assist Japan's take down as agreed at Potsdam. Truman's actions were an outrage and crass move in Stalin's eyes and caused a huge frosting in the superpower relations - an opinion implied in Source U, which cites the ' crass nature of power politics' as a reason for developing Cold War.

Truman's bombings could definitely be described as an act of " power politics", as Truman was fully aware that it was a move that could be a powerful tool by which pressure and intimidation could be exerted. Truman further contributed to development of cold war through his tough introduction of the Truman Doctrine - a policy seen as unnecessarily aggressive and intrusive into European affairs, as well as an indirect attack on the Soviet Union and communism. It can be seen as another form of his " power politics" in which to exert intimidation over the USSR.

The policy statement was issued by Truman in 1947 and stated that the USA would aid any country or government under attack of armed minorities - the underlying message being that they were prepared to intervene and present

any apparent spread of communism. The policy developed from the situation in Greece, which entailed a civil war between their monarchist govt and the radical communists. The British had been assisting them, not only out of principle, but also due to their economic interest in the country, being a good source for goods and energy resources; however after the war they owed ? 000 million in debts and could not continue supporting the Greek government. Truman used his doctrine to send American aid and military advisers to Greece to defeat the communists - his assistance was clear to all, to be a design to have wider application: creating a division and choice between two alternatives, communism and democracy. To Russia and Stalin this doctrine was a great insult, as well as evidence of American imperialism, a view very much reinforced with the launching of the Marshall Plan.

It defends the idea presented by Geoffrey Roberts, that Stalin's " policies were reactive and restrained" and Source U's view that he was " ready to see cooperation [in] solving contentious international issues"; that it was actually the USA that took control, spread capitalist ideologies and did not involve the USSR before acting on foreign affairs. The Marshall Plan was another area of American foreign policy, which demonstrated an abrasive and unforgiving stance on Stalin, the USSR and their apparent expansion into Eastern Europe.

It's purpose on the surface appeared to be innocent enough, however the motives behind it could be said to have been vital in the rising tensions between superpowers, that were soon to develop into a full blown cold war. Through the plan, the USA supplied aid to many European countries, giving destroyed nations a chance to rebuild their economies; though a generous



act, the Truman made sure that it was highly publicised - he wanted the US to appear to be the strong saviours, who all should strive to be like.

For example, Italy was a nation which received much aid and as a result, not so coincidentally, at the same time, a democratic system of governance and capitalist market was put into Italy. This was due to the huge amounts of propaganda and programmes used as a means of influence on vulnerable nations, such as 'operation bambi', a piece of American, capitalist propaganda used to influence the minds of the young. The propaganda which accompanied the aid meant the Marshall Plan was dubbed by Molotov as 'Dollar Imperialism' - the whole set up seen as an attempt by Truman to use financial aid as a mechanism by which the USA could gain control over Europe and exploit it for their own economic interests. The spreading of capitalism through propaganda was seen as both an attack on communism, as well as an act of hypocrisy, considering that Stalin had been so long condemned for promoting the spread of communism through Europe. Truman's development of the Marshall Plan, excluded the Soviet Union and alienated them greatly, creating feelings of distrust and even hate between the two.

Finally another example of American foreign policy to suggest Truman had a prominent role in the development of Cold War is his actions in the Korean War. After World War Two the Korean peninsula was divided, with attempts at a peaceful unification failing due to the deep ideological differences between the communist north and capitalist south, as well as the inevitable invasion which took place in 1950 by the north into the south.

American politicians commented that this invasion was further evidence of Stalin's attempts to spread communism and therefore Truman decided it was necessary to intervene and stop this growing spread of communism, under the auspices of the United Nations. Truman's intervention and commitment from sixteen of the UN countries, was seen as another confrontational message to Stalin, that the USA were completely against communism and were not frightened to fight it.

Truman used staunchly anti communist General Douglas MacArthur to lead the US forces into saving the south from complete overthrow of the north - they were successful in doing so yet Truman felt it necessary to authorise a 'thrust north' - an invasion and decision which marked a shift in policy of containment towards one of attempting to roll back communism from the Korean peninsula. It was a decision that was visibly aggressive and one which shocked many.

Not only did the decision devastate many civilian lives in North Korea, killing a great number and forcing the majority to live underground, but it also acted as another push between Truman and Stalin - between the west and the east - and increased the inevitability of Cold War. Truman's actions here support the revisionist point made in Source U, that Stalin " wanted to avoid confrontation", that he wasn't the tyrant made out to be - the source subtly asks us to question whether Truman was actually the more aggressive force to be reckoned with, rather than Stalin.

The ever developing cold war not only owed responsibility to the two superpower leaders, Stalin and Truman, and their foreign policy, but also to

other factors outside of their control. For example the famous 'Iron Curtain' speech, delivered by Churchill in March 1946, Missouri, in which he harshly called for firmer action by the West against the threat of communism. This "complex" factor is acknowledged and supported by Source U, recognising the importance of "British policy makers" and their role as an additive to the conflict. The source suggests that the British actions, i. . Churchill's, could not be blamed on either superpower, as they were his "choices" and no one else's. In his speech, Churchill declared that 'from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent', Churchill had called for an alliance between the two countries, suggesting they meet this expansion with an equal level of aggression and intimidation. This hostile view surrounding the USSR outraged Stalin and caused great hysteria in Moscow, with Churchill being accused as a warmonger, deliberately provoking the Soviet Union.

The speech created an increase in animosity between the superpowers and without a doubt contributed to the outbreak and development of cold war. A final factor demonstrating to be a cause of developing Cold War in the period of 1945 to 1950 was the years of the Red Scare in the USA. The scare developed from the high feelings of anti-communism in the 1940s and early 1950s, which evolved into a wave of hysteria, generated by a fear that the USA was being undermined by the enemy, from within their own country.

Despite the fact that the communist party in the USA never exceeded 100,000 members, suspicions of communist spies in the US government ran rife in this period causing an ever growing drift between the superpowers and more momentum for war. This hysteria was played on and made a lot worse

by Senator Joseph McCarthy, a politician trying to revive his career, through accusing government officials of being disloyal communists.

Though he was proven wrong, anti communist views were strongly embedded into American society and as a result hardening of foreign policy. This hardening was referred to as McCarthyism and it was inevitable given the increasing vulnerability felt by the many Americans who feared the spread of communism, eager to defend capitalism. Though set in motion by McCarthy, the root of the Scare was due to the ever present issue of the superpowers' vast ideological differences: something neither one could help.

Source U reinforces the idea that differing political practices and ideologies was a main reason for Cold War development, citing "hostility and mistrust between dictatorship and democracy in an uncertain world" as very important in the deteriorating relations. "In conclusion it is correct to say that Stalin was responsible for the development of Cold War, due to both his disloyalty to important agreements made between the superpowers at Yalta and Potsdam and his clear and successful attempts at Eastern European expansion, as well as his plainly spiteful actions during the Berlin Blockade.

However it is unfair to label him as the sole reason for the developing Cold War - Truman was also an aggressive leader who successfully spread ideology through his Marshall Plan and openly promoted the condemnation of Communism across the world. Adding other factors such as Churchill's speech and opinions on communism as well as the American fears of McCarthyism, into the situation meant that Cold War was unavoidable from any angle and could not have been due to one person or event.