

Free essay on cold war as a competition between the us and ussr

[War](#), [World War 2](#)



‘ Instructor’s name’

The cold War

Relations between the USA and the USSR were always defined by many complicated interwoven political and economic factors, and the relationship which was a cautious cooperation during the World War II transformed into a superpower rivalry after the war. The basic distinction that existed in the political systems of the countries created an environment, which did not aid in mutual understanding and for a period of almost four decades there was a high military tension between the two nations. This sustained tension between the two countries and their allies and the ensuing political scenario, was commonly denoted by the term ‘ cold war’. The term was coined by George Orwell, and it almost defined the world politics in the subsequent years that followed the WWII. The period was characterized by each faction trying to garner global influence at the expense of other, and the period saw cycles of relative peace followed by high tensions of war. A full-fledged War would have paved way for another global conflict, and definitely would have caused a mass destruction given the fact that both the countries had access to nuclear weapons. Luckily the leaders of both the nations were responsible enough to prevent such a fate, and there were many incidents during the cold war when the men in power in both the countries exhibited sound judgment in not allowing the tension to escalate. This essay aims at analyzing the various political and economic goals of the United States and the Soviet Union for the postwar world, and how these clashing aims launched the Cold War and also to analyze the various conflicts that arose during this period.

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The cold war was not an immediate product of the World War II, and both the countries did not enjoy a comfortable relationship right from the formation of the Soviet Union. The conflict was basically a war of ideologies and in short can be put as American liberalism Vs. Soviet Communism. (Leffler and Arne Westad, 2010, Pg. 20) The USA did not like the formation of a state based on the ideologies of communism after the revolution of 1917, and the relation was further aggravated by the fact that the new Soviet leaders opted out of the World War I. Both the countries did not resume diplomatic relations until the year 1933. The World War II saw both the countries form a temporary alliance to defeat the common enemy - the Nazi Germany (Library of Congress, 2010) Once the World War II ended and the Nazi regime thwarted, the differences between the allies again came to the fore, particularly with reference to the Soviet annexure of the east Europe. The comment made by Winston Churchill that an 'iron curtain' have descended in the middle of the Europe, aptly catches the Western sentiments towards the Soviet move. While the US and its Western allies saw the world being divided into democratic and non-democratic forces, Stalin saw the two camps as capitalist and imperialist factions on one side and the progressive communist faction on the other side. While the Soviet viewed capitalism to be the biggest threat, the US allies saw democracy as the only salvation for the war torn world. This basic ideological difference was the root cause for the Cold War, a period where world was divided into two camps hostile to each other, characterized by permanent tension just short of an all out war. The three important allies who fought Hitler, Britain, America and Soviet Union, had different and at times conflicting goals, for the post war peace.

America headed by Roosevelt, wanted to establish global economic supremacy and an international peace organization to monitor the world affairs. Britain, led by Churchill wanted to regain control over the Mediterranean and ensure the freedom of east European countries so that they act as a buffer between Britain and the Soviet. Stalin's immediate priority was rebuilding the economically battered Soviet Union which was at shambles as a result of German attack. The Potsdam Conference of 1945, where the leaders of the three nations met (Truman and Attlee, took over from Roosevelt and Churchill) brought out the differences between these countries. Truman in the conference told Stalin that America had a new weapon capable of mass destruction, thereby posing a direct threat to Soviet's interest. By the end of the conference the Atom bomb was dropped on Japan. Stalin had his own weapon development program in place and it started the famous 'arms race' between the two superpowers. The two countries not just compete in military expertise, but the rivalry extended into other disciplines also like Science and Sports. The effect of the cold war was not just felt in Europe and America, but spilled all over the world as witnessed in China. The fall of Japan saw the escalation of civil war in China, between the communists, backed but not always by Soviet, and the nationalists, supported but not unconditionally by the United States. (McNeill and Unger, pg. 1) With the Chinese communists winning the civil war the balance slightly tilted towards the east. A series of events that took place between the years 1948 to 1962 saw the world being pushed to the brink of a World war III.

After the communism triumph in china and end of atomic monopoly in 1949,

the Truman American Government aggressively followed a containment policy whereby it tried to curb expansion of communism with vigor. The first example of its aggressive tactics was witnessed in the Korean War (1950-53). In the year 1950 the North Korean army with the huge support of the Soviet Union launched a military attack on South Korea. UN force consisting of forces from the USA, Britain and Canada went to the aid of the South Koreans, to stop the invasion. The public opinion on the UN involvement in the war was divided as people feared a global nuclear war. The war ended only in 1953 and the Armistice was signed only after Stalin's death. North Korea continues to be an authoritarian communist ruled country, and South Korea has adopted a multi party system. The major outcome of the war was the development of a military structure for the NATO allies.

The Vietnam War which was fought from 1956 to 1975 was another proxy war fought during the cold war era. In this war too, the ultimate aim of the US involvement was to contain the spread of communism in Indochina. The war was between North Vietnam supported by its communist allies and South Vietnam supported by anti-communist countries mainly the US. As Hunt opines Vietnam conflict brought into fore what he terms as an ' Ugly American' (inspired by a book written under this name in 1958), whereby many political personalities paraded the political scene of America, each with his own reality based fictional accounts about how communism is winning in Asia and how it was a threat to America. (Hunt, Pg. 2011) Like Hunt many historical observers state that Vietnam War was a strategic misstep by the US.

And the Cuban Crisis in 1962 brought WWIII closer than ever. The

deployment of missiles by Soviet Union in Cuban soil put America under alert and both sides started preparing for a possible full scale war. There were exchange of messages and inflammatory speeches from both sides. The following is an excerpt from Khrushchev's letter to President Kennedy.

“ To be sure, we will not remain mere observers of pirate actions by American ships in the open sea. We will then be forced on our part to take those measures we deem necessary and sufficient to defend our rights. To this end we have all that is necessary.”

- N. KHRUSHCHEV (Library of Congress, 2010)

The missile crisis had a significant effect on the U. S-Soviet relations (Garthoff, Pg. 142) and led to the cold war's first arms control agreement between the nations, the Antarctic Treaty of 1961. Cuban crisis and the erection of Berlin Wall are seen as crucial phases of the cold War, and are generally attributed to the incompetence of the Soviet President Khrushchev.

The Cold War was not just a socio-political enmity or competition on arms and space programs between world's two superpowers, it was also a competition between the US and USSR as to how best to reorganize the human society. (Gaddis, 2011) The intensity of the cold war faded in the 1980s and completely ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the year 1991. The end of cold war allowed Russia to cut its military spending considerably, yet the economy spiraled downwards. After the end of the cold War the world become unipolar with the United States remaining as the sole superpower. But the effect of the cold War can be still felt, particularly in the

third world countries were conflicts fuelled by the cold war still creates social and military tension.

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