

# What were the origins and the early manifestations of the cold war? essay sample

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In 1945 as the Second World War was coming to a close there emerged a new and altogether different type of war. The Cold War, as it is known, was a war where the two superpowers of the time the United States (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) fought each other in many different battlefronts but never involving actual armed conflict with each other. This war lasted for about half a century and in this essay I shall relate the origins and the early manifestations of this war.

The most significant reason for the start of the Cold War was the opposite and conflicting ideologies existing within the two superpowers. Communist USSR held principles that went against the principles of Capitalist US. To give one example, capitalism needed countries as “markets” for American products so that the US economy could stay healthy and competitive. After the Second World War the Soviet Union created an “iron curtain” by establishing communist dictatorships in much of Eastern Europe and thus the Americans lost many possible markets dealing a blow to the US’ economic might. Thus the actions of the communists were damaging for the capitalists as it went against their principles and this was a cause for the establishment of the Cold War.

The most obvious origins of the Cold War lie, however, in the conferences that the Allied leaders held in the final years of the Second World War. In these conferences difference of opinions emerged in various issues such as Poland’s border, Germany’s future and the future of liberated Europe. This became more prominent when the wartime leaders of US and Great Britain (Roosevelt and Churchill) were replaced by Truman and Attlee respectively.

Thus, a great division occurred amongst the Allies now that the common

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enemy was defeated. The disagreements were the first clear sign of the beginning of a new war.

The personalities of the post-war leaders mentioned above and also that of Stalin, the leader of the USSR were such that suspicion and distrust was harvested in the atmosphere. In a world that was shattered and needed unity such an atmosphere spurred causes for rivalry. Stalin, on one hand, had a xenophobic nature which was unnerving for the others and Truman on the other hand was a firm and straightforward man who did not like the slyness of Stalin. Amongst these two main leaders stood others such as Churchill, who was cunning to the core, and Attlee, a concerned and nervous politician (who was known for his ingenious switching of sides in British politics after his abandonment of Churchill) and not a completely reliable person. Such differing personalities also meant that getting along was hard for the victorious Allies and thus a split emerged which was an origin for the Cold War.

Stalin's xenophobia was laid with reason. When the communist Bolsheviks were fighting for power in Russia in 1917 many Western nations supported the opposing elements within Russia that was trying to keep a lid on this communist party. This led to the communists having a general hatred for the Western nations which was amplified when Germany attacked USSR. The Western nations did not open up a Second Front to assist the communists but this front was rather opened at the very ending of the war from which the Soviets took the implication that the Western nations wished to suffocate communist USSR. Such interpretations when simmered down to the Soviet

people made cooperation with the Western nations almost impossible after the Second World War.

On the side of the Americans the same lack of understanding was present. Due to their previous isolationist state the world was plunged into chaos. Not wanting this to happen again the US decided to be more firm and act as the “policeman of the world”. The US believed that it was monarchy and imperialism which gave rise to dictators like Hitler and Mussolini who wanted to establish their own empires and achieve other selfish wants. Added to the century long hatred of imperialism from their previous experience with Great Britain the US opposed anything which infringed the right of nations and when the Soviet Union installed supposed “friendly neighbouring governments” it seemed to the US that another empire was being formed led by communist Soviet Union. Triggering the anger of the American public the Americans adopted a similar hostile attitude as that of the Soviet people causing the start of a Cold War.

The hostile attitudes of both the nations were also due to the fact that after the Second World War the two superpowers were much in front when in comparison with other nations. Both sides, however, wished to be at the forefront and wished to fill the “vacuum of power” that was created after the war. Therefore, in this battle the two sides realised each other as the new enemy and this was a cause for the beginning of the Cold War.

After the Cold War had begun it did not take much time for it to manifest itself and situations to arise where this war could be seen and declared. Sir Winston Churchill’s speech at Fulton, Missouri was the first clear indication of

the start of this war. This was in the arena of diplomacy but in many other ways the war was fought between the superpowers.

In the realm of foreign policy the US followed quickly with the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. President Truman, by declaring this doctrine, led the way for the US to be aggressive and the policy of containment (where communism would be contained and stopped from spreading) was quickly followed. It was made clear to the world that the United States held no feelings of kindness towards the Soviets. This was a manifestation of the Cold War.

The Marshall Plan reinforced the Truman Doctrine by giving aid to Europe and strengthening the power of democratic nations. This was another manifestation of the Cold War as the US was trying to establish an alliance combating communism (eventually leading to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the NATO). USSR responded by forming the Comecon and the Cominform, both puppet organisations designed to mimic and respond to the American policies.

Actual combat was achieved in 1950 when the dispute between North and South Korea led to war. These two nations had opposing ideologies similar to that of the superpowers and thus the superpowers involved themselves by supporting one side or the other. Such a development of the Cold War occurred many times whereby other nations were used as puppets in order to fight the war between USSR and the US and manifestations of the Cold War occurred.

Finally, early manifestations of the Cold War could be seen in the military aspect of the two sides. The US signalled a threat by dropping the atom bomb in Japan in 1945. The surprised and enraged Soviets responded by testing the Hydrogen bomb in 1949. Thus, the Cold War was manifested in the military power of the two sides where the two nations stockpiled weapons in order to appear stronger than the other. This led to the arms' race in which the two superpowers fought with extreme vigour.

Therefore the origins of the Cold War lie in many points but the common and prevalent reason was the difference of opinion and the building up of this difference in the masses of the two nations causing disdain and hatred between the two superpowers. The early manifestations of the Cold War were in many forms such as diplomacy, foreign policy, crisis points involving other nations and weaponry. The Cold War, which began in 1945, ranged for a very long time but much of what would happen in this time period was foreshadowed in the early manifestations of the Cold War which in turn was produced by the origins of the Cold War.