

Who was to blame for the cold war



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The Cold War is the name that is given to the relationship between the USSR and the USA after World War II. It was essentially an ideological struggle between the USSR and the USA. Both the sides were trying to impose their political model as the dominant global one. For over 40 years (1945-1989) the USSR was in constant conflict with the USA, but it was a conflict that never ended up as open warfare. It stayed as a “ Cold War” as both sides were trying to destroy each other through economic and political actions as well as propaganda and acts of espionage.

There was tension after World War II between the USA and the USSR because both the sides were trying to impose their political model as the dominant global one. Much of the growing tension of the 1940s was a result of a pattern of ‘ action and reaction’ of how one country did something and the other reacted in its own way and responded to it. This resulted in the Cold War between the USA and the USSR. In this essay I will be considering three possible scenarios of who was to blame for the Cold War; the USA, the USSR or both.

There are three historical views on this topic, the Revisionist view which blamed the Americans, the Traditionalist view which blamed the Russians and the Post- Revisionist view which blamed both sides. The Revisionist view on the Cold war was that American policies, and the desire to spread Capitalism around the globe, caused the Cold War. They thought that the USA was to blame and effectively started the tension, as after Roosevelt’s death in 1945, Harry Truman took over and did not have good terms with Stalin.

He didn't realize how much Russia had been through in World War II. By this time, America had developed the Atomic Bomb. They refused to share the nuclear technology with the USSR. The USA had used it twice on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which made the USSR feel like the USA was making a point that they were in control and that they were threatening the Russians (and the rest of the world). It was also because Britain and the USA kept postponing Doom's Day, which made Stalin, assume that it was a plot to enable Germany to weaken the Soviet Union.

Another reason is that Stalin could not forget that Britain and the USA had tried to destroy the Russian Revolution which made him feel very offended. The main Traditionalist view on the Cold War was that Stalin was trying to build up a Soviet empire. He was trying to convince more countries to come under the political model of communism. This way he would be their leader and would effectively rule them. In 1939, the USSR signed a Nazi- Soviet pact with Germany causing a " pact" throughout World War II thereby Russia and Germany would not attack each other.

This pact was broken on the 22nd of June, 1941 when Germany attacked Russia. As the USA and Germany were rivals, the USA thought that the pact was a sign that the USSR was going onto the opposite side. In 1948, Soviet troops cut off all transportation routes between the West of Germany (which was ruled equally by Britain, the USA and France) and Berlin. This was called the Berlin Blockade - Stalin had planned to starve the Berliners in the West zone to submission. Stalin said he was defending the East German economy against the new currency, which was ruining it.

The Western powers said he was trying to starve West Berlin into surrender, which was what he was doing in actual fact. The USA considered on using their Armies to get the Soviet Union out of Germany but that would have been seen as an act of war and the USA didn't want to start a hot war (open warfare) with the Soviet Union. Stalin ended the Berlin Blockade in 1949- it had lasted over 10 months. In 1955, the USSR developed submarine-launched nuclear missiles and by 1957 they developed these missiles to hit targets thousands of miles away.

This caused the USA to think that the USSR was planning an attack on them, and they started to begin their own development of nuclear missiles. The Post-Revisionist view on the war is that the historians think that both sides were to blame because there was hatred on both sides. Historians agree that it was due to a clash of different beliefs - the USSR and other similar countries wanted Communism (Communism is a system of government based on the community.

This places the needs of the community over the needs of individuals), while the USA wanted to pus Capitalism (Capitalism is an economic system where things like land are owned by an individual, not by a government or community). The Post-Revisionist historians believe that it was because both sides had different political, economic and social views and this would create friction between the two countries. These historians claim misunderstandings and mutual suspicion by both countries fuelled the conflict. Post-revisionists accept the earlier interpretation of Stalin as a leader interested more in Soviet security than world domination.

They also argue that American leaders, unsure of Stalin's motivations, viewed Stalin's actions in Eastern Europe as a threat to their own political and economic objectives. Both the USA and the USSR, in seeking to promote their country's interests, caused the Cold War. Misinterpretation played a big part in the beginning of the Cold War. Each side believed that the other was planning an attack so they started to prepare for the attacks of one another making either of the countries suspicious of each other.

In conclusion, I think they were both equally at fault and that the Post-Revisionist views are true. Both countries wanted to change the world and impose their ideas of both Communism (USSR) and Capitalism (USA). However it is also true that both countries were more at fault at some things and less at others. For example, America developed nuclear weapons but it was Russia's misinterpretation of the use of these bombs. This is an example of where both countries are at fault.