

Ideological Differences and the Origin of the Cold War

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The Cold War originated from ideological differences. While communist nations and industrialized capitalist nations competed in both technological and political superiority, both nationalistic tones appeared, creating differences leading to the brink of a war without combat. The origin of the Cold War can be traced back before WWII with American industrialism and nationalism disregarding any government without democratic tones. Ideological differences and their relation to the origin of the Cold War can be seen through the Potsdam Conference, the Truman Doctrine, and the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These three occurrences fueled anti-communist sentiment in the United States and continually enforced democratic superiority through the entirety of the Cold War.

As World War II came to an end, the three most prominent world powers met in Germany to discuss plans for the divided Europe after German demolition. Stalin, representing the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill, representing Great Britain, and Harry Truman, representing the United States, met from July 17- August 2, 1945 for a conference in Potsdam to determine which countries would have control over prior German controlled areas (Charman). During this conference, the United States and Great Britain grew untrusting of Soviet intentions, as the Soviet Union wanted previous German territories to be united but unarmed (Larson). Truman and Churchill viewed this as an uneasy negotiation because if Germany was united but weakened, it would allow Germany along with countries in Southeast Asia to develop communist governments, a political affiliation that was not favored by the western nations. The distrust of a communist government surpassed the want for a united nation which had been destroyed throughout the war. With hopes of providing a stern front which would open the Soviet Union up to further negotiations, Truman informed Stalin that the United States had

developed a weapon which could bring upon mass destruction, the atomic bomb (Miscamble). Although, as the United States presented this information to Joseph Stalin as a means of showcasing western power, Stalin rebutted that the United States should then use that weaponry to help the Soviets fight the war in the Pacific (Miscamble). Although this exchange shows how both the communist and capitalist nation wanted to become superior, the ideological differences prompted tensions to raise even higher, as this information prompted the Soviets to push scientists to develop the same caliber of technology. As the Potsdam conference ended, the three nations decided to divide Germany into three separately controlled sections (Jacklin). However, by the end of the conference the western nations developed a larger distrust of Soviet intentions and it was obvious to Stalin that Churchill and Truman had a vendetta against him and his country for their undemocratic ideologies and agenda.

After the Potsdam Conference came to an end, the United States began to take great measures to detach themselves from the attachments that they had made with Soviet foreign affairs. In the Truman Doctrine, released on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman declared that the United States would provide democratic assistance to all countries under the threat of authoritarian regimes, obviously meaning communist nations such as the Soviet Union (Merrill). The Truman Doctrine primarily originated from a speech in which Harry Truman reprimanded Great Britain for withdrawing their support from Greece as they were falling under control of the Greek Communist Party (Jones). Communism had become an issue that the United States felt they needed to take political and militaristic steps to contain. The issue of containment quickly spread throughout the United States as an issue which needed to be enforced, as a great sense of nationalism grew against governments which were not democratic. Consequently, the

Soviet Union viewed Truman's "containment" speech as a threat to the Soviet government and people and tension which had spurred from the Potsdam conference grew even farther (Merrill). The Cold War, in western standards, was the continual support for democratic governments in hopes of ultimately weakening communist ones in order to prevent a "Domino Theory", a key term by US President Eisenhower regarding the spread of communism throughout the world if countries such as Vietnam fell under communist control (Eisenhower). However, the Soviet Union did not plan on succumbing to western superiority, strengthened by the Truman Doctrine, and continued to progress their scientific research into the creation of atomic weaponry. These continual efforts made the United States government uneasy as they were pushed into an anti-communist hysteria, termed "The Second Red Scare", causing military to heighten security in Western Europe and Southeast Asia.

Western attempts to eliminate communism, ultimately leading to the height of the Cold War, persevered as western powers united for the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on April 4, 1949. NATO was formed as a collective security against the Soviet Union (Gheciu). The extent that this organization was important to anti-communist tones was that this was the first peacetime military alliance that the United States had joined, strengthening the claim that ideological differences were the driving force to full participation in the Cold War. As communist nations started to become more relevant, such as those in Czechoslovakia and Italy, NATO enforced the containment policy and the presence of an "Iron Curtain", a term coined by Winston Churchill representing the difference in ideologies which had separated Europe (Gheciu). The fear that communism would spread throughout the rest of Europe along with the Pacific and North Atlantic became so high that direct militarization was organized to

prevent such attempts. Communist nations, on the other hand, did not see capitalist regimes as inherently stronger, and countries such as the Soviet Union continued with the advancement of technology to create atomic weaponry, which was ultimately achieved on August 29, 1949 (Whitfield).

Ideological differences such as that between communism and capitalist democracy were the main reason for the origins of the Cold War. The difference in governments frightened western powers as they only granted the right to choose one's government as long as it was aligned with democratic ideals. As seen through the Potsdam Conference, the Truman Doctrine, and the formation of NATO, the fear of communism and want to develop atomic weaponry surpassed economic and social agendas. Although economic destruction in Europe and disagreements to the reconstruction of the destroyed countries was an issue that caused disagreement, it can be tied back to which countries would be able to claim said countries and how they would establish their governments. As communism began to spread throughout the world to different parts of Europe and Asia, such as Vietnam, tensions grew higher and the Cold War was conflict due to political and social disagreement.

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