

## WHO WAS THE MIGHTY DESIGNER OF THE COLD WAR?

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### ABSTRACT

Cold war has always been a focal point in international relations studies, while the question of “how did it emerge at first place?” has been a source of constant debate. In this article, the author aims at answering the question by starting the analyses as early as 1917 October Revolution. It is concluded that polarization of the world in the hands of two superpowers with antagonistic ideologies made the cold war inevitable.

**Keywords:** cold war, capitalism, communism.

### INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to grasp the Cold War from the perspective of ideological conflict. Going back as early as ‘1917 October Revolution’ would shed light on the historical birth of the post-WW II conflict. Russian empire, which was considered as one of the biggest power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fell into hands of ideologically Marxist Bolsheviks in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political, military, and economic emergence of naturally hostile ideology to the capitalism, and imperialism created panic in monarchical regimes and the USA. However, RSFSR’ attempt for internal unification of the former imperial lands, and later Stalin’s policy for empowerment of national communism, rather than world communism, and another rising issue of fascism during 1920s and 1930s postponed the, so called, global clash of rival ideologies (USA-USSR). Real fundamentals of Cold War, indeed, were established after 1939 and gained seriousness during World War II. Secret agreements, suspicions about the intentions, and military actions of superpowers in the course of WWII drove Soviet Russia and United States to opposing sides. It would be useful to examine chronologically, in the following paragraphs, each factor that contributed to escalation of the Cold War.

In 1939, Stalin proposed to Hitler a non-aggression pact in order to protect the Soviet Russia, and create a buffer zone by expanding its territory towards Europe. Stalin was certain that war is approaching, and he had no choice, but signing non-aggression agreement with antagonistic fascist Germany. Hitler being tactical agreed on pact to keep Soviets at bay while he would wage war against Western Europe. So, both sides being pragmatic signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in August 23, 1939. As it is mentioned, beside a mutual pledge of nonaggression, there was a secret part of the pact which enabled both parties to partition Poland, and give right to Soviet occupation of the Baltic States, and part of Finland. Following the invasions by the Red Army in 1940, Western powers were shocked by the action. Soviet Union faced harsh criticism in the United States. President Roosevelt denounced the action and called the Soviet Regime as a dictatorship which engulfed its harmless neighbors. On the other hand, the German-Soviet pact, also, encouraged Soviet Union to call Turkey for a revision of 1936 Montreux Convention (which gave Turkey a full right to control Bosphorus straits and

Dardanelles) and establish Soviet-Turkish co-sovereignty in the straits.<sup>1</sup> Upset Turkish officials, analyzing the level of threat, regarded this issue as an intervention to the internal affairs of Turkey, and completely rejected any kind of negotiation over straits. Ambitious demand and additional diplomatic crisis over Eastern Turkey (territorial demand of Georgian and Armenian SSRs) appalled Turkey which immediately inspired new trilateral military alliance of Great Britain, France, and Turkey in 19 October, 1939. These Soviet expansionist and interventionist policies created in minds that Stalin would join the war in the side of axis powers, however, entire German-Soviet collaboration was buried under German attack ('Operation Barbarossa' in 22 June 1941), leaving the Soviets helpless, and propelling her to seek new alliance. But, it was difficult for Stalin to regain trust of the USA and Britain. They were, curiously, following the advance of Nazi Germany against inward territories of USSR, while Stalin had been pushing the Allied powers to open a second front. Revisionist writers have pointed out on issue that American policy makers during World War II saw little to choose between the evils of a "Communist" and a "Nazi dictatorship". The Democratic senator from Missouri, Harry S. Truman, spoke for fellow congressmen in 1941 when he declared: "If we see that Germany is winning we should help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances."<sup>2</sup> It is reasonable to think that USA and UK were quite interested in war between Germany and Soviet Union. From perspective of Western allies this ongoing war could be depicted as the struggle of two uncontrollable and problematic powers against each other to an extent of life-or-death, and at the end it was definite that one of them would perish, or at least both would be exhausted. However, while bitter war was going on, Red Army could manage to stop the Germans in the battle of Stalingrad (23 August 1942 – 2 February 1943) which was considered the bloodiest war with unprecedented amount of casualties. This battle is turning point, not only in the context of Second World War, but in understanding the upcoming influence of Soviets, as well. Battle of Stalingrad, and later battle of Kursk, pushed USA to cooperate with Soviet Union in order to implement the 'unconditional surrender' plan that had been announced at Casablanca Conference by F.D. Roosevelt. Thus, following the victorious achievement in Stalingrad, Stalin succeeded to urge allied powers to arrange a meeting in order to devise a future strategy for rest of the war. As a result of long deliberations, it was decided that meeting should take place in Tehran, at the end of 1943 (28<sup>th</sup> November). The Tehran Conference, for the first time, brought all the major powers of a new Alliance (the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom) together, which will be called "Big Three". The conference had lasted with full of tension between Western allies and Soviet Union. Stalin's domination in the conference, oppressed Roosevelt and Churchill, and pushed them to make concessions to Soviet demands over Eastern Europe and Far East (Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin). Moreover, Stalin persuaded them to open a second front by May 1944, while Soviet Union promised to launch a major offensive against Germany.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rozakis, Christos L. INTERNATIONAL STRAITS OF THE WORLD. (page 43). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987. Accessed March 31, 2017. [https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=yJc7HWWhF-K8C&pg=PR3&hl=tr&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.tr/books?id=yJc7HWWhF-K8C&pg=PR3&hl=tr&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W. COLD WAR THEORIES. Vol. 1. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> "The Tehran Conference, 1943." Office Of The Historian. Accessed March 28, 2017. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/tehran-conf>.

The Tehran Conference is a skeleton conference that forged succeeding ones in Yalta (February 4-11, 1945) and Potsdam (17 July-2 August 1945). Towards the end of WW II, meeting at Yalta concretized all promises regarding to territorial demands of Soviet Union and determined conditions of ending war in Europe and Japan by the help of USSR. Yet, Polish question didn't reach to total compromise at Yalta Conference. Dispute over question was mainly about Poland's future boundaries and government. While Polish Government-in-exile (London) was supported by Whitehall and Washington, provisional government was favored by the Soviets.<sup>4</sup> The problem had been tried to be solved by Stalin, when he transformed nature of the provisional government into more coalition-like unity by which Stalin wanted to show his "goodwill". Even though, United States and Soviet Union seemed to cooperate by giving up some of their interests, some people thought that these conferences, indeed, mostly benefited Soviet Union by granting her dominion over Eastern Europe, thus, easing the spread of communism. In the United States, President Roosevelt blamed for his delaying policy of political decisions, and flexible and optimistic approach to the Stalin's plans. However, Roosevelt was realist; he knew that Soviet success in those conferences was, actually, thanks to wartime strategy. As a result of war, in fact, USSR gained a tremendous political power by locating its Red Army at the heart of Europe. It is undeniable that USSR made the biggest sacrifice in order to exterminate the Nazi threat. Economic devastation and human loss of the Soviet Union amounted for half of the total loss. So, at the end of war, Soviet Union emerged as a rightful actor to shape the future of the world. Therefore, United States couldn't simply disregard the achievements of biggest army in Europe (Red Army); thus, expel the Soviets from continental Europe. In fact, US were worried that it would be impossible to contain USSR from expansion which stood upon borders of Western Europe. But, it is still unrealistic to speak of unlimited desire of the Soviets. USSR was well aware of its limits and possible action that might create conflict with its Western allies. In the cases of French and Italian Communists, who tried to seize power (in 1944-1945) but opposed by Stalin, we can illustrate the Stalin's planned sphere of influence.

But, there was an issue in which Soviet Union was insistent, and was not planning to retract. The issue, that led Soviet-American dissension, was war reparations of Germany. Soviet demanded reparations on the basis of damage that Germany caused (decided as \$10 billion), though United States and Great Britain abstained. Harsh memory of the First World War made Western allies to refuse any reparation. As a result, disagreement led to massive transfer of German industry and military capacity from East Germany to the Soviet Union (some people regarded as pastoralization of Germany). The plan was carried out without informing the Allied powers. Consequently, United States suspended action on demands for further West German reparations to the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Later, Truman administration made reparations as restrictive as possible and gave priority to the economic problems of Germany, rather than Soviet Union. Soon after Harry Truman became the 33th president of America, Soviet-American relations severed. Intensification of the Cold War started with the birth of Truman

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<sup>4</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W. COLD WAR THEORIES. Vol. 1. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. (page 83)

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W. COLD WAR THEORIES. Vol. 1. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. (page 65)



Doctrine. The doctrine aimed at containing Soviet expansion and Communist influence. Advocates of Truman Doctrine, such as George F. Kennan, proposed that “divide Europe frankly into spheres of influence—keep ourselves out of the Russian sphere and keep the Russians out of ours.”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Churchill’s famous speech at Missouri (March 5, 1946), which was accompanied by President Truman at his side, pointed out that “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.”<sup>7</sup> Churchill expressed his worry that how tiny communist formations, by the help of Soviets, are seeking to gain a totalitarian control in those satellite states of Eastern Europe (such as in Hungary, Czechoslovakia), and aligned with Truman’s ideas. In addition, The Red Army’s occupation of Iran, even after British troops withdrew, further exacerbated the aggression between United States and Soviet Union, which calmed down after the withdrawal of Soviet forces in April 5, 1946. Nevertheless, United States took action to sign an agreement with Iran, in 1947, which pledged to supply Iran with military equipment and increase its military immunity against Soviets through U.S. military advisory mission. Following the Soviet’s action in Iran and re-demand of Turkish soils, Truman claimed that “There isn’t doubt in my mind, that Russians intend an invasion of Turkey and seizure of the Black Sea Straits...”<sup>8</sup> Truman acknowledged that he needs strict policies to encounter and reject any further Soviet claims. Thus, Truman introduced his doctrine in March 12, 1947. He called all religious fundamentalists, businessmen, patriotic organizations etc. to free all ‘democratic nations’ from Soviet threat. In this regard, Truman as a priority urged Congress to assist Greece and Turkey with \$400 million aid. Furthermore, in accordance with the Truman Doctrine, the United States enacted the Marshall Plan (a 4-year-plan that enacted in 1948). It is directed to provide all European countries with economic assistance. Subsequently, the years from 1948 to 1952 saw the fastest period of growth in European history. Industrial production increased by 35%.<sup>9</sup> Even though plan included Eastern Europe, and even Soviet Union, Stalin was skeptical about the America’s intention. Stalin accepted it as a tool to weaken the communist governments by intervening in economic structure of those countries. Therefore, he forced Eastern Europe to refuse any kind of aid from the US. Soon, as a response, Soviet Union launched symbolic plan, the Molotov Plan. This system aimed at creating an economic alliance (trade union) of all socialist countries. The war and its outcome were regarded as a triumph for the United States, because it was considered true success of the American economy by engaging militarily, politically and economically. War production had lifted the United States out of the Great Depression and had inaugurated an era of unimagined prosperity.<sup>10</sup> United States, economically, emerged as a strongest country in the world. But, Truman and his advisers thought that America is still insecure, when condition in its European market is at stake. United States well accepted that

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<sup>6</sup> Thompson, Kenneth W. COLD WAR THEORIES. Vol. 1. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981. (page 64)

<sup>7</sup> Axelrod, Alan. THE REAL HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR. A NEW LOOK AT THE PAST. New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 2009. (page 79)

<sup>8</sup> Leffler, Melvyn P., and Odd Arne Westad, eds. THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR. Vol. 1. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. (page 72)

<sup>9</sup> "The Marshall Plan and Molotov Plan." Boundless.com. Accessed April 1, 2017. <https://www.boundless.com/world-history/concepts/the-marshall-plan-and-molotov-plan-0-18138/>.

<sup>10</sup> Leffler, Melvyn P., and Odd Arne Westad, eds. THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR. Vol. 1. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. (page 67)

post-war Europe was desperate about establishing new order. Economic devastation left Europe fragile to Soviet exposure which was ready to help leftist movements to gain political power, thus, bringing the countries of Europe under Soviet sway. It meant that open-market economies of Europe would collapse, leading to dramatic decrease in demand to American goods since war ended as well. Thus, immediately after the Second World War, United States' focus concentrated on rehabilitation of the economic structure of Europe. Being vigilant about the Soviet Union's action, United States formed twin aims of rebuilding Western Europe and Germany whilst keeping the political situation on the continent fluid.<sup>11</sup> Thereby, Truman challenged the former isolationist policies of 1920s and 1930s, which he believed that caused the WW II and current hegemony of Soviet Union. Furthermore, Truman concluded that USA should oversee and prevent acquisition of rich resources by the 'hostile countries' which might use it to strengthen its army and start a new war, like the appeasement policy enabled Germany to do so.

From a broader perspective, it is important to comprehend that two superpowers, actually, pursued expansionist policy after triumph over Nazis. But, this situation was, indeed, creating an obstacle to both countries, rather than cooperation, because their interests were clashing. While US was planning to strengthen its capitalist agenda (economic imperatives) through actively investing in and exporting goods to European continent, Soviet Union encountered America by bringing, one by one, all potentially capitalist states under the dominion of communism. Both superpowers saw themselves as a leading actor of their camp. Each tried to ensure security by engaging in arm race. In one of Truman's speech, he uttered that United States would hold the atomic bomb as a "sacred trust" for all mankind, while Stalin reacted by quintupling the military research and development budget between 1945 and 1953.<sup>12</sup> To sum up, two superpowers pursued similar policies by altering façade in accordance with their ideologies, and were equally responsible for hostilities during the Cold War.

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<sup>11</sup> Ball, Simon J. *The Cold War, An international History, 1947-1991.* Bristol, Great Britain: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd, 1998. (page 11)

<sup>12</sup> Ball, Simon J. *The Cold War, An international History, 1947-1991.* Bristol, Great Britain: J.W. Arrowsmith Ltd, 1998. (page 16)

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