

History Knowledge Organiser HT3 - How can a war be 'cold'?



Ideological differences

The USA was capitalist; the USSR was communist. These conflicting beliefs underpinned the entire Cold War as each power believed the other was trying to spread its ideology around the world. There was division between the capitalist democracies of the West and the Communist dictatorships of the East, marked by the 'Iron Curtain'.

US actions

President Truman delivered a speech, which resulted in the Truman Doctrine, a commitment to protecting 'free peoples' from outside aggression. This was backed up by the Marshall Plan, which provided money to European countries to support recovery after WWII. Both actions were seen by the Soviet Union as a direct attack on communism.



Nuclear Arms Race

The development of atomic weapons increased the competition of the Cold War and made it dangerous as both superpowers pushed each other to the brink of war. The 'race' began in 1945 with the dropping of the atomic bomb by the USA, with further developments in bomb and missile technology by both superpowers throughout the Cold War.

Collapse of Grand Alliance

The USA and USSR had been united in WWII in order to defeat Hitler's Germany. This alliance began to crumble once Germany had been defeated and ideological differences started to come to the surface. When Truman became president, relations deteriorated further as he and Soviet leader Stalin did not get on.



Why did the Cold War develop between 1945 and 1949?

Soviet actions

The Soviet Union (USSR) wanted protection on its borders to avoid attack like in WWII. It expanded its influence (and communism) across Eastern Europe to create a buffer zone of friendly states. The Americans viewed this as aggressive expansion. This view was vindicated in 1948 when the Soviets blockaded West Berlin.

Key vocab and concepts:

Arms race - the rapid increase in the quantity and quality of military power

Blockade - the means of blocking a place to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving

Buffer zone - a neutral area serving to separate hostile forces or nations

Capitalism - an economic and political system where trade and industry are controlled privately rather than by the state

Cold War - a period of political tension between the Soviet Union and the USA

Communism - an economic and political system where all property is owned by the government

Containment Policy - US policy to prevent the spread of communism

Democracy - a system of government where the citizens exercise power by voting

Dictatorship - a form of government characterized by a single leader

Domino Theory - the idea that if one country becomes communist, the surrounding countries will follow in a domino effect

Iron Curtain - a non-physical boundary dividing Europe into separate areas after WW2

Superpower - a very powerful and influential nation