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## Who was to blame for the Cold War: the US or the USSR?

The Cold War is the name given to the period of ideological hostility that existed between the communist USSR and the democratic, capitalist USA after the end of World War Two until the collapse of the Soviet Union, which began in 1989. This hostility did not manifest itself in direct military conflict between the two superpowers, instead they attempted to gain a position of superiority through such things as propaganda, proxy wars, espionage, arms races, strategic spheres of influence and military positioning. The blame for this, nearly half century of global tension and aggression, is an area of constant debate: was it the Americans to blame, or the Russians?

Patrick's arguments that the Russians were to blame	Elliott's arguments that the Americans were to blame
Most of the actions taken by America after World War Two were defensive in nature and merely reflective of their resolve to contain the aggrandising and carnivorous desires of the USSR.	Most of the movements made by the Soviet Union after World War Two were defensive in nature – usually in response to an offensive action made by the USA and her allies.
The formation of COMINFORM (1947) and COMECON (1949) by the Soviet Union predated the formation of NATO (1949) by the USA. The West rightly interpreted these as aggressive actions and evidence of the Soviet desire to expand.	The Warsaw Pact was merely a response to the Allies formation of NATO. In the same way, the Molotov Plan (Comecon) and Cominform were direct responses to the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine.
The Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe was a fulfillment of their inherent and long-term desire - which had existed since 1917 - to spread Communism throughout the world. The sanctity of territorial sovereignty and the human rights of Eastern European citizens were of little to no importance to the USSR.	The Soviet 'takeover of Eastern Europe', which is usually used to point the finger of blame at the Russians, was a response to the perceived and actual threat posed by the Allies. It was also insurance (buffer zone) against another attack from the Germans (they had been attacked twice from the West in both world wars).
Ever since the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, the Soviet Union had been focused on exporting revolution to the rest of the world, an ideal that preoccupied it until the 1980s. This was understandably interpreted as aggressive and expansionist by America.	As far back as the civil war in newly communist Russia (just after 1917), the USA aggravated the USSR by involving themselves in the civil war that ravaged the Soviet Union, on the side of the Whites, or non-communists. Historical precedents for US aggression and antagonism were set early in the Twentieth Century.
Stalin's vision for Eastern Europe post WW2 did not match that of America; he was only prepared to accept Eastern European states that were communist satellites of the USSR, while the West believed in capitalist democracy.	Churchill <i>and</i> Roosevelt had agreed that much of Eastern Europe should be 'given' to the Soviet Union, in return for their own dominance in certain parts of Europe.
A perceived threat from the West on behalf of the USSR is not the same as an actual threat – nor is it a legitimate excuse for ignoring territorial sovereignty and democratic human rights for nearly 50 years after WW2.	The American atomic programme (which had been kept a secret from Russia – her ally during World War Two), as well as the use of the atomic bombs on Japan, were interpreted as threats to the Soviet Union.

Don't forget to check out Dr Elliott L. Watson's free website: [www.thecourseworkclub.com](http://www.thecourseworkclub.com) and follow him at @thelibrarian6 on Twitter.

Don't forget to check out Patrick O'Shaughnessy's free website: [www.historychappy.com](http://www.historychappy.com) and follow him at @historychappy on Twitter.