

**KEY QUESTION: Why did Soviet – US relations break down after 1945?**

**FACTOR 1: Long Term suspicion + mistrust**

The Russian Revolution occurred in October 1917 – the West viewed this as a threat to democracy and capitalism so they supported the Whites in the Russian Civil War (1918-21). The USSR created COMINTERN (1919) to spread communist ideology and encourage global revolution. The West were also suspicious of the USSR when they made the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August 1939.



**FACTOR 2: The Grand Alliance – A Marriage of Convenience**

The Grand Alliance was brought together because of the common goal of defeating fascism after Hitler invaded Russia in 1941 and Japan (Germany’s ally) attacked Pearl Harbour. The US and GB were democratic and the USSR was communist – these are very different ideologies.

**KEY TERMS**

Atomic Diplomacy  
Comintern

**DISCUSSION POINT**

Was the collapse of the Grand Alliance ‘inevitable’?

**FACTOR 3: Basic ideological incompatibility!**

**Politically:** Democracy championed representative and accountable government through regular multi-party elections. Communism believed in a one-party state.

**Economically:** The West believe in capitalism: free markets, competition, private ownership. Communism supports state ownership and a centrally planned economy.

**Society:** Democracy supports individual rights, such as freedom of speech and the press, whereas communist society restricts individual liberty for the collective ‘good’ and enforces censorship and suppresses freedom of speech.

**FACTOR 4: Atomic Bomb + Atomic ‘Diplomacy’**

Just before the Conference began, on 16 July 1945, the USA had successfully exploded an atomic bomb at their test site in the New Mexico desert. When first told about the success of the experiment, Truman is said to have remarked: if it works... *I’ll sure have a hammer on those boys*. At Potsdam, Truman chose to inform Stalin that the US possessed a new weapon of unusual destructive force. Although Stalin already knew details about the Manhattan Project through his spy networks, he was able to complain at this treatment and the fact that there were secrets between supposed Allies.

**FACTOR 5: Expansion of Communism**

Despite agreeing at Yalta that free elections would be held in Eastern Europe after the defeat of Nazi Germany, there was little evidence at Potsdam that Stalin intended to allow them. In fact the Red Army was in control of Poland and the USSR was in the process of setting up a communist government there. Truman would come to believe that Stalin was renegeing on the ‘Declaration on Liberated Europe’

**Two Meetings – differences emerge**

**YALTA** (February 1945) Seemingly a ‘constructive’ meeting. President Roosevelt willing to be understanding of Soviet post war concerns. However, Poland’s borders and government emerges as a potential problem, but is put on the ‘back burner’ as they concentrate on finally defeating Germany in Europe (May 8 1945)

**Two Meetings – differences consolidated...**

**POTSDAM** (July / August 1945): Personnel change, Truman replaces Roosevelt and he is ‘tired of babying the Soviet’ + says ‘win, lose draw, we must win!’. Differences over Germany evident – USSR want reparations and a neutral Germany. Truman thinks by allowing the USSR to have reparations they would be repeating the mistake of the Treaty of Versailles after WWI.

**Schools of thought which are You?**

**Orthodox / traditional:** USSR to blame for their attempts to enact a global communist revolution.

**Revisionist:** USA to blame – Truman took too hard a line after WWII

**Post Revisionist:** Both to blame – it was a product of avoidable ‘misunderstandings’