

History, The Cold War: Superpower relations between
1941-1991

Lesson 2 of 30

Worksheet

**Why did tension develop at the wartime
conferences?**



Conferences Background

Despite believing in **different political ideologies**, the USA, USSR and UK formed an alliance during WWII in order to defeat Hitler. However, their fundamental beliefs and attitudes towards each other did not change.

As the end of the war approached, the allies' **ideological** differences influenced how they wanted the world to be run after the war. The USA and the UK wanted a peaceful Europe to be **capitalist and democratic**. Stalin wanted to introduce Communism in **Eastern Europe** and bring these countries under the **control of the USSR**. Roosevelt and Churchill were suspicious of Stalin and he, in turn, was suspicious of their aims at the conferences.

Without their common enemy of Hitler and Nazi Germany, the **underlying tension** between the Grand Alliance would **start to develop**.



Tehran, November 1943 BACKGROUND

Before the Tehran conference, the leaders of the Grand Alliance had never formally met. This first conference was their opportunity to **discuss the planned invasion of Nazi occupied France**. Stalin wanted this to happen as the Soviet Red Army was the only army fighting the Nazis on land at this point in the war.

Stalin insisted on Tehran (in Iran) as a venue, as Iran had recently been brought under the control of Soviet and British forces. The wartime alliance was still in place as their **common aim** (to defeat Germany) remained the same, which **stopped tension developing**.



Tehran, November 1943 AGREEMENTS

USA and UK **agree to open a 'second front'** and attack Nazi occupied Europe through France. This would reduce the pressure on the Soviet army on the Eastern Front, which was suffering huge losses of men. The attack on Western Europe would force Germany to move troops away from the Eastern Front.

Once the war in Europe was over, **Stalin would declare war on Japan** and provide troops to support the USA in their fight in the East.

An **international organisation would be set up** where countries could talk through issues and agree solutions to avoid war in the future. This established the principle for the creation of the United Nations.

SUMMARY: both sides agree to support each other to fight their enemies



Tehran, November 1943 DISAGREEMENTS

Churchill was unhappy that the 'second front' was to be opened in the West, rather than in the Balkans (an area in South East Europe).

There was **some tension between Roosevelt and Churchill** as Roosevelt sided with Stalin over the 'second front' being in Western Europe. Roosevelt was also suspicious of Britain's **colonialism**.

Tensions between Roosevelt and Churchill hinted at the fact that, after the war, the two great superpowers would be the USSR and USA.

SUMMARY: suspicion, but no clear disagreements



Yalta, February 1945 BACKGROUND

Allied victory in WWII looked likely and the aim of Yalta was to decide **what to do with Germany once it was defeated.**

D-day had opened the 'second front' promised at Tehran and by February the allied forces were forcing their way into Germany as German troops retreated to Berlin.

The **USSR had defeated the Germans on the Eastern Front** and so had control of most of Central and Eastern Europe. Stalin was keen to **keep control of land** the Soviet army had fought so hard to win so that it could serve as a **buffer against future attacks from the West.**



Yalta, February 1945 AGREEMENTS

EASTERN EUROPE: countries in Eastern Europe to have **free elections** to determine their governments

GERMANY: to be **split into four zones** controlled by USA, USSR, UK, and France. Nazi party banned and war criminals put on trial.

REPARATIONS: Germany to **pay reparations of \$20 billion** for damage in the war. Half to go to USSR for their huge losses.

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations would be set up. Stalin had a lot of influence in negotiations as three countries, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, were in the USSR.

WAR: Stalin confirmed he would **join the war against Japan** after Germany was defeated.

SUMMARY: agreement over Germany, reparations, Eastern Europe



Yalta, February 1945 DISAGREEMENTS

POLAND: no one was really happy about Poland. Although **Stalin** was pleased that he would regain land as the Polish borders were reset to their 1921 position, he wanted **Poland to become Communist**. The **USA and UK wanted a free and democratic Poland** and supported the **government-in-exile** in London.

Poland would continue to be a problem in future meetings.

SUMMARY: disagreement over the future of Poland



Potsdam, July-August 1945 BACKGROUND

German surrender: in May 1945, Germany surrendered, the war in Europe was over and the common enemy, Hitler, was dead.

Change of leaders: Churchill was Prime Minister at the start of the conference but by the end the UK election had been decided and Labour's Clement **Attlee became Prime-Minister**. Attlee wanted to focus on improving welfare at home rather than foreign affairs. Harry **Truman** had taken over as **President** of the United States after Roosevelt's death in April 1945. Truman was much more anti-Communist than Roosevelt.

Atomic bomb: this was successfully tested by the USA the day after the conference began. The **timing was deliberate as Truman wanted to show his strength** as he was determined to be tough with Stalin.



Potsdam, July-August 1945 AGREEMENTS

Re-commitment to agreements at Yalta.

Germany: was **split into four zones** of occupation, although economy run as one. **Berlin also divided** into four zones, even though it was in the Soviet zone. This was to keep some Western influence in the East. Agreements made about the Nazi party at Yalta were confirmed.

Reparations: USSR, UK, USA, France each take **reparations from their zone of Germany**. USSR's zone was poorest so they could take a quarter of the industrial equipment from the other zones.

SUMMARY: agreement over Germany and reparations



Potsdam, July-August 1945 DISAGREEMENTS

REPARATIONS: Stalin wanted to go further than the agreement and take \$10 billion, but Truman refused as he did not want to destroy Germany.

EASTERN EUROPE: Truman and Stalin also clashed over what should happen to the countries in which the USSR had defeated Germany. **Truman felt that they should rule themselves**, rather than be controlled by the USSR. Stalin disagreed and had troops in Eastern Europe to enforce his influence in the region.

SUMMARY: disagreement over the government of Eastern Europe



Glossary

Ideology - a system of beliefs and ideas which form the basis of economic and political theory

Democratic - a system of government where the whole country elect a government

Tension - strain or stress in a relationship

Reparations - compensation for war damage paid by the defeated country

Government-in-exile - a government set up in another country when the government's country has been taken over by someone else

Atomic bomb - an extremely powerful weapon that causes damage by heat, blast, and radioactivity

Colonialism - where one country gains control of another, occupies it with settlers and benefits from it economically



Comprehension Questions

1. How did the different beliefs of the Grand Alliance cause tension between them?
2. What caused tension at the Tehran conference?
3. How did tension develop at the Yalta conference?
4. Why had the Grand Alliance broken up by the end of the Potsdam conference?
5. **Challenge question:** which area of disagreement do you think caused most tension between the Grand Alliance?

Once you have completed your answers, resume the lesson to find out how you got on and hear some more.

