

The Sub-zero Strife that Rescued Humanity

Fiona Finger

Senior Division

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Imagine two children sitting in a classroom. After collaborating on a team project several months earlier, the children slowly grow to resent each other, a feeling that eventually transforms into mutual enmity. None of the other children quite know the root of this resentment; some theorize it may have been over colored pencils, while others claim the disagreement stemmed from snack time length.

Regardless of the cause, the other children acknowledge this growing tension, and while some benefit from it, most of the other children fear these two contradicting characters.

Suddenly, one of the children develops a seemingly brilliant scheme. This scheme involves pretending to throw spitballs at his unsuspecting rival, therefore provoking, but not directly harming his enemy. By executing this genius plan, he figures his nemesis will grow annoyed, and dispose of his controversial, inferior opinion.

Therefore, terrible quickly, this child fashions a basic spit ball and pretends to launch it at his enemy. Although he never actually makes contact, he hopes this threat will strike fear and force his foe to resign.

Of course, child two is outraged. Immediately, he abandons his history project and devotes himself to duplicating and improving the rudimentary spitball his attacker produced.

The children continue this technological, physiological battle until their weapons evolve from spitballs to knives, finally transforming into guns. The rest of the class watches in intrigued horror, fearing both nations, and hyper aware of the destruction their fateful triggers are capable of causing.

Fortunately for the entire class, the children are both weakened from this strenuous encounter, and one of the children has lost his entire support system of friends and acquaintances. Both children realize they have gone too far, and disassemble their respective weaponry.

This tale ends with former friends, now reluctant acquaintances. A seemingly unacceptable ending. Yet when this conflict is scrutinized, several issues have been inadvertently solved. The children

have avoided completely destroying each other, and have learned the theoretical destruction of psychological warfare.

This allegory is a perfect analogy to the Cold War. Two countries, with contrasting ideologies, constantly provoking each other, engaging in an physiological battle of superiority.

But unlike this short story, the Cold War was not a *strictly* egotistical war, as many other factors resulted in the enkindling of the Cold War. Through conflicts surrounding communist vs capitalism, the use of realpolitik, and several minor provocations the Cold War was constructed. As the Cold War progressed, diverse strategies were used to increase support from the public, most notably the propaganda and censorship of both peripherals.

These issues magnified the potential for a full-scale war, and developed the “compromising” component of the Cold War. The Cold War itself was a compromise because this mental battle acted as surrogate for a potentially deadly war, rescuing all of humanity from annihilation. Additionally, the Cold War taught many lessons about human nature, and how to ameliorate the future. These factors clearly support the under acknowledged significance of the Cold War, and demonstrate how several complex conflicts nourished this critical compromise.

The most validated cause of the Cold War surrounds the debate over a Capitalistic or Communistic government. A quote by Allan Told, author of History for the IB Diploma: The Cold War, explains how these opposing countries regarded each other throughout the Cold War, “Both sides appeared to accept for most of the period that, ultimately, coexistence with the other political and social system was impossible and so were determined to weaken each other by any means short of all-out war.” This quote corroborates how a significant amount of pressure and importance was placed upon destroying each respective government system. Furthermore, this quote demonstrates the reluctance both sides felt towards war, but the desire they held to “beat” each other.

This hatred towards oppositional government types can be traced back to basic definitions of both systems. Capitalism, as defined in from Britannica's Dictionary¹ is , "An economic system that features private ownership of the means of production (such as factories, offices, and shipping enterprise." This becomes significant when reviewing the definition of communism, " a political and economic system in which the major productive resources in a society (such as mines, factories, and farms) are owned by the public or the state."² These quotes are identical in structure and explanatory tone, but demonstrate the fundamental difference between communism and capitalism; ownership. While communism centers around collaboration and equality, bringing minor success for the total population, capitalism centers around self-worth and opportunity, bringing major success for smaller portions of the population.

After acknowledging this "fundamental cleavage"³ between communism and capitalism, it seems destined a battle would result. Previous historical events; such as The French, American, and Serbian Revolutions showcase how disagreements over government style are capable of providing unavoidable conflict.

Conflict was magnified by the Cold War because two major world powers were constantly clashing. This destined battle produced the ideal breeding ground for the Cold War. Ronald Reagan, President of the US during a large fraction of the Cold War, acknowledged this governmental battle in his own words, claiming the Cold War to be the battle between "An Evil Empire and The Free West."⁴ Clearly, this statement holds significant bias, but explains the opinion that communism (the USSR) had imprinted upon the US. Additionally, this statement portrays the significant propaganda and over exaggeration used to procure support for the Cold War.

¹ "Capitalism." *Britannica Kids*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

² "Communism." *Britannica Kids*. N. p., 2018. Web. 16 Jan. 2018.

³ *Deutscher*, I. 1969. *Stalin*. Quoted in *Rayner*, E. G. 1992. *The Cold War*. London, UK. *Hodder Murray*. p.9.

⁴ "Reagan, "Evil Empire," Speech Text - Voices Of Democracy." *Voices of Democracy*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

In order to gain more knowledge on this main cause, an interview was conducted on The Public Perception of the Cold War.⁵ The first interviewee, Polina Finger, was 16 years old when the Cold War ended in 1991. Located in St.Petersburg, Russia (former Soviet Union), Polina was exposed to a substantial amount of government propaganda. When asked to share the Soviet's typical opinion surrounding capitalism during the Cold War, Polina says she was repeatedly told; "communism is a superior system, and capitalism is simply decay." This propagandized statement provides a unique USSR outlook towards the Cold War. To a Russian citizen, capitalism was simply viewed as a "dying" method of government, and communism was superior. This is unique because USSR pushed forward the battle of superiority overall, and encouraged the Cold War by promoting communism as a powerful, successful method of government.

Another key constituent in The Cold War was the use of realpolitik. Realpolitik is defined as the idea of adhering to others interests, for personal benefit, even if personal viewpoints do not align. The use of realpolitik can be identified during WW2, when the USSR and US combined forces to benefit the entirety of the world. After banding together, ample victory was bestowed upon both sides of this union, and it seemed reasonable to allow this alliance to continue. In reality, both sides had their own motives and intentions between this affiliation, and these conflicting goals lead to the initial collapse.

This use of realpolitik is magnified in a quote by Isaac Deutscher in 1967⁶, "The condominium of the 'Big Three' (Britain, US, and USSR) was toppling even before it had taken solid shape...In this 'marriage of convenience' the thought of the inevitability of divorce had been in the back of the mind of each partner from the beginning."The aforementioned WW2 example demonstrates how all members of this metaphorical "marriage" held very self-focused ideals in mind, and only combined forces because of

⁵ Finger, Fiona, and Polina V Finger. "A Russian Recollection of the Cold War ." 10 Jan. 2018.

⁶ Deutscher, I. 1969. Stalin. Quoted in Rayner, E. G. 1992. The Cold War. London, UK. Hodder Murray. p.9.

convenience. Essentially, Deutscher is speaking about the how this "convenient" alliance was doomed to fail simply because all parties believed so.

Subsequent of this belief, many more possible causes are developed for the Cold War. In fact, upon investigating the psychological connection between beliefs and actions, a discovery was made and then dubbed "the placebo effect." Although this is a complex, scientific phenomenon, the basic theory of the placebo effect can be related to failure of the WW2 alliance.

The placebo effect is typically described as a cognitive event where the human body heals itself by using only remedies triggered by the brain. To clarify this theory, an experiment published in *The Science Translational Medicine* explored this the placebo effect by testing how people reacted to migraine pain medication. One group took a migraine drug labeled with the drug's name, another took a placebo labeled "placebo." The researchers discovered that the placebo was 50% as effective as the real drug to reduce pain after a migraine attack.⁷

In relation to the Cold War, this experiment provides an accurate representation on human character, and the power of thinking. Therefore, because both opposing forces of the Cold War simply *believed* that ending their alliance and eliminating opposing government systems was important, they were more determined to create these "favorable" ideals.

The overall concept of the placebo effect suggests that even though scientific, logical evidence may argue against what the human brain chooses to decide, the human brain can often win. It is obviously a stretch to claim an entire *war* was fueled because of basic human nature, but history and science have a unique history of intermingling, and the human response for fear is overcompensation and determination, two critical factors of the Cold War.

The two formerly mentioned factors also play a large role in propaganda that was infused into citizens. As a result of this extreme propaganda the Cold War only grew more inevitable. In the US,

⁷ Publishing, Harvard. "The Power Of The Placebo Effect - Harvard Health." *Harvard Health*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

Government propaganda was used to portray the USSR as “evil” and “deceitful”. To study the effects these propaganda sources had on US citizens, another interview directed towards public perception of the Cold War was conducted.⁸ This interview featured Thomas Finger, a US citizen living in Wisconsin during the Cold War. Subsequent of his youth throughout the war, (Thomas was 28 when the Cold War “ended”) Thomas provides a unique adolescent perspective on this controversial topic. As he describes his experiences, it is interesting to note how modified and amplified certain Cold War aspects are in his memory. Specifically, government propaganda appears as a emphasized percentage of this historic event. In one quote, Thomas states how, ““Everybody in my times period grew up with James Bond. I would say this was the most influential source of information at the time, and that the Soviets were often portrayed as ‘evil’ and ‘aggressive.’”

Reflecting upon quotes collected from James Bond films, this statement can be very clearly affirmed. In a particular 1964 episode⁹ Russian characters are often described using verbs such as “icily” and frequently drawing guns. Additionally, threats are often used such as “If you do you will be *shot!*” These biased descriptions demonstrate how the US utilized media sources to procure support for the Cold War, and how the battle of “good vs evil” was portrayed through TV characterization.

Finally, minor provocations were also employed throughout the Cold War. A short list of these events include the 1980 Olympic Boycott in Moscow. The Olympic Boycott in Moscow was presidential choice made by James Carter, encouraging US Olympians and allies to boycott the upcoming games due to an Afghanistan invasion led by Russian. James Montague, an aspiring olympian, lost his only chance at a gold medal due to this event. As Montague recalls the moment he learned he could not attend the upcoming olympics; “And then I heard those words from Pres. Carter: 'We will not go'. I thought, you gotta be kidding me? We're not going to the Olympics? I was heartbroken that politics and sport had

⁸ Finger, Fiona, and Thomas R Finger. “An American Recollection of the Cold War.” 10 Jan. 2018.

⁹ “Quotes From “From Russia With Love”.” *IMDb*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

mixed, but they always do, it's no use pretending otherwise."¹⁰ This was a strategic power play made by the US to provoke Russia, and demonstrate a lack of respect. The Olympic Boycott also revealed the US did not see Russia's athletes as worthy competitors, widening the Cold War conflict.

Another competition of superiority fought between the Soviets and US was The Space Race. Katherine Paterson shares her experience with The Space Race, stating that, "Sputnik dramatically raised the nation's awareness of what was lacking in science and math education in America."¹¹ This is an intriguing quote that indicates how The Space Race fueled yet another battle between these superpowers, one of intelligence. Through technological warfare, this race took place in space, pushing both sides to their extremes, and encouraging both sides to feel superior to each other as advancements were made. This only elevated the Cold War conflict, and brought a balance between scientific limits and the necessity for power that both countries faced.

The Cold War left the post-war world with several tainted victories, yet no defined victor. As a result of this lengthy battle, the USSR crumbled, allowing several independent nations to form. This fragmentation resulted in the disintegration of a world superpower, leaving the US as the strongest, and most influential country in existence.

Although sometimes viewed as an insignificant piece of history, the Cold War holds much relevance in our current world. Principally because if the Cold War had not occurred, there would not be a world left to live in.

Through conflicts surrounding government type, artificial alliances, and strategic power plays, the Cold War was permitted. As the Cold War progressed, diverse strategies were used to increase support from the public, including the use of television and impactful characterization.

¹⁰ James Montague, CNN. "Gold Against The Soul: An Athlete's Story Of The 1980 Moscow Boycott - CNN." *CNN*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

¹¹ "Katherine Paterson Quote." *A-Z Quotes*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

The Cold War represents a compromise because this mental battle acted as replacement for a potentially deadly war, rescuing all of humanity from annihilation. Additionally, the Cold War taught many lessons about human nature, and how improve future relations.

Regardless of whether future generations chose to listen, the Cold War shares many lessons. As 2018 plunges into a new year, new relationships are made throughout the world, and many historians argue Russia and the US have begun a new "Cold War", due to their icy relationship.

In order to prevent history from repeating itself, it is up to the current and future generations to find a compromise, even when conflict seems unavoidable. History will continue repeating until a lesson is learned and acted upon. As best stated by John. F Kennedy, "Mankind must end warfare or warfare will end mankind."¹² And what better way to end conflict, then with compromise?

Primary Sources

Finger, Fiona, and Polina V Finger. "A Russian Recollection of the Cold War ." 10 Jan. 2018.

This was an interview I conducted to learn more about the Russian perspective on the Cold War.

Polina Finger was a young Russian girl growing up during the Cold War. This interview was used for several quotes throughout the essay, as well as creating a compare/contrast structure with the American

¹² "John F. Kennedy Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

perspective of the Cold War. I learned a significant amount of information surrounding propaganda uses and impact throughout the Cold War.

Finger, Fiona, and Thomas R Finger. "An American Recollection of the Cold War." 10 Jan. 2018.

Similar to the other cited interview, I conducted this conversation to discover more about American perspective on the Cold War, as well as contrasting features between the two sides. Thomas was a teenage boy during the Cold War and he lived in Wisconsin throughout the Cold War. I used quotes and ideas suggested from this interview throughout my piece.

James Montague, CNN. "Gold Against The Soul: An Athlete's Story Of The 1980 Moscow Boycott - CNN." *CNN*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

This news story includes a personal account of a US Olympian. I used a short story and quote from this article to add a personal touch to a historical event. This was a unique evidence because it added a human point of view to the Cold War.

"John F. Kennedy Quotes." *BrainyQuote*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

I used a quote from JFK to close my essay and attempt to teach a meaningful lesson to future generations. This was a significant source to me because it helped bring an authoritative, experience perspective into my piece.

"Katherine Paterson Quote." *A-Z Quotes*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

From this source I used a quote about "The Space Race" between the US and USSR. This was a helpful piece of evidence because it provided a primary source on how The Space Race affected the US population.

"Quotes From "From Russia With Love"." *IMDb*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

In this source, I used quotes from the James Bond film; From Russia With Love. This source showcased the use of propaganda through television, and how quotes in the movie were angled to villainize the Soviets. This is a critical source because it supports how the Cold War was enlarged and over exaggerated.

"Reagan, "Evil Empire," Speech Text - Voices Of Democracy." *Voices of Democracy*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

Ronald Reagan was president of the US for a large portion of the Cold War. I utilized a quote by Reagan to demonstrate the US perspective on the USSR. This source helped me understand how perspectives varied during the Cold War.

Secondary Sources

"Capitalism." *Britannica Kids*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

This was a page on a renown dictionary website I used to describe the definition of capitalism. I used several quotes from this website to compare/contrast with other quotes and learn about the fundamentals of these government systems.

"Communism." *Britannica Kids*. N. p., 2018. Web. 16 Jan. 2018. (Secondary Source)

This was a page on a respected dictionary website I used to describe the definition of communism. I used several quotes from this website to compare/contrast with other quotes and learn about the fundamentals of these government systems.

Deutscher, I. 1967. Stalin. Quoted in Rayner, E. G. 1992. The Cold War. London, UK. Hodder Murray. p.9.

This was a quote taken from an article by a historian. Through this quote, the ending of the 'Big Three' (Soviet, British, US) is explained and justified. This quote adds to my paper because it helps identify and justify the mental stance of Cold War competitors, adding yet another perspective to this piece.

Publishing, Harvard. "The Power Of The Placebo Effect - Harvard Health." *Harvard Health*. N. p., 2018. Web. 17 Jan. 2018.

In this article I found interesting facts about human physiology and behavior. I used these quotes to justify a possible scientific cause of the Cold War. This source was significant because it provided a source that I used to demonstrate the connection between science and human actions.

Todd, Allan. *History for the IB Diploma: The Cold War*.

Allan Todd was the author of a well-plotted and presented book. This textbook was incredibly important to my paper because it helped me understand various details about the Cold War. I used several quotes and paraphrased pieces of information from this piece.