**In A Nutshell – Origins of the Cold War – Key points guide (revise around this, it is only a skeleton!)**

1. **Who was responsible for the Cold War?**

**Historical interpretations**

* **The Orthodox School**

Popular until the 1970s with historians such as W. H. McNeill in *America, Britain and Russia, Their Co-operation and Conflict 1941-6*, 1953. This blamed the Cold War on Soviet expansionism.

* **The Revisionist School**

Very much influenced by those in USA who criticised US involvement in war in Vietnam in the 1960s. Historians such as G. Kolko and G. Alperowitz blamed the Cold War on the provocative actions of the USA.

* **The Post-Revisionist School.**

1970s move away from blaming either side. Historians taking a more detached view and looking at range of causes. E.g. D. Kergin *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State,* 1977.

**Introduction: Causes of the Cold War**

**Long term causes**

* **Bolshevik Revolution**. This brought conflict with the West due to fears of the spread of communist ideas especially as Lenin advocated world revolution.
* **Wilsonian Liberalism**. This conflicted with Bolshevism. It was based on his belief in national self-determination with no government imposed on national groups, open markets and collective security based on the League of Nations. The Bolsheviks saw all these as tools of world capitalism.
* **Stalin** remembered and resented US and British intervention in the Civil War in support of the Bolshevik opponents, the Whites. He was also suspicious of the Anglo-French policy of appeasement in the 1930s towards Nazism and Fascism. Were the West intending to use Nazism against the Soviet Union?
* **Economic differences**. Marxism blamed the division of society on capitalism and private ownership and wanted state ownership of all businesses and land. This was the antithesis of the US economy which was based on private enterprise.
* **Political differences**. The USA increasingly championed liberal democracy based on freedom to vote, of speech, of worship and of the press. Communism opposed multi-party states which created conflict and divisions and believed in a on-party state ruling on behalf of the people.

**The Second World War**

* **The Grand Alliance** was borne out of necessity – The USA, USSR and Britain allied against the Axis Powers. There were several strains in the Alliance.
* **Stalin** was furious at the delay in opening up a second front against Germany until June 1941. He believed that the West wanted to see the Soviet Union defeated by Nazi Germany.
* **Poland** increased the East-West differences. Britain had gone to war to maintain Polish independence. Stalin, on the other hand, had no intention of accepting an unfriendly government in Warsaw.
* Strategically, **Soviet control of Poland** was vital to prevent future invasions. Britain and the USA were appalled when, in August 1944, the Warsaw uprising took place and the Soviet army, which had reached the River Vistula outside Warsaw, did nothing to help.
* Many in the USA, especially **Harry Truman**, the Vice-President, hated communism and disliked working closely with the USSR.

**The legacy of the Second World War**

This was the immediate reason for the Cold War.

* The power vacuum created by the defeat of Nazi Germany. Huge areas of Europe had been liberated. What form of government and economy would they have?
* The USA wanted the liberated countries to be given freedom of choice over government and economy. In the huge areas of eastern Europe occupied by the Red Army, Stalin favoured Soviet type regimes. Stalin made this clear in 1945: ‘whoever occupies a territory imposes his own social system. It cannot be otherwise’.
* Distrust and suspicion on both sides fuelled by western support for the Whites during the Russian Civil War and western dislike of Stalin’s purges of the 1930s.
* This was intensified by the US decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan in 1945. Stalin was furious at not being consulted. It also sent out a clear message about the military superiority of the USA.

**Soviet attitudes in 1945**

**To what extent was the Soviet Union responsible for the Cold War?**

* **The traditional view blamed Stalin and Soviet expansionism when the USSR imposed Soviet style regimes on Eastern Europe.**
* Stalin’s aims were more complicated that this. He was determined to maintain the security of the Soviet Union and prevent a future invasion.
* Over 20 million Soviet citizens were killed during the Second World War. He wanted to create Soviet controlled buffer zones in Eastern Europe but for survival rather than world revolution and the spread of communism. Expansionism was not his primary objective.

**US attitudes in 1945**

* Roosevelt had been prepared to co-operate and compromise with Stalin especially over the future of eastern Europe.
* He died in April 1945 and was replaced by Harry Truman who was greatly influenced by anti-communist groups in the USA and was very suspicious of Stalin’s motives.
* The *Long Telegram* of 1945 seemed to confirm all Truman’s suspicions. It was written by George Kennan, the USA’s Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Moscow. He saw Stalin as aggressive and insisted that only a hard-line approach would prevent Soviet expansion.
* Truman adopted a hard-line or ‘Iron Fist’ approach as a reaction to the failure of appeasement in the 1930s to stop Nazi expansionism.
* The US failed to understand Stalin’s obsession with security against attack. Instead they were influenced by the Comintern and the desire of the USSR to encourage world revolution.
* This seemed confirmed by Soviet attempts to impose governments on eastern Europe. An expansionist and aggressive Soviet foreign policy was viewed as the product of the totalitarian regime in the USSR.
* US industry pressurised the government to protect its markets in Europe against the spread of communism.

**When did the Cold War start?**

Historians differ on this.

* For historians such as Arthur Schlesinger, who see the Cold War as a clash of rival ideologies, it began with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.
* Others, such as William A. Williams, believe it was caused by the US decision to take a major role in world affairs in 1945.
* J. R. Starobin and other post-revisionists believe that negotiation and compromise were still possible in 1945 but broke down in the ensuing two years. The Cold War began properly in 1947.

**How did the Cold War develop, 1945-7?**

By 1947 there was a deep rift between East and West due to differences over the future of Germany, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

The first real signs of differences occurred at the allied conferences of 1945.

**Yalta, February 1945**

* They agreed on the setting up of the United Nations, the post-war partition of Germany and the principle of free elections in eastern Europe.
* There was some disagreement over Poland. Stalin had set up a communist government at Lublin but agreed to the demands from the West for free elections in return for keeping the parts of Poland occupied in 1939.

**Potsdam, July 1945**

* Relations were far less cordial. Truman was now President and distrusted Stalin.
* The USA and Britain were annoyed at Stalin’s actions in eastern Europe. Communist groups were being positioned in important government roles. Soviet influence was expanding in Poland where there seemed little chance of free elections.

**The Atomic bomb**

Worsened the distrust between the two sides.

* Stalin was furious that he had not been consulted.
* Truman saw this as an ideal opportunity to show the military strength of the USA and, at the same time, make Stalin more amenable in Europe.

Attitudes continued to harden in 1946 due to:

* Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech, March 1946. Churchill delivered the speech at Fulton, Missouri and insisted that an iron curtain had descended across Europe from ‘Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic’ and stressed the need for an alliance between Britain and the USA to prevent further Soviet expansion.
* Truman reiterated his iron fist approach. ‘Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language another war is in the making’.

**The Truman Doctrine**

Soviet support for communism in Greece seemed to confirm the worst suspicions of the West.

* Post war Greece saw a struggle between the British sponsored royalist government and communists who were strong in the countryside.
* In February 1947, Britain, almost bankrupt, told the US government that it could no longer maintain troops in Greece.
* In March Truman issued a statement known as the Truman Doctrine. ‘It must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressure’.
* Although its immediate aim was to support the Greek government, it had important long term implications. Truman was not prepared to allow communism to triumph. Whenever there was a straight choice between communism and democracy, the USA would intervene against communism.
* The USA was assuming the role of the ‘policeman of the world’ to stop the spread of communism.
* US aid of $400,000,000 was enough to defeat the communists in Greece.

**Marshall Aid**

This was USA aid to those countries in Europe devastated by the Second World War. It furthered the divisions between East and West. It was offered in 1947 just months after the Truman Doctrine.

* Although applicable to all countries affected by the war, those of eastern Europe did not apply as they would have to open up their economies to US capitalist interests.
* To the Soviet Union it was a deliberate attempt by the USA to extend their political and economic influence into western Europe, another example of American imperialism.
* The USSR retaliated by setting up the Cominform, an organisation to co-ordinate communist parties throughout Europe, and the Comecon, an organisation to provide economic assistance to the states of eastern Europe.
* Churchill believed the Marshall plan was ‘the most unselfish act in history’. It was not. The USA was trying to protect its economic and political interests in Europe. A bankrupt western Europe would not be able to trade with the USA and might well be susceptible to a communist takeover.
* Again, who was responsible for the escalation of the Cold War, 1945-7. Stalin and his policies in Poland and Eastern Europe or the USA with the atomic bomb, Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan?

**B: The Soviet ‘takeover’ of Eastern Europe**

**Stalin’s motives**

Two very different views.

* Historians such as Samuel Sharp and F. Shuman, believe he was following the traditional expansionist policies of the Tsars.
* Revisionists believe his motives were far more defensive and involved the security of the USSR.

**Defensive**

This was due to the weakness of the Soviet Union in 1945.

* Militarily Stalin felt threatened by the USA especially after the use of the atomic bomb.
* Economically, the USSR was weak after 4 years of war.
* The war had resulted in the deaths of 20 million Soviet citizens, the highest of any countries involved in the wars.
* Poland was traditionally hostile to Russia and would need to be controlled.
* Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria had all allied with Nazi Germany.
* Stalin therefore wanted a series of buffer states to secure the USSR against possible future western invasions.
* The USA failed to understand Stalin’s defensive motives and saw this as evidence of Soviet expansionism.

**Buffer states**

Stalin’s views appear to have changed between 1945 and 1947.

* In 1945 he appeared willing to accommodate the west and accept limited free elections in eastern Europe. Indeed he did not believe communism would suit countries such as East Germany.
* By 1947 he realised that he could only maintain control through the imposition of Soviet style regimes.

**Soviet policies 1945-8**

**‘Takeover’ 1945-7**

* About 11 million Red Army troops were stationed in eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. This number was reduced over the next two years although sixty divisions were left to police the area.
* Pro-communist governments were set up in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania.
* This normally followed the same pattern with the Soviet Union forcing communist politicians into positions of authority, especially minister of the interior and elections then manipulated to ensure communist success.

**Czechoslovakia, 1948**

* By 1948 Czechoslovakia was the only remaining democratic country in eastern Europe. Elections were due to be held but the communists were unpopular as the Czechs had not been allowed Marshall Aid.
* There was a communist takeover. The police was purged and non-communist political leaders purged. The leading non-communist in the government, Jan Masaryk, was arrested and died in custody.
* President Benes was forced to resign and was replaced by the communist, Gottwald.

**The Berlin Crisis, 1948-9**

This was the first major crisis of the Cold War and illustrated the central problem of Germany.

**Causes**

* The West now favoured a strong, revived Germany as a barrier to Soviet expansion. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, wanted to keep Germany weak.
* These differences were shown in Berlin. West Berlin benefited from Marshall Aid and quickly recovered and began to prosper. East Berlin, like the rest of East Germany, was plundered by the USSR and not allowed Marshall Aid. Conditions were poor.
* In 1947-8 the three western zones were united economically to aid recovery.
* As a symbol of increasing prosperity the allies decided to introduce a new Deutschmark. This was the last straw for Stalin.
* In June 1948 he severed all road, rail and canal links with West Berlin.
* The USA believed this was the first stage to Stalin forcing them out of West Germany. This was unlikely.

**Results**

* The West organised an airlift of supplies to West Berlin. All food and fuel supplies for over 2 million Berliners were flown into the city. By May 1949 Stalin had conceded defeat and lifted the blockade.
* The Berlin crisis showed the need for a co-ordinated defence strategy by the West and the formation of NATO.
* It ended any hope of reunification between East and West Germany. In August 1949 the three western zones of Germany joined together to become the Federal Republic of Germany.
* In response, the Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic.
* Relations between the USSR and USA reached an all time low in 1949.
* The creation of NATO meant that US forces were sent to Europe and the Iron Curtain now became a front line.

**Nato and the Warsaw Pact**

These two organisations symbolised the Cold War, the divisions between East and

West.

**Nato, 1949**

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was set up in 1949.

* This came about as a direct result of the Berlin crisis of 1948-9. The crisis showed the need for the western powers to work together against communism.
* It involved the USA in a military alliance in peacetime. There would be no return to isolationism.
* An attack on one member would be seen as an attack on all.
* A NATO command was set up to co-ordinate the defence of its members.
* To Stalin, this was a deliberately provocative act by the West.

**The Warsaw Pact, 1955**

* The Soviet equivalent of NATO. It was an agreement to co-ordinate the defence of eastern Europe.
* It was set up after West Germany was admitted to Nato in 1955. It should the depth of fear that the Soviet government had of a possible revival of German militarism.
* If one member was attacked the others would come to their aid.
* The Pact’s headquarters was in Moscow under a Soviet Supreme Commander.
* This strengthened Soviet military control over eastern Europe. Soviet troops were stationed across the buffer states.