

Cold War: Document Based Question

Cold War Beginnings Historical Context: Between 1945 and 1950, the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union broke down and the Cold War began. For the next 40 years, relations between the two superpowers swung between confrontation and détente. Each tried to increase its worldwide influence and spread its competing economic and political systems.

Directions: Using the documents below complete the Document POV and Significance Sheet. Use the question below and the Document POV and Significance sheet to create an argument that you will explain in a three paragraph response.

Question: *Which side, the United States and its Western allies, or the Soviet Union and its allies in the East, was more responsible for starting the Cold War?*

Document 1

This is an excerpt from Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech, March 5, 1946:

"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe... All the famous cities and the populations around them lie in the Soviet sphere and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence, but to a very high and increasing measure of control from Russia."

Document 2

This is an excerpt from the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed by the United States, Canada, and ten nations of Western Europe in 1948:

"The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or in North America shall be considered as an attack against them all. They agree that if such an armed attack occurs, each of them will assist the party or parties so attacked. Each will immediately take whatever action it considers necessary to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. It will, if necessary, use armed force."

Document 3

The Soviet Union responded to NATO by creating its alliance, the Warsaw Pact (shown below):

Soviet Union, Albania (until 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (until 1990), Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

Document 4

This is an excerpt from a speech by Soviet Premier (leader) Nikita Khrushchev in 1956 in which he explains his point of view on U.S. actions:

"The inspirers of the "cold war" began to establish military blocs – the North Atlantic bloc, SEATO, and the Baghdad pact. (They claim) they have united for defense against the "communist threat." But this is sheer hypocrisy! We know from history that when planning a redivision of the world, the imperialist powers have always lined up military blocs. Today the "anti-communist" slogan is being used as a smoke screen to cover up the claims of one power for world domination. The United States wants, by means of blocs and pacts, to secure a dominant position in the capitalist world. The inspirers of the "position of strength" policy assert that it makes another way impossible because it ensures a "balance of power" in the world. (They) offer the arms race as their main recipe for the preservation of peace! It is perfectly obvious that when nations compete to increase their military might, the danger of war becomes greater, not lesser. Capitalism will find its grave in another world war, should it unleash it."

Document 5

The threat of nuclear war was obvious in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. This excerpt, from President John F. Kennedy's speech to the American people, explains the US position:

"... We have unmistakable evidence that a series of offensive missile sites is now being built on that island ... Cuba has been made into an important strategic base by the presence of these long-range offensive weapons of sudden mass destruction. This is an open threat to the peace and security of the Americas. Our objective must be to prevent the use of these missiles against this or any other country. We must secure their withdrawal from the Western Hemisphere ... I call upon Chairman Khrushchev to halt and eliminate this secret and reckless threat to world peace."

Document 6

After Kennedy ordered a blockade of all offensive military equipment being sent into Cuba, Premier Khrushchev responded with this message:

"Mr. President, the Soviet government decided to help Cuba with means of defense against outside attack. These weapons were only meant for defensive purposes. We have supplied them to prevent aggression against Cuba ... With respect and confidence I accept the statement you set forth in your message of October 27, 1962. You said then that Cuba will not be attacked or invaded by any country of the Western Hemisphere ... We have given the order to discontinue building the installations. We shall dismantle them and withdraw them to the Soviet Union."

Document 7- American Political Cartoon



Document POV and Significance

	Author	Point of View (POV)	Audience	Significance
Document 1				
Document 2				
Document 3				
Document 4				
Document 5				
Document 6				
Document 7				