

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND SOVIET UNION RELATIONS: THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLD WAR OVER BERLIN 1958 - 1961

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Abstract

This work focused on United State of America and Soviet Union relations how the relationship lead to ideological war popularly known as the Cold War and how this war affected Berlin. The era heralded the advent of the most destructive instruments in the annals of humans development – the Atomic Bomb and the Ballistic Missiles. The presence of these instruments in the midst of humanity, gave rational beings something to worry about. During this period, international peace was exposed to the danger of being violated. More warrisome but engaging is this notion has continued to survive in many accounts of the era. Obviously, the role of Cold War in perpetuating conflict or enhancing peace in the international political system need to be re-examind. This paper, therefore, re-examines, the impact of the Cold War on international peace, with place like Berlin as area of concentration. Measure taken by the lead actors – the United States and the Soviet Union respectively, and how the two super powers explore the era in order to protect their national and vital interest. The zeal of nations in quest of acquiring and maintaining supetr identity in the International politics. The paper finds out that the influence of the Cold War over Berlin violated international peace and polarised the international system. The paper thus argues that the entire world populace must have a sense of commitment to the international system. This is attainable only when the international political apparatus is organised and managed in such a way that it will reflect the people’s yearnings. To realise this, we need a compitent and dynamic world body which will be capable of interpreting what constitutes the overall human interests into common interest. The paper is historical: hence, it adopts a qualitative method of analysis. Useful pieces of information were obtained from important relevant documents, and array of secondary sources.

Key Words: United States, Soviet Union, Relations, Cold War, Berlin.

Introduction

In the early hours of August 6, 1945, a belligerent American pilot, hovering over the sleepy city of Hiroshima, pressed a butten that heralded an unprecedented change in the international system. Thus arrived the atomic bomb a ghastly new dimension had been added to warfare.

The World War II, ended with the emergenc of two opposing ideological blocs in international system led by the United States of America on one hand and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) on the other hand. The cold War, a brain-child of the second world war, originated from the war-time illusions of the Western Statesmen. These actors notably, Winston Churchill Prime Minister of Britain and President Truman of Americ, anticipated a post war co-operation of Soviet Union, but the post war development disillusioned them. This is aptly stated by Fleming D., The Cold War, originated in the chagrin of Western leaders, notably Churchill and Trman, over Soviet control of central and Eastern Europe after World War II.ⁱ

The Soviet violation of the allies post war peace treaties at Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, her outright blockade of her portion of Berlin from the West, the communist expansionism in East Europe, and the Soviet’s frustration of free election in Eastern Europe alarmed the Western leaders. “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, Sir Winston Churchill warned, an iron curtain has descended across the continent”.ⁱⁱ

The World War II ended in a most spectacular way – the emergence of the two super-powers and the birth of the atomic bomb. This destructive instrument was used by the United States to end the war with Japan. Britain having secretly possessed the atomic bomb, took steps to conceal it from Soviet Union and other actors of international political system. In his iron curtain speech on May 3, 1946, Winston Churchill of Britain said:

It would nevertheless be wrong and impudent to entrust the secret knowledge or experience of the atomic bomb, which United States, Britain and Canada now shares, to the World Organisation, while it is in its infancy. It would be criminal madness to cast it adrift in this agitated and ununited world. No one in any country has slept less well in their beds because this knowledge and the method and the materials to supply it, are at present retained in American hands. I do not believe, we should all have slept so soundly, had the position be reversed, and if some communist or neo-fascist state monopolised for the time being these dreaded agencies.ⁱⁱⁱ

The monopoly of the atomic bomb by the West and the war time strategy of the western allied nations whereby they delayed the opening of the second front for lack of sufficient barges for such enormous undertaking and which the Soviets interpreted as a “deliberate attempt by the World’s two leading capitalist powers to destroy both of their two major ideological opponents one and the same time”,^{iv} naturally led to mutual suspicion of Western powers by the Soviet Union. She saw her Western allies, war time delay in opening the second front as a calculated attempt by the West to expose the Red Army to massive onslaught of the Nazi’s. During the war-time and post war-time peace conferences, the allied powers laid down modalities for post war settlement. Hence the end of the World War II, heralded the division of Europe between the victorious powers – Britain, America, Soviet Union and France.

The continued stay of Soviet troops in East Europe, the suppression of free election and expansionism policy in East Europe generated tension in the relationship between the Soviet Union and West nations. These tensions paved the way for the emergence of a new era in the international political system – The Cold War. The western leaders fear of Communist expansionism led to the adoption of containment policy which became a dominant factor of the foreign policy of the western countries, especially the United States.^v

Guided by the spirit of deterrence, the western nations formed themselves into military alliance – The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), in 1949. The tensed situation in the global scene was intensified by the Soviet explosion of the first atomic bomb in August, 1949, and the successful communist revolution in China, in the same year. These developments alarmed the western powers so much that they formed various alliances, both military and economic, in order to checkmate the strange Communist expansionism. The Soviet Union, responded with the forming of Warsaw Pact on May 14, 1955.^{vi}

The zeal to contain communism, escalated the Cold War, the world drew nearer to global conflict. The Cold War was carried to Europe, Asia, Latin America, Central America, Middle – East and Africa. The world came close to witnessing the Third World War in 1950, when the ideological giants – the United States, and Soviet Union, took sides in the Korea War of 1950 – 1953. In Vietnam, Cuba, Berlin, the Middle-East and Congo, the Cold War blossomed and global conflict seem imminent.^{vii}

The intensification and proliferation of Cold War in different fronts, compelled the principal actors – the capitalist bloc and the communist bloc led by both the United States and the Soviet Union respectively to embarked on stock-piling of nuclear weapons, the Arms Race ensued and nuclear war threatened the world. The stock-piling of nuclear weapons by these actors restored equilibrium in the possession and manipulation of these dreaded agencies, therefore led to what the British statesman, Winston Churchill called “Balance of Terror”, a nuclear stalemate in which coexistence became the only rational policy. The balance in the possession of these nuclear weapons forced the western powers, especially the United States to negotiate for peace with the Communist Lord (Soviet Union) in the Mid 1960’s. “The quest for peace in the 1960s and 1970s, lessened the tension between the East and West – detents”.⁵ To this end, this work is devoted to finding out the United States of America and Soviet Union relations and the influence the Cold War had on Berlin and International Peace.

Conceptual Clarification

The study engages a few words or concepts which may seem quite ambiguous. These concepts require some clarifications. It is my intention to define them in brief to enable readers to understand and digest the work without racking their brain.

Cold War: This is a state of intensive competition devoid of armed conflict between states – a policy of making mischief by all methods short of War between nations.

Balance of Power: This is a theory of international relations which according to Isaak, “Balance of Power system is an equilibrium made up of approximately equal power or nations set against each other so that no one power can predominate”^{viii}

Iron Curtain: Is an ideological barrier separating the Soviet Union and the communist countries of East Europe from the Western countries, which hindered trade and communication.

International System: In the words of Stanley Hofimann, “is a pattern of relations between the basic units of world politics, who is characterised by the scope of the objectives pursued by these units and of the tasks performed among them, as well as by the means used in order to achieve those goals and perform these tasks”^{ix}

Deterrence: Deterrence “is persuading an enemy that attacking you will not be worth any potential gain”^x

Balance of Terror: Is a state of equilibrium in the possession of nuclear weapons by which both ideological powers could destroy each other.

Diplomatic Rapture: this is a situation of severance of diplomatic or formal political relations between nations who hitherto were enjoying cordial relations.

Western Powers: The term western powers is used to indicate the capitalist nations of Europe led by the United States.

National Interest: These are those interests and priorities of a nation, for which she could go to war to protect or maintain.

Theoretical Framwork

Cold War is a research field that poses serious problem of choice in adopting a theoretical framework for its analysis. This is because of the abundance of contending frameworks. There are System Theory, Mutual Aid Theory, Conflict Resolution, Centre Periphery, Marxist and Game Theory. These theories can equally provide a perfect theoretical mould for the analysis of the impact of Cold War on Berlin.

It is my intention to use the Game Theory as my tool of analyses because, it seems to be most relevant to the topic under investigation. Though not without blemish, the game theory, has universal applicability to international political system. In this work, I intended to liken the actors of the Cold War to players of various kinds of “parlour games” – draught, chess, chicken, poker, scramble or bridge games. The games are prone to conflict decision – making and co-operation.

Game theory is a mathematical discipline, that is designed to deal with the question of optimum behaviour of participants in games of strategy and to determine the resulting equilibrium. In game theory, each participant endeavours to maximize their advantage in situations where the outcome depends on their actions, and the nature. The interests of participants in the game theory, are often opposed and sometimes parallel, to one another. In other words, conflicting interest and possible co-operation among participants are likely to be there. There is also mutual suspicious among participants because, some of them can forecast with certainty the next action of others. The proponents of game theory are John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstem who published the book, “The Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour in 1944”^{xi}

Games are described by specifying possible behaviour within the rules of the game. In a game, the rules are given by physical and legal environment within which an individual’s actions may take place. In the game of international politics, each actors have being rational beings, who has definite objectives and having at their disposal, some resources with which to confront their opponents in conflicts. The actors are expected to act rationally. Game involves moves and countermoves, which tends to explain the unfolding of the moves, the state of information of the players, and the alternative choices available to each actor at each encounter. Each actor, unaware of the opponent’s choices, choose a single number that identifies a strategy from sets of strategies allowing for all contingencies.

In game theory, the player is also expected to have perfect knowledge of the strategies open to him in pursuit of his aims. The players should also be able to design a strategy that covers all contingencies and ensure minimum risks and maximum – pay-off. In all games there are outcomes – the pay-off. It is

the relationship between player and the price of objective, they aim at – a win, a loss, or draw. In game theory, theorists are interested in analysing the strategies that will enable the players to maximise their outcomes, and the prospect being usually small in range, requires careful study of the alternative course of action. The rules of the game is simply the distribution of resources and the employment of these resources. In Cold War, players, are expected to know that nuclear missiles are not to be used – they are not part of the rules of international game.^{xii}

Alliances are often formed in international politics. In game theory context, alliances means, the combination of resources for the best advantage of the players. This is an indication that the players are many. Consequently, those who have common objectives, pool their resources together to enable them achieve their objective interests. This co-operation among actors is known as the variable – sum game which assumes that two or more parties can gain more individually by co-operating, especially in the long run, for according to Isaak:

Rather than arguing over existing economic pie, it is more satisfying to co-operate and create more pies, for every one by means that individual parties would not have available, if they merely worked on their own.^{xiii}

Conversely, the Zero-sum game – a pure conflict game or situation assumes that “Whatever one party gains, the other party necessarily losses and that co-operation is, therefore, irrational”.^{xiv} A more appropriate model in international relations, is the multiparty non zero-sum game; for, as Zawodny reminds us, “We must recognise that some types of international conflict today can be resolved only by situations in which neither side losses and in which sometime both sides may win”.^{xv}

The Influence of the Cold War Over Berlin

The ideological conflicts between the communist world and their capitalist counter parts between 1949 and 1975, gave the international community something to worry about. The fate of global peace during the Cold War era, the emergence, spread and escalation of the ideological combat amongst the principal actors of international system was a turning point in the annals of human existence in the world. It is rational, to find out the actual influences of the Cold War over Berlin.

The Place of Berlin Crisis on International Peace

Berlin in the analysis, will codify Germany and other European nations. This is because the events in Berlin affected other European nations. Berlin is indispensable in my understanding of the Cold War and its impact on pacific resolution of global disputes. “Berlin, the capital of the defeated Third Reich, quickly emerged as the most vibrant and emotionally charged symbol of the Cold War – a role it retained for more than four decades. Even before the wall went up, making it the divided first city of an already divided Germany. It was the place – by virtue of its position on the front line between the Eastern and Western blocs, where many of the battles of the Cold War were fought out”.^{xvi}

The Berlin question had its root in the post World War II peace arrangements of the victorious allies. At the end of second world war, the allied powers were preoccupied with working out lasting frameworks for maintaining international peace and avoiding future wars. Their plans were later enshrined in the United Nations Charter whose preamble runs thus:

We the people of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourges of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights of men and women and of nations large and small... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims...^{xvii}

In pursuance of these objectives, the statesmen convened at Yalta, and Potsdam to work out means of attaining them. In these conferences, the statesmen concern themselves with the future status of Germany. Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, during the wartime conferences, agreed to govern Germany through a Four-Power Allied Control Council (ACC) in liaison with France which will administer Germany as one economic unit. Sir Frank Roberts one of the British diplomats who took part in the Yalta conference, recalls the reasoning behind these arrangements.

“This was in no way conceived of as a partition of Germany. It was a matter of military convenience and safety, to avoid unfortunate incidents or misunderstanding between the four victorious allies”.^{xviii} These arrangements were largely confirmed at the Potsdam conference, the last meeting of the “Big Three” war-time allies, which took place on the outskirts of Berlin in July and August 1945. There was broad agreement on the need to keep Germany weak and prevent the re-emergence of a powerful and aggressive German state. For that reason, the war-time allies insisted on applying the five (5) ‘Ds’ to the defeated enemy: denazification, demilitarization, decentralization, decartelization, and democratization.^{xix}

It was after Potsdam, where the statesmen agreed on the merger of the four occupation zones into one administrative and economic unit that matters came into conflict. The Russia saw, Potsdam agreements as binding on them to receive 25 percent of all dismantled plants in West Germany as reparation and also to participate in the control of the Rhine – Ruhr area.

The issue was complicated by the development of event in East Berlin where communism was not only introduced, but the Soviet went as far as seizing current outputs of East Germany industries as their just due without consulting the Western powers nor account for the value of the materials taken already, which was a violation of the Potsdam agreement. Wart was of the opinion that,

This rationalisation of the economy was thought to be the initial step whereby the Russians would receive the reparations from West Germany promised at Potsdam, while the British and American would be provided with food stuffs and, raw materials from the Soviet zone to ease the financial burden of feeding the population in their zone. But Moscow was absorbed with its own economic problems, and the plight of the German people was a matter of independence. The Russians continued to seize much of the current output of East German industry as their just due, declining to co-operate either by accounting for the value of the materials already taken or by placing exports in a common pool to help pay for essential import.^{xx}

In agreement with Wart, Spanter recounted:

The Russians quickly began demolishing the industry in their zone with great gusto, never of course informing the Western powers how much they were taking. The Russians also cut off the regular food supply from Eastern Germany, which had traditionally been Germany’s breadbasket; under the original agreement they were to furnish this food in return, for the three-fifth of capital equipment they were allowed to move from the Western zones.^{xxi}

This development had a far reaching impact; the creation of tension between Western allied powers and their Eastern counterparts. The West reaction was manifested in American suspension of all further reparation payment to the Soviet Union until, Russia opened its zone as part of Germany. In Spanter’s analyses,

If East Germany no longer furnished the necessary supplies of food which West Germany needed, Western Germany would have to increase her export to buy food from abroad, and if she had to increase her exports, she had to increase her production.^{xxii}

The prevailing European economic situation in 1946, rendered the allies plan to prevent German rearmament by holding down her industries production implausible. Consequently, Britain and United States planned to “lift Germany out of her economic stagnation and make her industry contribute to the general economic recovery of Europe”.^{xxiii} This plan was implemented by the merging of the British and American zones of occupations into a German state called “Bizonal”. From then on, American German policy was shrouded in her Secretary of State, Byrnes, in a major address delivered in Stuttgart on September 6, 1946: “It was not in the interest of world peace that Germany should become a pawn or partner in a military struggle for power between the East and West”.^{xxiv}

Wart saw Hyrnes’ speech as being “Fraught with unintended irony: the struggle over Germany had already begun”.^{xxv} In his opinion, Spanier posited that “it was in this negative way the Byrnes called for Germany’s positive participation in the Cold War”.^{xxvi}

The principal countering weapons, that the Soviets used in opposing the policies of the Western powers in Germany were obstruction, delay, and vituperation in the Allied Control Council and the Council of Foreign Ministers. They also made use of propaganda attacks in the press, appeals to German nationalism, protests from satellite states of Eastern Europe and finally pressure on Western Berlin. The continuous failure of the Council of Foreign Ministers to reach quadripartite, created a situation in Germany which, if permitted to continue, would have increasingly unfortunate consequences for Western Europe.

It was therefore necessary that urgent political and economic problems; arising out of this situation in Germany should be solved. The participating powers had in view, the necessity of ensuring the economic reconstruction of Western Europe including Germany. Britain could not fulfil her traditional obligation to the two countries and given the fact that both countries were at the verge of imminent collapse; the British note signified communist expansion in affected countries could only be stemmed by American total commitment, which led to the Truman doctrine, Spanier posited:

Truman came to the heart of his speech. Here he spelled out what was to be known as the Truman Doctrine. The United States could survive only in a world in which freedom flourished. And we would not realise this objective. Unless we are willing to help free people to maintain their institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them, Totalitarian regimes.^{xxvii}

The Truman Doctrine was manifested in the historic Marshall Plan for European Economic recovery. The plan was an invitation offer by American Secretary of State, George Marshall to Western European countries to present United States, with a plan for their common needs and common recovery. It could also be said to be a deliberate strategy to save herself from criticism of precipitating the Cold War; Spanier was of the view that, "If the United States had invited only the nations of Western Europe, it would have placed itself in a politically disadvantageous position in which it would have been blame for the division of Europe and intensification of the Cold War".^{xxviii}

As a condition of aid under the Marshall Plan, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (DEEC) was set up in 1948 to liberalise trade, promote European economic integration and administer the assistance.^{xxix} The Congress would have given their blessing to the plan had Soviet Union participated. Rather, the consequences on the Soviet had some drastic impact, especially when American plan drew constitution and instituted new government for Germany. The Soviet reacted clamping down on Western powers by imposing, a blockade on Berlin on June 16, 1948. This was preceded by an earlier coup d'état in Prague, thus abducting Czechoslovakia behind the iron curtain. The Western powers resorted to airlifting of goods into their own zones of Berlin. The world stood at the brink of war, for if any of the actors had dared to interrupt the other's strategy that is, had Soviet Union shot American planes or American armed forces bulldozed their way through Russian blockade, third world war could have been triggered off. To this Spanier posited:

Since more than two million people in West Berlin were in danger of starvation when available food stocks became exhausted, United States began a gigantic airlifting of goods on June 26th, 1948. For both side of Berlin became a symbol of political prestige in central Europe, with Moscow and Washington, equally fearful of an incident that might provoke serious hostilities.^{xxx}

Thus, at the verge of war, the Chief protagonists entered the round table. After rigorous bargaining which spread over months, the blockade was lifted on May 12th, 1949. One of the aftermaths of Berlin blockade was the polarisation of international system into NATO and Warsaw Treaty Organisation. NATO was established formally in April, 1949, with the members recognising:

...that an armed attack against one or two of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack on all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations; will assist the party or parties to attack by taking forth-with, individual and in concert with the use of armed forces, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic areas.^{xxxi}

Warsaw Pact was inaugurated on May 4, 1955, the signatories according to Roy, "Have given an undertaking to settle their mutual disputes by peaceful means, to resist the attacks of the imperialist states

jointly, to establish peace and security by jointly resisting any foreign attack upon any member state”.^{xxxii}

The tension over Berlin abated, following the settlement of Berlin blockade and the shift of the Cold War to Korea. The formation of Warsaw Pact in 1955 was followed by the admission of Western Germany into NATO, in May, 1955. This development worsened the Cold War. The Soviet pressed the West to recognise East Germany. On finding that she cannot effect that on the Western powers, Khrushchev, the then Soviet leader, struck the West at their weakest point – Berlin. On November 26th, following the defeat of Soviet Middle-East gambit, Khrushchev gave the West an ultimatum to withdraw their troops from Berlin and insisting inter alia on ending the occupation status of West Berlin. The American unpreparedness to negotiate about the reunification of Germany, gave the Soviet no other choice than to construct the Berlin Wall in 1961.^{xxxiii}

The second Berlin crisis threatened the very existence of human race. The Soviet threatened to unleash nuclear holocaust on humanity, should United States fail to abide by her demands, it was only the Cuban crisis that relieved mankind from perpetual fears of thermonuclear war in Berlin. The gravity of Berlin crisis was manifested in Windsor’s analysis,

Yet the problem had changed in the summer of 1961. It was not the wall that changed it, so much as the weeks of tension that preceded it. Both, the United States, and the Soviet Union were now apparently convinced that the Berlin crisis had become too dangerous. The risks of bloody incidents along the wall, and the possibilities of a conflict arising out of them, seemed to grow for some months. But after the silence confrontation of Soviet and American tanks at checkpoint in October, the tension rapidly subsidised.^{xxxiv}

The Aftermaths of the Cold War Skirmishes over Berlin

Having patiently gone through the issues at stake in Berlin, during the Cold War, it will be worthy to outline its lasting effects on international peace.

The Cold War affected international peace, so much, that it balkanised the world against itself. Berlin was divided into separate zones. It was divided temporarily at first along ideological lines, and later permanently with the concrete wall in 1961.

Another significance of the Cold War in relation to these countries was the violation of international peace. The world was at brink of war in Berlin in 1948 and 1958. The greatest impact of these skirmishes was the preservation of international peace. Men invented the instrument for exterminating one another, but the fear of the aftermath of their usage was so great that none is eager to precipitate the action that will lead to their usage. Thus international peace was preserved.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to examine the actual influences of the psycho-ideological struggle between the Eastern and Western bloc-nations on international peace, and also find out the extent the brain-child of second World War (Cold War) had encroached on the peaceful coexistence of actors in international political system. The game theory helped so much in dispelling the mist that beclouded the Cold War and my understanding of its obvious impacts on international peace. During the course of this research, the analysis showed that the protagonists of the Cold War, behaved in a typical player’s manner. There were moves and counter moves, during the Berlin blockade and counter strategy of airlifting. There were also bluffs as in Khrushchev’s threat of nuclear attack on the West, if they did not move out of West Berlin within a given date. There was also room for negotiations. It was discovered that throughout the Cold War, the actors resorted to negotiation when their strategies, moves and counter moves were exhausted during the Berlin blockade.

This paper is concerned with investigative analysis of the Cold War influences over Berlin in inferring the influence of the Cold War on international peace. After what is pass for exhaustive analyses, the work concluded, from the findings, that the Cold War violated international peace and polarised the international system. Paradoxically, the Cold War which gave birth to the nuclear arms race also

preserved international peace because the destructiveness of nuclear equipment – to be precise, prevent global war, knowing that its usage will herald the extermination of all lives on earth including the deployer of such dreaded instrument. This was shared by Essan Gala:

It is considered likely by many that the system of security which is inherent in the strategic relationship between the superpowers based as it is on a balance of terror, has discouraged them for over three decades from initiating military conflicts directly with each other. It is also assumed that it has prevented regional conflicts in which either side might be involved to escalate to global conflict.^{xxxv}

The paper finds out that the influence of the Cold War over Berlin violated international peace and polarised the international system. The paper thus argues that the entire world populace must have a sense of commitment to the international system. This is attainable only when the international political apparatus is organised and managed in such a way that it will reflect the people's yearnings. To realise this, we need a competent and dynamic world body which will be capable of interpreting what constitutes the overall human interests into common interest.

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