

FOCUS

In 1941, Britain, the USA and the USSR formed a Grand Alliance against Germany and its allies. In this section, you are going to examine just how strong that alliance was and how well it lasted during the Second World War and how well it lasted once the Second World War was over. You will practise writing a narrative about how the Alliance changed in the years 1943–46.

1.1 Early tension between East and West

The Grand Alliance, 1941

The Grand Alliance was between Britain, the USA and the USSR. They fought together against Nazi Germany and its allies, Italy and Japan (known as the Axis Powers), in the Second World War. The Alliance was formed in two stages:

- **Stage 1:** In June 1941, the Nazis invaded the USSR. British leader Winston Churchill quickly seized this opportunity and formed an alliance with Soviet leader Josef Stalin.
- **Stage 2:** In December 1941, Germany's ally Japan attacked the USA's navy at Pearl Harbor. Until then, the USA had been neutral, but US President Franklin D Roosevelt quickly joined Stalin and Churchill's alliance.

SOURCE 2

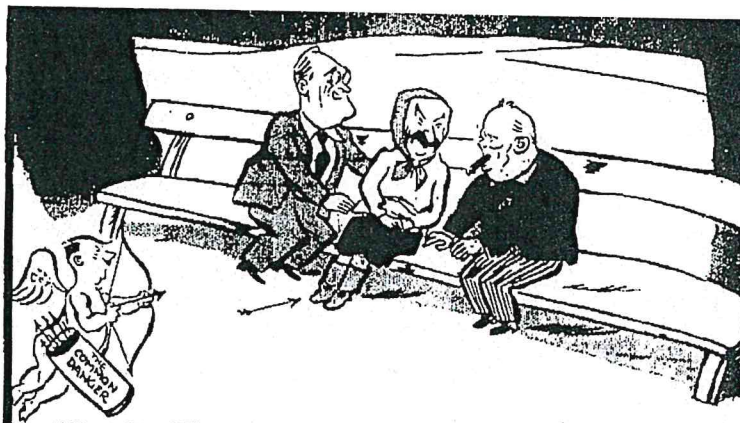


A Soviet cartoon from 1941. The figure in the centre is the Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler.

SOURCE ANALYSIS

- 1 Source 2 is trying to suggest how strong and united the Grand Alliance was. How does it do this?
- 2 The caption 'Love conquers all' for Source 3 is very sarcastic. If the cartoonist had given the cartoon a more direct title what might he have called it?
- 3 Explain two ways in which Sources 2 and 3 have different views about the Grand Alliance.

SOURCE 3



A British cartoon from 1941, with the caption 'Love conquers all'. The figure in the centre of the bench is Stalin and he is being charmed by US President Roosevelt (on the left) and British leader Winston Churchill. The small figure is Hitler. Hitler is shown as Cupid, a legendary figure whose arrows cause people to fall in love.

How united was the Grand Alliance?

Churchill came up with the name 'Grand Alliance'. Propaganda presented it as strong and united. The new friends would 'smash' the enemy (see Source 2). However, not everyone was convinced by the propaganda. The truth is it was a **strategic wartime alliance**, not a bond of brotherhood as Churchill claimed. The USSR had been a communist country for more than 30 years. The majority of politicians and business leaders in Britain and the USA disliked and feared communist ideas. In the past, both Britain and the USA had helped the enemies of the communists. This made the USSR wary of Britain and the USA.

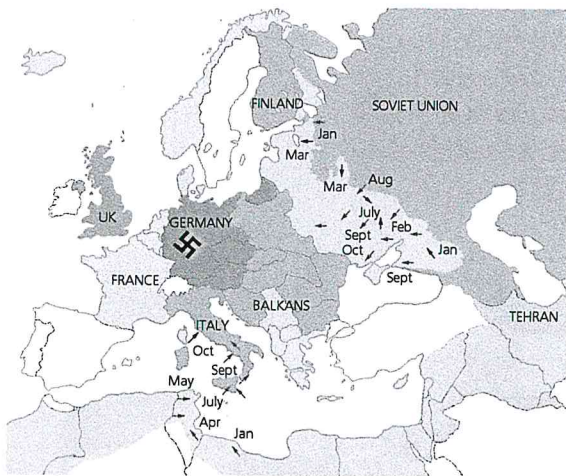
RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 1 Who were the Big Three?
- 2 What was the purpose of the Grand Alliance?

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 1 Why was the Grand Alliance an unlikely alliance?
- 2 Why was Tehran chosen for the first meeting of the Big Three?
- 3 What did the Big Three plan to talk about at Tehran?

FIGURE 1



Europe at the end of 1943.

SOURCE 4



The ceremony at which Churchill presented Stalin with the ceremonial sword at the Tehran Conference.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 4 What were the four main things the Big Three agreed at Tehran?

The Tehran Conference, 1943

By the end of 1943, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Grand Alliance would defeat the Axis Powers. So, in November 1943, the Big Three met for the first time in person in Tehran, in Iran (see Figure 1). Tehran was chosen because it was neutral ground and it was relatively safe from enemy attack.

What happened at Tehran?

The conference got off to a poor start. Stalin was unhappy that the USSR was the only one of the Big Three which was directly fighting the Germans on the ground, suffering massive casualties and enormous destruction. Stalin wanted the USA and Britain to attack Germany in a Second Front. Churchill and Roosevelt pointed out that this was difficult as it involved an invasion by sea, but Stalin felt that Churchill and Roosevelt were just happy to let the USSR bear the brunt of the fighting. At one point, it looked as though they would all leave, but then the mood changed.

On the second day, Churchill presented Stalin with a magnificent steel sword and made a speech in honour of the bravery of the Soviet people fighting the Germans (see Source 4). Stalin was deeply honoured. As it happened, Day 2 was also Churchill's birthday and there was a magnificent birthday dinner.

Roosevelt was not feeling well and went to bed early but Churchill and Stalin ended up drinking and talking and getting on famously until about 3 o'clock in the morning.

Agreements

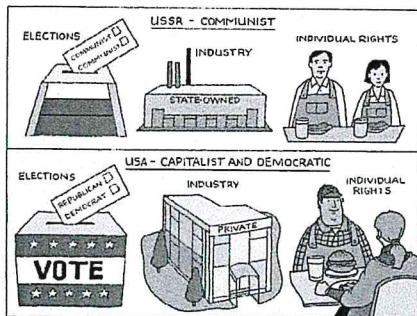
Churchill's birthday had helped to improve the mood of the conference. By the end, the Big Three had reached some key agreements.

- To create a **Second Front**. US and British Empire forces would invade France in the summer of 1944. This was not as early as Stalin had wanted, but he accepted this.
- That the **USSR would enter the war against Japan** as soon as Germany was defeated.
- That parts of **eastern Poland would be given to the USSR** after the war. Churchill was unhappy about this because Britain had gone to war to protect Poland. However, he was prepared to compromise as Poland would be given parts of eastern Germany as compensation.
- That a **United Nations Organisation was to be set up** after the war to help solve international disputes and **promote humanitarian causes** such as fighting disease or helping refugees.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

1 Make your own copy of the diagram below and label it to show the differences between US and Soviet ideology about:

- elections
- industry
- individual rights.



Differences between the superpowers

The Big Three did not meet again until 1945. By that time, it was clearer than ever that the USSR and the USA were now the world's leading states – superpowers. It was also clear they had differing views about what should happen once the war ended. Here's why

Conflicting ideologies

The USA and USSR had completely opposing beliefs about how a country should be run. Here is a summary of those differences:

American society was based on two key ideas: democracy and capitalism	Soviet society was based on communist ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy: President and members of Congress (the US Parliament) elected in free elections. • Capitalism: property and businesses owned by private individuals and companies. • High standard of living but also extremes of wealth and poverty. • Rights and freedoms of individuals more important than everyone being equal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-party state. Soviet people could only elect communists. • Industry was organised and run by the state. Unemployment and extreme poverty rare, but the general standard of living was lower than for the average American. • Rights of individuals less important than the good of society as a whole.

Conflicting priorities

Ideological differences were important of course. But we should not forget that there were also more old-fashioned rivalries as they competed for power, influence and economic wealth and resources.

<p>Stalin's priority was security. Germany had invaded the USSR through Eastern Europe. His country suffered at least 20 million dead and it had left the USSR's industries and cities devastated.</p> <p>Stalin wanted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • massive compensation from Germany, and • to control Eastern Europe so he could not be invaded again. 	<p>Roosevelt wanted the countries liberated from Nazi and Japanese rule to become democracies with capitalist economies.</p> <p>Spreading US ideas and capitalism would give the US political influence and create profits for the US economy.</p>

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 2 What were Stalin's priorities?
- 3 What were Roosevelt's priorities?
- 4 Is it possible to say one side was right or wrong?

The Yalta Conference, February 1945


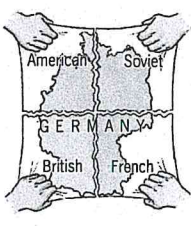

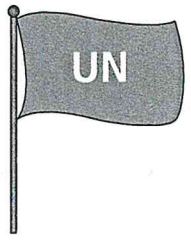
SOURCE 5



A publicity photograph from the Yalta Conference, showing Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill.

Agreements at Yalta

The Big Three met at Yalta, in Ukraine, in February 1945. As with Tehran, the publicity photographs and the press reports told a story of unity and friendship. And, in truth, the Big Three did reach some important agreements.

✓ Japan	✓ Germany	✓ Eastern Europe	✓ United Nations
Stalin agreed to enter the war against Japan.	Germany would be divided into four zones: American, French, British and Soviet.	Eastern Europe should be seen as a 'Soviet sphere of influence '.	Big Three all agreed to join the new United Nations Organisation.
			

SOURCE ANALYSIS

What impression is Source 5 trying to give to the public?

Disagreements

But what the public did not see was the areas of disagreement between the Big Three. There were two important areas they disagreed about.

✗ Poland	✗ Germany
Stalin wanted the border of the USSR to move westwards into Poland to make the USSR more secure from future possible attacks. Roosevelt and Churchill did not approve of Stalin's plans, but Stalin would not budge.	The Big Three agreed that Germany should pay reparations, but they could not agree on the amount. They left the decision for the next time they were due to meet.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 5 Name and describe two examples of agreement at Yalta.
- 6 Name and describe two examples of disagreement at Yalta.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 7 What was Operation Unthinkable and what did it reveal about superpower relations?
- 8 Why were Churchill and Roosevelt worried about Soviet policies?

After Yalta ...

The public were not told about the increasingly difficult and tense relations between the Big Three. But historians know from letters and telegrams between Roosevelt and Churchill that they were becoming increasingly worried in the months after Yalta. Churchill even ordered the British military commanders to prepare for a possible war against the Soviets – the plan was called Operation Unthinkable.

The Potsdam Conference, July–August 1945

The Big Three met again in Potsdam, near Berlin, after Germany's defeat. But it was a new Big Three!

- President Roosevelt died in April 1945, so there was a new US President, Harry Truman.
- Churchill was still there at the start of the conference, but there was an election in Britain on 5 July which Churchill lost, so he was replaced by the new Prime Minister, who was Labour Party leader Clement Atlee.

SOURCE 6



An official publicity photograph of the leaders of the Big Three at the Potsdam Conference. The new British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, is on the left, new US President Harry Truman is in the centre and Stalin is on the right.

Relations at Potsdam were more tense than they had been at Yalta:

	<p>The new US president, Harry Truman, was much more anti-communist than Roosevelt and he was very suspicious of Stalin.</p>
	<p>Soviet armies now controlled most of Eastern Europe. After forcing the German armies out of Eastern Europe, Stalin set up a communist government in Poland, against the wishes of the Poles – and of Truman and Churchill.</p>
	<p>The USA had tested an atomic bomb. Truman took Stalin to one side at the conference to tell him about it personally.</p>

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 1 Name and describe two things that had changed between Yalta and Potsdam.
- 2 Name and describe two examples of disagreement at Potsdam.

Not surprisingly, this different atmosphere at Potsdam led to more disagreements than agreements.

x Germany	x Reparations	x Eastern Europe
Stalin wanted to cripple Germany completely. Truman disagreed as he did not want to repeat the mistake of the Treaty of Versailles.	Stalin wanted compensation from Germany. Truman agreed at first, then changed his mind. To Stalin, Truman seemed to want to protect Germany. That made Stalin suspicious.	At Yalta it was agreed that Eastern Europe would be a Soviet 'sphere of influence'. To Stalin, this meant he could set up governments loyal to him and keep them under close control. This was much more than Truman had in mind. He began to suspect Stalin of wanting to control all of Europe.

FOCUS TASK

Write your own narrative of the Grand Alliance: Part 2

You are now going to write a narrative about the second period from the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences.

The focus is going to be how the Alliance became more strained.

Use these sentence starters and select two points to include in each sentence.

After the Tehran Conference the Alliance became more strained, ...

-
-

They met again at Yalta and they agreed ...

-
-

But there were also signs of tension such as ...

-
-

Then they met in Potsdam in July 1945. By this time, some things had changed such as ...

-
-

They disagreed strongly at Potsdam over ...

-
-

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 1 What do some historians think Truman was trying to achieve when he told Stalin about the bomb?
- 2 How did Stalin react and why?

After Potsdam ... The atom bomb

Relations continued to get worse after Potsdam. Another development which made relations worse was the atom bomb.

As you have read, Truman took Stalin aside and told him about the USA's new weapon at Potsdam. Some historians believe Truman was trying to intimidate Stalin. Truman was also puzzled when Stalin showed little reaction and thought Stalin did not understand. In fact, Stalin already knew about the bomb from Soviet spies who were passing secrets to the USSR. He did not react because he did not want to show Truman he was concerned about the bomb, but he probably was. He ordered Soviet technicians and scientists to develop a Soviet A-bomb and by 1949 both superpowers had nuclear weapons.

After Potsdam ... The Iron Curtain: Eastern Europe and the Soviet satellite states

The next issue to sour relations between the superpowers was the creation of Soviet 'satellite states' in Eastern Europe. Stalin was determined to control the governments of Eastern Europe to protect the USSR from future attacks. Although elections were held, Stalin made sure that communist governments led by politicians loyal to him took power in all countries in Eastern Europe.

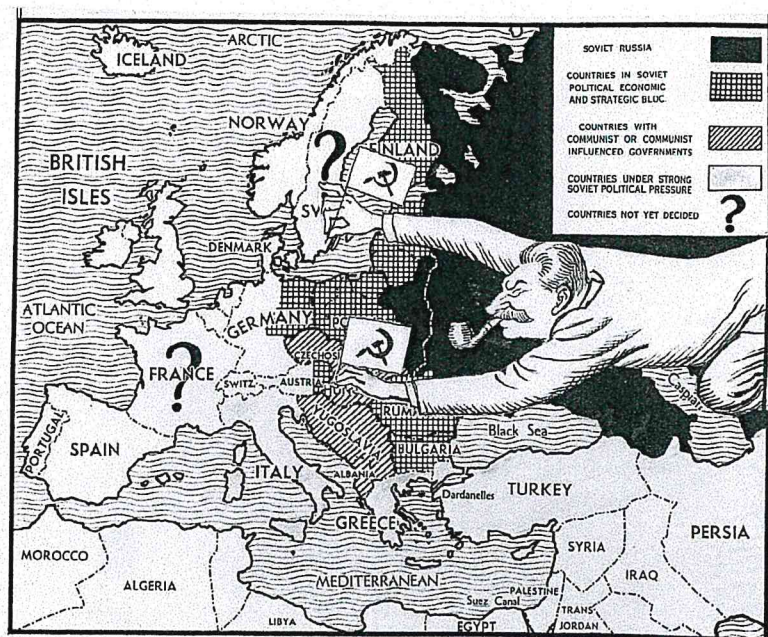
SOURCE 8

SOURCE 7



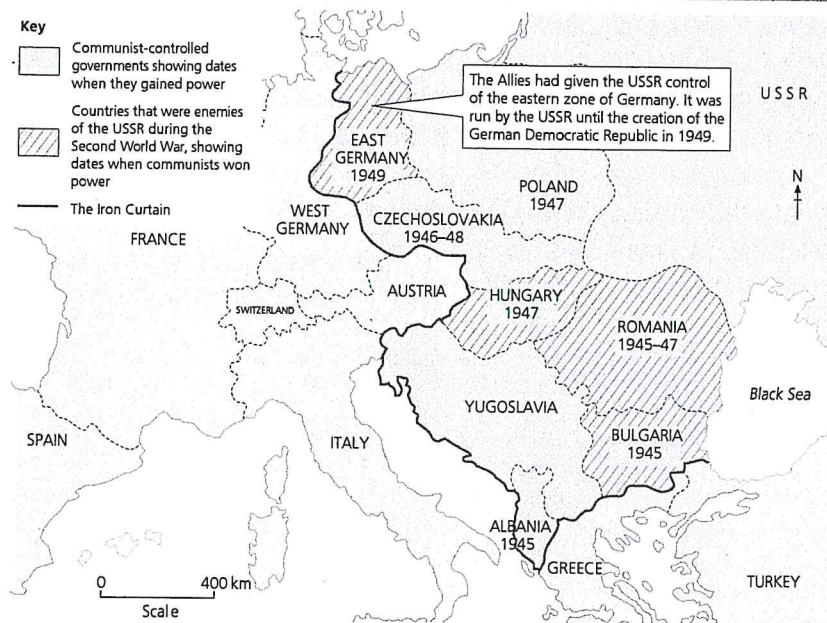
Let us not forget that the Germans invaded the USSR through Finland, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. Why is it so surprising that the Soviet Union, anxious for its future safety, is trying to make sure that friendly, loyal governments are in these countries?

Stalin speaking in 1946.



A British cartoon from 1947 showing how Stalin's policies looked to the British and Americans.

FIGURE 2



The Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe 1945–48. The red line shows the Iron Curtain.

As Figure 2 shows, it was an effective takeover. It was also brutal at times. Communists often worked with other parties at first but they gradually took control. Opposition parties were banned and their leaders were arrested or sent into exile. In some cases, they were beaten or even murdered.

To Stalin, control of Eastern Europe made sense. If he controlled the region, nobody would be able to invade through it. To Truman, Stalin's control of Eastern Europe was evidence that Stalin was building an empire.

In a famous speech in 1946, Churchill referred to the border between Western and Eastern Europe as an 'Iron Curtain'. After this, the term became the widely used name for the border between communist Eastern Europe and the West.

Truman shared Churchill's concerns and he believed that Stalin wanted to take over the rest of Europe as well.

RETRIEVAL PRACTICE

- 3 What is the Iron Curtain and how did it get its name?
- 4 Give one reason why Stalin wanted to control Eastern Europe.
- 5 Record two examples of Eastern European states that became communist in the period 1945–48.
- 6 Describe some of the methods used by communist parties to take power.

FOCUS TASK

Write your own narrative of the Grand Alliance: Part 3
 You are now going to extend your narrative after the Potsdam Conference to include the atomic bomb and the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe.

Use these sentence starters and select two points to include in each sentence.

Relationships were further strained after the Potsdam Conference ...

The USA developed A-bombs and used them against Japan in August 1945. Stalin's response was ...

Between 1945 and 1948, most Eastern European countries became communist. For example, ...

This was achieved by ...

The end of the Grand Alliance

There was no 'official' end to the Grand Alliance. But by 1946 it was clear that the former allies were now suspicious rivals with differing views of how the world should look (see Sources 9A and 9B).

SOURCE 9A



George Kennan

SOURCE 9B



Nikolai Novikov

SOURCE ANALYSIS

Write a more detailed caption for each of Sources 9A and 9B.

SOURCE 10

The Soviet Union is committed fanatically to the belief that there is no way to live peacefully with the USA. It believes that it is desirable and necessary to disrupt the internal harmony of our society and destroy the traditional American way of life. They believe that America's international prestige and authority must be broken if Soviet power is to be secure. This hostile state is one of the world's greatest powers with tremendous resources. It has proved very effective in spreading its influence to other countries and its forces are highly skilled in underground methods of warfare. Finally, the Soviet Union is completely closed to ideas and beliefs apart from its own so we cannot negotiate with them.

Extract from the Long Telegram by George Kennan, February 1946.

Historians today can access the documents that were being produced at the time. Two documents they have found particularly useful are known as the Long Telegram and the Novikov Telegram. They had a big impact on relations between the superpowers.

The Long Telegram

The Long Telegram got its name because ... it was very long, about the same length as this chapter in fact! It was written by George Kennan, a senior US official stationed in Moscow. In February 1946, he set out his views about Stalin's policies and how he thought the USA should respond. In short, he believed that the USSR was intent on spreading communism across the world and destroying the democratic, capitalist way of life of the USA. He believed it was vital to stand up to the USSR aggressively and forcefully (see Source 10).

This document had a major impact on President Truman and effectively shaped US policies for years to come. Truman knew that some Americans wanted to reduce US involvement in world affairs. He worked very hard to build up support from the American people and politicians and he made speeches warning Stalin that the USA would resist any attempts to spread their power.

SOURCE 11

It ought to be fully realised that Americans are making preparations for a future war against the Soviet Union. In the eyes of Americans, the Soviet Union is the chief obstacle in the American path to world domination. We can see this from the massive increase in the size of the US army and the way in which the US has been placing military bases in regions from which strikes can be launched on Soviet territory. This can also be seen in the attempts of the Americans to rebuild Germany and Japan and use them in a war against the USSR.

Extract from the Novikov Telegram, September 1946.

The Novikov Telegram

Stalin was furious about this increasingly hard line from Truman and he retaliated. The Soviet media began to rally the support of their people by presenting their former allies as warmongers who wanted to see the downfall of the USSR. Another key document that has proved useful to historians is the Novikov Telegram. Nikolai Novikov was a senior Soviet official stationed in Washington. His telegram was almost a mirror image of Kennan's in which he claimed that the USA wanted to use its military and economic might to subdue the USSR and dominate the world.

FOCUS TASK

Write your own narrative of the Grand Alliance: Part 4

You are now going to conclude your narrative with what happened after the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe.

Use this sentence starter and select two points to include in this sentence.

The Alliance finally collapsed in ...

Suspicious between the two sides reached breaking point in 1946 when ...

REVISION

You don't need to do these tasks now, use them when you are revising for a test, or a mock exam, or the real thing.

Task 1

Go back over this chapter. Cover up the text so that you can only see the Retrieval Practices. See if you can answer them without looking at the text.

Task 2

Ask your teacher to provide you with copies of Sources 2–6, Figure 2 and Source 9 (which are all visual sources). Turn these slides into a presentation and see if you can tell the story of superpower relations in this period using only these sources.

Task 3

Which event of the period 1941–48 had the most important consequences?

Use a table like this to compare them. Here are some guidelines for judging importance/consequences:

- Who/what was affected?
- Did it cause anything else to happen?
- How big was the impact, e.g. did it affect many people or last a long time?
- Did it improve superpower relations or make them worse?

Events	Type of consequence(s): political, economic, ideological, international, domestic, etc.	Actual impact(s) on people, countries, international relations, etc.
Formation of the Grand Alliance 1941	Political and international	Showed Big Three could work together despite differing political views; effectively sealed the fate of Germany and Japan in the Second World War