



HISTORY UNIT / DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES
H1 International History [1945-2000]
(Syllabus 8838/01)



JC1 H1 History Weighted Assessment 1 (WA1) Suggested Perspective

Note: I did not split the answer into parts or boxes, so this is the full version of what you can/might be expected to write! (The first paragraph deals with the “how are the sources similar and why are they similar” bit, while the second and third deal with the “how are the sources different and why are they different” bit. You can, of course, opt to arrange/organise it differently.)

You will also notice that there’s usually more to say for ‘why are they different’ compared to ‘why are they similar’ – this is pretty logical too because it’s highly unlikely that you will get 2 sources that are very similar!

I also gave some alternative and bonus points to highlight other possible things you could raise. As always, remember that history is an ARTS subject; there are always multiple possible answers!

Sources A and B are similar in blaming the US for the outbreak of the Cold War as their actions were seen to be aggressive to the Soviet Union and the rest of the world. Source A highlights that US actions make it seem as though they were trying to “build up a large amount of force to intimidate the rest of mankind”, with their actions in Eastern Europe looking like an “attempt to encircle” the USSR with “unfriendly neighbours.” Source B corroborates this by stating that the building of US bases around the world, particularly the “numerous bases against the USSR”, were clear examples of “military aggression” from the US. The reasons for this similarity could be found in the context of America’s actions in the initial post-war period. Source A was clearly informed by Kennan’s Long Telegram in 1946 and US responses toward the Sovietisation of Eastern Europe, as Wallace was clearly concerned over the direction that US policies were taking and how aggressive these must appear to the Soviets. In a similar vein, Source B was written in the context of US containment policies in 1947, particularly the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, which to Zhdanov were evidently acts of US aggression and desire for world domination. The context of US policies in the post-war world could thus explain why two politicians from seemingly different sides of the divide were in agreement on seeing US actions as to blame for the outbreak of the Cold War.

However, Sources A and B differ in the aspect of US foreign policy which they focus on in blaming the US for the Cold War. Source A focuses mainly on the strategic and military aspects of US foreign policy, as it addresses their “continued production of bombs”, and their attempts to “secure air bases spread over half the globe”. Source B, however, also highlights the economic dimension to US policy, suggesting that US economic aid to Europe was just “taking advantage” of the post-war situation to bring “Europe into bondage to America.”

**Other possible differences – You could possibly highlight that Source A was more concerned with the impression that US policy was giving – ie the image that the US actions was conveying to the rest of the world, while Source B instead focuses mainly on how US actions affect the USSR, in terms of how they are designed to be directly against the USSR. The following explanation of ‘why the sources are different’ can potentially work for both of these options.*

The reasons for these differences are apparent when we further compare the context, author and purpose of the two sources. Source A, a letter from Wallace to Truman in July 1946, was primarily a warning, with the probable purpose of trying to dissuade Truman from carrying through on his containment policy, which was at that time being formulated as a result of Kennan’s long telegram earlier in 1946. Wallace sees such policies as counterproductive and hurting the USA’s image in the eyes of the world. The reason for him holding such a view could be because he was the US Vice-President under Roosevelt previously, before Truman took over as President after Roosevelt’s death in 1945. Roosevelt was well-known to have a very different view of Stalin and the USSR than Truman – he sees Stalin as someone he could potentially work with, and certainly did not share Truman’s far more hard-line stance later. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Wallace had more in common with Roosevelt than Truman when it came to dealing with the USSR, thus he likely would have advocated a softer and more conciliatory stance. In this sense, he would definitely not agree with what he viewed as the increasingly aggressive and belligerent stance,



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particularly in a strategic and military sense, that Truman was taking with regards to the USSR by late 1946 and was trying to warn him against it.

**Additional possible point: He might even potentially have some sort of a domestic political motive here, in wanting to present himself in opposition to Truman with an eye towards the next US elections.*

Source B, compared to this, is markedly different in context and purpose as it was not so much a warning to Truman from his domestic political opponents but rather a direct response from the Soviets on Truman's containment policies, with the much more straightforward purpose of justifying the USSR's position in the Cold War and laying blame squarely at the feet of the US for the state of affairs in 1947. This was a Soviet source from Zhdanov at the founding of COMINFORM - an organisation which brings together the various Communist parties in Europe, thus Zhdanov was probably trying to rally his fellow Communists together in his speech by attacking the US and their actions. The timing of the source in September 1947 also reveals much. By this time in 1947, the policy of containment was already being elucidated and applied, as seen from the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan earlier in 1947, a marked contrast from the less tense situation in 1946. Thus, at this point, Zhdanov could also be wanting to justify the creation of COMINFORM as a response to earlier acts of "aggression" – both in a strategic and economic sense, by the US.

**Additional possible point: Furthermore, he could also potentially have the purpose of wanting to bind the European Communist parties closer to the Soviet Union through his speech and the COMINFORM conference, particularly so given that COMINFORM was arguably created in response to divergences among communist governments on whether or not to accept the Marshall Plan in July 1947.*

Conclusion (If you want)

Therefore, the two sources are similar in terms of how they blame the US for the outbreak of the Cold War due to their aggressive actions, though they differ substantially in terms of their purpose and context. While Source A primarily has the motive of serving as a warning to Truman from Wallace over his disagreements with the policy of containment being formulated then in 1946, Source B instead seems to be primarily an attempt by Zhdanov to rally the Communist bloc together in the face of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan in 1947.