

## The Cold War 1953–1964: Confrontation and Détente

The continuation of the Cold War is very much influenced by the **death of Stalin** and the rise to power of **Nikita Khrushchev**. If Stalin had been more of a cautious planner, Khrushchev was much more **adventurous and difficult to predict**. Officially, he announced a new policy of **peaceful co-existence** with the capitalist West and started a de-Stalinisation process. But he soon involved the Red Army in crushing the Hungarian Uprising in 1956 and issued a Berlin ultimatum in 1958. Most fatal of all, he placed nuclear missiles on **Cuba**. While Stalin had tried to extend Soviet influence in neighbouring countries, Khrushchev intervened in areas like the Middle East and Central America.

The new US administration with President **Eisenhower** and the **Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles** were both fierce anti-Communists and publicly announced in their new foreign policy, known as the **New Look**, plans of **'massive retaliation'**, **'brinkmanship'**, **'rollback' of communism** and the necessity of **nuclear superiority**. But the practical outcome was that no real adventurous moves were taken: no support was given to the Hungarians and there was no major escalation in Vietnam.

The **nuclear arms race** escalated and even a space competition started during these years with costs that, with the benefit of hindsight, the Russians couldn't bear. There were also several attempts to establish a dialogue and the 1950s witnessed the first summits during the Cold War between the leaders of the super-powers. In 1961, the **Berlin Wall** was erected and the year after witnessed a very dangerous conflict over Cuba, the **Cuban Missile Crisis**. This crisis was one of many reasons for the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s. The outcome of the missile crisis led to a new period of relaxation and attempts to co-operate which were interrupted by two major conflicts: President Johnson's **escalation of the Vietnam war** and the **invasion of Czechoslovakia** by the Warsaw Pact in August 1968.

So the period of 1953–1969 can best be described as a period of **both** confrontation and détente.

### Time for Détente (Lessening of Tension)? The New Russian Leadership after Stalin



Figure 2.3: Georgy Malenkov



Figure 2.4: Nikita Khrushchev

The policies of the new leadership in the USSR are the first signs of détente that we can see in the Cold War. But how much was this only rhetorical? We shall later assess if Khrushchev was a Cold Warrior. President Eisenhower on the other hand was not satisfied with 'containment'. He wanted to see a 'rollback' of communism. His policies would be tested in the 1950s and we shall also assess him from a Cold War perspective.

When Stalin died in 1953 there was no clear successor and a collective leadership emerged with Malenkov and Khrushchev as the most prominent leaders. In 1955, Malenkov was ousted by his rival Khrushchev. The new leadership opened up for new opportunities in the Cold War during the years 1953–1956:

- An armistice was finally signed in **Korea** in 1953.
- In 1954, a peace conference was arranged at **Geneva** to deal with the **Indochina War**, under the chairmanship of the USSR and Britain.
- In 1955, there was a Great power summit in Geneva between the USSR, the US, Britain and France. The leaders met for the first time since Potsdam 1945. The new and positive atmosphere was referred to as **'the spirit of Geneva'**.
- In 1955, the occupational forces of **Austria** decided to end the occupation and re-establish full independence of the country. This had not been possible in countries like Germany and Korea. Soviet troops were also withdrawn from Finland.
- Khrushchev started to **reduce the size of the Red Army** unilaterally (without the other side doing it).
- Khrushchev went to **Yugoslavia** in 1955, to heal the rift between the two states and to show that the USSR could accept the existence of a communist regime not totally controlled by Moscow, a clear break with Stalin's policies.
- In February 1956, Khrushchev gave a dramatic and important speech at a secret session of the 20th Party Congress, i.e., the **'Secret Speech'** in an attempt to promote 'de-Stalinisation' and liberalisation. It had far-reaching consequences as it started a de-Stalinisation process in the USSR. It can partly be seen as a **domestic political struggle** against old Stalinists like Molotov, but it had international implications as well. In **China**, Mao regarded the attack on Stalin's terror and the cult of personality as an indirect attack on his rule. Khrushchev also announced that there could be **'national roads to socialism'**, i.e., an acceptance of 'national communism'. His new policy towards Tito in Yugoslavia implemented this change. In the same month, Khrushchev dissolved Cominform, the international communist organisation. Communist rule was soon questioned in two satellites in Eastern Europe, Poland and Hungary.
- Ideologically, Khrushchev announced a major departure from orthodox Marxism-Leninism by introducing the idea of **peaceful co-existence** with the capitalists.

**Critical Thinking**  
Why do you think the Secret Speech is so important?

### The Eisenhower Administration and the New Look



Figure 2.5: Dwight D. Eisenhower



Figure 2.6: John Foster Dulles

When Eisenhower became the first Republican president in 20 years, he had promised to end the Korean War. But there was no fundamental change in attitude towards communism and no positive response to the new policy in the Kremlin. Eisenhower introduced a new foreign policy which was referred to as **The New Look**:

- Communism should still be contained. Dulles even expressed the desire of a 'rollback' of communist controlled areas i.e., a liberation of these areas from communism. Eisenhower supported it but clarified that it had to be achieved by peaceful means and no support was given in Germany in 1953, Poland and Hungary in 1956, when communism was challenged.

**Nuclear weapons** were now regarded as weapons of first and not last resort. In practical terms this indicated a policy of **massive retaliation** against possible enemies, and less reliance on conventional forces and Truman's policy of fighting 'limited wars'. As both superpowers were nuclear powers it was a dangerous gamble and Dulles explained this policy of 'brinkmanship' in a famous interview in 1956:

"The ability to get to the verge without getting into the war is the necessary art... If you try to run away from it, if you are scared to go to the brink, you are lost."<sup>33</sup>

- The policy of containment continued by the formation of alliances directed against the Communists. In 1954, the South-East Asian Treaty Organization (**SEATO**) was created by the US, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, with the main aim of preventing communist expansion in South East Asia. In 1955, the **Baghdad Pact** was formed between Britain, Iraq and later Iran and Pakistan with the aim of excluding the USSR from the Middle East. The US did not join for tactical reasons but stood behind the organisation. In Europe, Germany was offered full membership status in NATO in 1955, i.e., a decision to allow German troops again. **NATO in Europe, SEATO in Asia and the Baghdad Pact in the Middle East surrounded, or contained the USSR.**

**Why did the US administration not respond to the new signals from the USSR?**

- Eisenhower came to power during the war in **Korea** where the Americans had lost 33,000 soldiers due to attacks from two communist states: North Korea and China.
- In 1953, **McCarthy** was at the peak of his career and Eisenhower had won the presidential elections by attacking the Truman administration for being 'soft on communism'. It was not the right moment for an American 'thaw'.
- Both Eisenhower and Dulles were '**Cold Warriors**', i.e., strongly anti-Communists.
- Soviet signs of détente or a thaw were brief and interrupted in 1956 with the crises in **Hungary and the Suez**.

### The Non-Aligned Movement

The process of decolonisation had resulted in a number of newly independent states in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. In 1954, the **Indian Prime Minister Nehru** made a speech discussing Sino (Chinese)-Indian relations. He declared five pillars which should be seen as a guide between the two nations. These pillars would later be the basis of what would be the **Non-Aligned Movement**. The principles were:

- Respect for territorial integrity
- Mutual non-aggression
- Mutual non-interference in domestic affairs
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence.

In 1955, some Asian and African states organised a meeting in **Bandung** in Indonesia. The aims were to promote **Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism**. The meeting would play an important role in shaping a Third World identity. To oppose colonialism was

<sup>33</sup> Edwards, O., *The USA and the Cold War 1945–63*, p. 80.

in many ways equivalent to a desire to stay out of the Cold War. Twenty-nine states representing more than half of the world's population were present. The process of decolonisation had started and issues that were brought up were France's control of North Africa and the conflict between Indonesia and the Netherlands concerning New Guinea. The conference also supported "*the rights of the Arab people of the Palestine*." China played a very important role at the conference and her relations with other Asian powers were brought up. The Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai successfully displayed a conciliatory role. One major issue that was brought up was whether Soviet control of Eastern Europe was comparable to Western colonialism. A declaration was made condemning "*colonialism in all of its manifestations*."<sup>34</sup> The conference called for redistribution of resources for the benefit of poorer states and supported Nehru's principles outlined in 1954.

As a result of the Bandung conference, the **Non-Aligned Movement was established in Belgrade, Yugoslavia in 1961**. The formation of the organisation was a result of a co-operation between Sukarno from Indonesia, Nasser from Egypt, Nehru from India, Nkrumah from Ghana and Tito from Yugoslavia. Twenty-five states participated. Three questions have dominated the organisation:

- Third World states and their relation to the superpowers, i.e., **Cold War issues**. The aim was to find a 'third way'. It is against this background we see Tito's deep involvement in the organisation.
- **Decolonisation**: The organisation had established itself as an important protest organisation against colonial rule both in Africa and in Asia.
- The third question which dominated later development was the question of a **new economic world order**; i.e., how resources should be transferred from richer to poorer countries.

Cold War questions tended to dominate the organisation in the early 1960s. In the 1970s, especially after the fourth summit in Algiers in 1973, economic issues and a new world order have dominated. **East-West relations** and conflicts had been replaced by the **North-South conflict**. Tito led the work with Cold War issues while Castro from Cuba was deeply involved in questions about a new economic order. The fact that Cuba, a close ally to the USSR, was deeply involved in the organisation was criticised by some member states. The movement was normally more pro-Soviet than pro-American. The Non-Aligned Movement **lacked economic, military and partly political power** and the member states were very divided.

The importance of the organisation as the **voice of the Third World** should not be neglected. When Soviet leaders discussed whether they should invade Afghanistan in 1979, the Foreign Minister Gromyko opposed the plan and argued: "*All the Non-Aligned countries will be against us*."<sup>35</sup> Many ideas, especially concerning a new economic world order, have been influential. The idea of a responsibility of richer countries towards the Third World is today widely accepted and the Non-Aligned Movement has been instrumental in this development. One example is the recommendations of the Brandt Commission in 1980.

Détente was interrupted by two crises in 1956.

### Cold War Crisis 3: Hungary 1956

The Secret Speech started a dangerous political development which challenged Khrushchev's position. What did he say in his speech which gave the satellites this message? Khrushchev talked about how Stalin tried to overthrow Tito:

"But this did not happen to Tito. No matter how much or how little Stalin shook, not only his little finger but everything else that he could shake, Tito did not fall. Why? The reason was that, in this instance of disagreement with [our] Yugoslav comrades, Tito had behind him a state and a people who had had a serious education in fighting for liberty and independence, *a people who gave support to its leaders*.

<sup>34</sup> <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/16/bandung-conference-1955/2> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

<sup>35</sup> Rivero, D., *The Détente Deception: Soviet and Western Bloc Competition and the Subversion of Cold War Peace* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield) p. 81.

We have carefully examined the case of Yugoslavia. We have found a proper solution which is approved by the peoples of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia as well as by the working masses of all the people's democracies and by all progressive humanity. The liquidation of abnormal relationship with Yugoslavia was done in the interest of the whole camp of socialism, in the interest of strengthening peace in the whole world.<sup>36</sup>

Would the USSR now respect a similar relationship with other satellites? Khrushchev's policy was being tested.

The first satellite to react to the Secret Speech was Poland. In June there were riots in **Poznan** and hundreds of workers were wounded by attacking security forces. The Russians and the government responded with a **reform programme and a policy of liberalisation**. Wladislaw Gomulka who had been imprisoned for years after Stalin's purge on 'national communists' in the late 1940s, was rehabilitated. Khrushchev and the **Russian Politburo** feared too far-reaching reforms in one of the satellites and **went to Poland unexpectedly** in an attempt to avoid a major political crisis. They realised that much had been set in motion by the Secret Speech. There were extremely tense negotiations and the Russians threatened to invade. Gomulka assured the Russian leadership that **no major alterations would be made to the Polish system**, i.e., a multi-party system would not be allowed and that Poland would still be a member of the Warsaw Pact and remain within the communist camp. But a form of 'national communism' had been accepted, collectivisation of agriculture was ended and the regime now sought better relations with the Catholic Church. Gomulka was appointed First Secretary but the Soviet bloc was still considered to be intact.

A more difficult test came only weeks after. In October, 50,000 students, inspired by the development in Poland, demonstrated against communist rule and Soviet control outside the Polish embassy in Budapest. Continuing disorder and political violence soon developed into a **Hungarian Uprising against Soviet rule**. The USSR accepted a new government led by Imre Nagy including two non-Communists. For a brief period the country went through reforms, political parties were formed, freedom of the press was introduced and political prisoners were released. Dulles made a speech and congratulated the Hungarians for challenging the Red Army. Radio Free Europe, financed by the US but not formally a part of the US government, promised US aid. On 27 October, a coalition government was formed.

On 30 October and 1 November, the Nagy government declared that they were **preparing to leave the Warsaw Pact, become a neutral country and allow free elections**. This was a critical moment for Khrushchev and Soviet control of the satellites.

If one satellite and Warsaw Pact member was allowed to leave, it was very likely that there would be a domino reaction within the Eastern Bloc. Probably the same development that we saw after Gorbachev's new policy was introduced in the late 1980s.

**On 4 November, Soviet forces attacked** Budapest and installed a new pro-Soviet government led by Janos Kadar. Imre Nagy was executed and 30,000 Hungarians and 7,000 Russian troops were killed in the uprising. 200,000 Hungarians fled their country and left a gulf of bitterness against Russian rule.

**What were the reasons for the Hungarian crisis:**

1. The **Secret Speech** brought hope to many in the satellites. The timing of the events in Poland and Hungary shows the significance of the speech.
2. The **solution of the Polish Crisis** inspired people in Hungary. A form of 'national communism' had been accepted by the USSR in Poland.
3. Soviet armed forces and Soviet control of the country was **resented by many**. This was the driving force behind the revolution.

<sup>36</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1972) p. 600.

4. The USSR finally decided to invade Hungary because the new government announced that a **multi-party system** would be introduced and that the country would **leave the Warsaw Pact**. This would mean an end of Soviet control and to Khrushchev, who surprisingly had delivered his Secret Speech, this was unacceptable for two reasons: (1) There was definitely a risk for a **domino reaction** in Eastern Europe. (2) There was a risk that **Khrushchev would not survive this as a leader of the USSR**. (With hindsight we know that there was an attempted coup against him the year after.)

Can we blame the US for the Hungarian Uprising? Eisenhower had outlined a policy of 'rollback'—this was the opportunity. We know that Radio Free Europe stated that the US and the world supported the Hungarians and promised support. The radio station was partly funded by the US government but independent is independent. So it cannot be seen as the voice of the US government. Most people in the administration remained silent even though the Secretary of States, J. F. Dulles, gave a speech claiming the importance of giving support to countries breaking free from Soviet control.

### Impact and Significance of the Hungarian Uprising

1. **The USSR's role as a model of communism was questioned** by many communist parties, especially in the West and communist parties in Western Europe lost support.
2. Khrushchev and the USSR had drawn a line showing what they could accept in Poland and Hungary. **A disintegration of the satellite system was not going to be tolerated.**
3. Domestically, Khrushchev's liberalisation after 1956 was questioned and there was an attempt to overthrow him by old Stalinists in 1957.
4. Eisenhower and **the US** had shown that they were not **prepared to risk a war** over territories within the Soviet **sphere of influence** and that an armed 'rollback' was no real alternative. **This is probably the most important outcome of the crisis.**
5. It definitely brought an end to the 'spirit of Geneva'.
6. Mao had been critical to the Secret Speech from the beginning. He concluded, which is correct, that the uprising in Hungary was a result of Khrushchev's speech. Mao blamed Khrushchev for the uprising and this issue was one of many behind the Sino-Soviet split.

Before looking at this outline, make your own attempt to answer the question.

#### Exercise 8: Compare and contrast the origins, impact and significance of two Cold War crises.

(Show the similarities and the differences. It is an open question and we will take Korea 1950 and Hungary 1956 as our examples. It's probably easier to find differences.)

##### Similarities: Origins

1. Both Korea and Hungary were rather small states but the crises became serious world crises because the outcome would decide to which bloc they would belong in the Cold War.
2. It can be argued that the Soviet side was more active in causing both crises (Stalin had approved Kim's plans and the USSR intervened in Hungary.).
3. Both conflicts can be seen as attempts to secure communist rule.
4. In both crises the Soviet Union believed that the US was not to use military means.
5. Both crises were Cold War crises but fought in client states.

##### Similarities: Impact and Consequences

1. In both crises, the superpowers limited their action to avoid direct confrontation. In Korea, the

USSR was neutral and in Hungary the US didn't live up to her policy of 'rollback'.

2. Both crises were armed Cold War crises and affected opinions globally and to some extent they contributed to an escalation of the Cold War. Many examples can be given to show that both crises fuelled the Cold War: McCarthyism, support for Taiwan, NSC68 implementation (effects of Korea) and the spirit of Geneva was brought to an end with Hungary. (See below if the reactions to some extent differed.).

##### Differences: Origins

1. Korea started as an attack from one state against another, while Hungary started as a revolt from people in the country opposing Soviet control.

(Continued)

**Critical Thinking**  
In what way had both Khrushchev's and Eisenhower's policies been tested in the Hungarian crisis?

**Exercise 8: Compare and contrast the origins, impact and significance of two Cold War crises. (Continued)**

2. In Korea the North tried to conquer the South and in Hungary the USSR combatted 'counter revolutionaries' so that Hungary would remain in the communist camp.
3. South Korea was within a US sphere of influence. Hungary was within the Soviet sphere of influence.
4. The UN could take actions in Korea. The USSR blocked UN decisions about Hungary.
5. In Korea, Soviet actions were more in cover. It was, of course, not like that in Hungary.

**Differences: Impact and Consequences**

1. It was Korea which drew the line in the Cold War. In the US the NSC68 report was implemented. The Korean War was a turning point and Hungary was not.
2. The Korean conflict involved more than 15 states. Hungary did not. Even though international reactions were seen, the Hungarian Crisis compared to Korea did not cause such international involvement.
3. There was nothing like China attacking the UN in Hungary, with all its implications.
4. Korea quickly resulted in a number of commitments from the superpowers (China, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam). We couldn't see the same in Hungary.
5. While Korea tied the USSR and China closer together, Hungary did not. Mao had disliked

the Secret Speech from the beginning and they had different opinions on how to handle the crisis in Hungary. It contributed to the Sino-Soviet split.

6. It can be argued that the US lived up to her policies in Korea but not in Hungary, i.e., containment in Korea and no rollback in Hungary.
7. While it can be argued that the Korea War didn't solve the problem which had caused the conflict (one Korea) the USSR did achieve her aims in Hungary.
8. The Korean War was more devastating to Korea than the uprising in Hungary was to Hungary.
9. Hungary was a confirmation of the division of Europe after WWII. Korea cannot be seen in this light.

**Conclusion:** Both these conflicts were Cold War conflicts and world crises. In both conflicts, the USSR made attempts to secure full control for communist rule. But the reasons for the start, North Korea attacking the South and a Soviet military intervention in a satellite, differed of course.

In Korea, the US lived up to her policy of containment, but the policy of rollback was ignored in Hungary. This led to there being no international support for the Hungarians and that the USSR, unlike in Korea, achieved her aims. Korea led to major international consequences, Hungary did not.

**Cold War Crisis 4: The Suez Crisis 1956**

The Suez Crisis in 1957 gives us a crisis from a new region: The Middle East. It is a very interesting crisis. Initially both the US and the USSR stood on the same side: they both opposed the attack from Britain, France and Israel. As a consequence of the crisis, the USSR suddenly played a major role in this region, which was a departure from Stalin's **post-war foreign policy**. **The Suez Crisis is an example from the IB region 'Africa and the Middle East'.**

If we look at the Middle East in the mid-1950s we can conclude that there were four different but overlapping political conflicts:

1. **Britain and France** had traditionally dominated the region. They were in decline and **challenged** by regional leaders (the most important one was Nasser) and outside powers.
2. The two superpowers were now more active in the region making it a part of the **Cold War**.
3. There was a struggle between different Arab states for the **leadership in the Arab world**.
4. The fourth one was the **Arab-Israeli dispute** (Israel has been founded in 1948).

King Farouk of Egypt had been overthrown in an army coup in 1952. Soon **Gamal Abdel Nasser emerged as a new leader**. He was an **Arab nationalist** and opposed both the foundation of the state Israel and traditional Western domination in the Middle East. As an Egyptian leader he wanted full control of the Suez Canal. These aims and policies soon became a part of the Cold War. In 1953, the CIA evaluated Stalin's foreign policy. No attempts had been made to spread communism outside Eurasia. The CIA warned that **his successors might not be as cautious**. Khrushchev must be seen as more adventurous and when both Czech and Russian arms were sent to Egypt in 1955, it was the first Russian or communist arms agreement with a non-communist state. With Khrushchev the USSR embarked on a new foreign policy. The 'Third World' became a target area and even non-communist regimes, like Egypt, could be allies. This was new.

The situation in the Middle East was problematic to the US. Her NATO allies **Britain and France** had traditionally dominated the region which made them disliked in the eyes of Arab Nationalists like Nasser. US links to **Israel** were even more problematic. Nasser wanted a US arms deal, but refused to promise that the weapons should not be used against Israel. Nasser even supported armed raids killing Israeli civilians and this forced Eisenhower's hand—he could not sell US arms to be used in such actions.

France was facing a rebellion in Algeria and the National Liberation Front (FLN) rebels were given support from Egypt and Nasser. The rebellion was seen in a wider context of Arab nationalism in which Nasser was a key figure. To the French, this very problematic rebellion was secretly directed by the Soviet Union. Nasser could play off the superpowers in order to let them compete with each other, in attempts to buy his friendship.

- In 1955, Nasser made an **arms deal** with the USSR and one of Russia's satellites, Czechoslovakia and Soviet experts started to train the Egyptian army.
- In May 1956, Egypt recognised the communist regime in **China**. It was seen as a provocation by the West.
- Nasser also concluded an alliance between Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, against Israel.

Nasser's pro-communist attitude and anti-Western propaganda led to the US and Britain cancelling a loan which should finance the building of **the Aswan Dam**. With no Western support Egypt might turn to the USSR. This would probably only damage relations between Egypt and the USSR since the cost for the project would be difficult for the USSR to bear alone.

- **Nasser responded by a nationalisation of the Suez Canal**. The Canal was mainly owned by British and French stockholders but Nasser promised compensation. Control of the Canal would bring incomes to the Aswan Dam project.

Israel, Britain and France decided to invade Egypt in order to humiliate Nasser and replace him with a pro-Western leader. The decision to invade in 1956 was due to the following:



1. **Nasser** was an Arab Nationalist who **threatened British and French interests** in the Middle East.
2. The **oil** industry was one such important 'interest'. Two-third of Europe's oil was shipped through the Canal.
3. By accepting Soviet support, Nasser opened up for the USSR in the Middle East. Nasser's policies became a **Cold War issue**.
4. Nasser's anti-Western policies and the idea of an alliance of Arab states also **threatened Israeli** interests.
5. The French wanted to stop the flow of weapons from Egypt to **Algeria**.

On 26 October 1956, Israel invaded Egypt. The carefully drafted plan, denied by all three states, was that Israel should secure the Canal and then France and Britain should intervene to secure order and re-establish control of the canal zone. By humiliating Nasser one aim was to depose him. The invasion met worldwide opposition and worst of all, **opposition from both superpowers**. The US had been involved in discussions as to how to solve the crisis with Britain and France between July and October. The US had opposed an attack and the reasons were:

1. Eisenhower could not openly support what could be seen as a **colonial aggression**.
2. If the US had accepted the attack, and the USSR had been the only protector of an Arab state under attack, it **would give the USSR an upper hand in the Arab and Third World**.
3. When the attack was launched the **Hungarian revolt** had started. It was impossible to condemn Soviet aggression in Hungary, and defend British/French aggression in Egypt.

The attack caused uproar in Britain. The Labour opposition had been kept in the dark and during the period June–October, the public opinion had calmed down and was not expecting war at this point. But the international reaction was even more problematic. The Suez Crisis was in many ways unique: to some extent it was a Cold War conflict, but both superpowers supported Egypt and were taken by surprise when it started. To the US, trying to deal with Soviet aggression in Hungary, the Suez Crisis was impossible to defend. Vice President Richard Nixon said: *"We couldn't on the one hand, complain about the Soviets intervening in Hungary and, on the other hand, approve of the British and the French picking that particular time to intervene against Nasser."*<sup>37</sup> To defend the attack would also provide Soviet propaganda with an advantage in the Third World. To the USSR, eager to replace Western dominance in the oil-rich Middle East, and to show herself a defender of countries in the Third World, the crisis was a golden opportunity.

The issue was brought to the Security Council in the UN by both the US and the USSR but Britain and France could veto all resolutions.

The Soviet reaction was even sterner. Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin threatened to **intervene on the Egyptian side**, and to launch rocket attacks on Britain, France and Israel. Eisenhower feared a major escalation. The US could not remain neutral in a **war between the USSR and two NATO allies**. The US had to use every possible means to end the conflict. The US refused to provide Britain and France with petroleum, in a situation where they were facing a Middle East embargo. The British economy suffered from the war and the British sought immediate assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but it was denied by the United States. Britain faced an economic crisis where the country would soon be unable to pay for import of food to feed the population. This **financial pressure** forced a solution. Britain surrendered to American demands and called the invasion off, without consulting the French. The French had to accept Britain's decision but were furious. Prime Minister Eden in Britain was forced to resign and a 74-year British presence in Egypt was brought to an end. The military assault on Egypt had been successful but the outcome confirmed Egyptian sovereignty and ownership of the Canal. To Britain and France it was a disaster. Especially the French who thought they had been betrayed by the leading state in NATO, the US.

<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

When the crises were to be formally resolved, it was brought to the UN. For the first time, the General Assembly held an emergency session, and by using the Assembly it was impossible to block decisions through veto power. The UN had a template of sending peacekeeping troops and would from now on continue to do so in other crises in the world. The UN troops evacuated the area, separated troops and remained in the area as a peacekeeping unit.

### The Effects of the Suez Crisis

- **Nasser's prestige** in the Arab world and the Third World increased and Arab nationalism grew in strength. The outcome of the crisis confirmed Egyptian sovereignty and ownership of the Canal.
- **Soviet influence in the Middle East** grew and it was Soviet money that financed the Aswan Dam.
- **The crisis was disastrous for the traditional British and French influence in the Arab world.** Some have argued that the crisis marks an end of the British Empire. Britain had to leave the Suez and Egypt after 74 years.
- This conflict can also be seen in the context of the decolonisation process. France and Britain had been the two leading colonial powers in the world and the humiliation in the Middle East gave strong impetus to the decolonisation process in the world.
- The Suez Canal was cut off and a pipeline from Iraq to the Mediterranean was also closed. This was a serious development for Europe and after the crisis the Japanese started to build super-tankers which went round the Cape of Good Hope. As a consequence, the crisis diminished the importance of the Canal. Few had realised this when it started.
- It diverted attention from the **Hungarian Uprising** from which the USSR benefited greatly.
- In January 1957, Eisenhower launched his '**Eisenhower Doctrine**' and the US Congress gave him the right to provide economic and military assistance to any Middle Eastern country threatened with armed aggression or internal subversion. As a result of this, the US intervened in Lebanon in July 1958.
- In July 1958, pro-Nasserite Iraqi army officers murdered the king and the Prime Minister in Iraq and withdrew the country from the pro-Western Baghdad Pact.
- In the late 1950s, **France started to move away from NATO**. A French politician, Pineau, concluded *"the main victim of the (Suez) affair was the Atlantic alliance...if our allies have abandoned us in difficult, even dramatic, circumstances; they would be capable of doing so again if Europe in its turn found itself in danger."*<sup>38</sup> In 1966, the process ended when all French land and air forces were withdrawn from the NATO military command and with the removal of the NATO headquarters from France. France was still a member of NATO. The reasons for De Gaulle's independent foreign policy had several explanations but the Suez Crisis was not insignificant. The crisis also made the French realise that they needed nuclear weapons of their own.
- Many have argued that the Suez Crisis played a role in the process of integrating Europe. On the evening when Britain informed France that she was pulling out, the French foreign minister had a meeting with the German chancellor Adenauer. According to one account, Adenauer said: *"There remains to them (i.e., France, Britain and Germany) only one way of playing a decisive role in the world, that is to unite Europe... We have no time to waste; Europe will be your revenge."*<sup>39</sup> The next year the **Treaty of Rome**, the founding treaty of the **European Economic Community**, was signed. The French did what they could to keep Britain out of the union as long as they could. Britain was still a close ally to the US and the Suez Crisis had shown that this Atlantic relation was more important to Britain than European co-operation. Britain was seen as America's Trojan horse.
- It was the UN which finally could send **peacekeeping forces** to the area. This was the first time the UN took such action. Lester B. Pearson, who would later become the Prime Minister of Canada, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 for his work of creating a mandate for a United Nations Peacekeeping Force.

<sup>38</sup> Ball, S. J., *The Cold War: An International History 1947–1991*, p. 152.

<sup>39</sup> *The Economist*, 27 July 2006, p. 24.

 **Key Point**

The Cold War had now turned to the Middle East which was an escalation and a departure from Stalinist foreign policy.

**Exercise 9: Compare and contrast the origins of two Cold War crises.**

(Show the similarities and the differences. We choose the Korean War 1950 and the Suez Crisis 1956 as an example.)

**Similarities:**

- Both conflicts started with an **armed attack** where **neither of the two superpowers were directly involved**.
- Both conflicts started in what could be seen as **smaller countries**, but it was soon clear that the outcome would be of **major importance** to the Cold War.
- Both conflicts gave an impression of being potentially very important and ran the risk that both superpowers could be directly involved.
- Both conflicts involved close allies to the superpowers (China, Britain and France).
- Both conflicts show that there were no geographical limits in the Cold War—it was global. (Stalin had been much more cautious.)

**Differences:**

- The aims were **more limited in Egypt**. While the attacking powers would topple Nasser and take control of the Canal, the aim in Korea was initially to annex another state.
- In Korea, the USSR had been a part of the preparation for the attack. **No such superpower involvement** could be seen in Egypt when planning the attack.
- Many of the **aims in the two conflicts differed**. Kim wanted to unite his country. Stalin approved his plans for a variety of reasons. In Egypt there were many other reasons: to curb Arab nationalism, oil, Cold War reasons, control of the Canal, Nasser, Algeria, Israel's security and of course the desire of both Britain and France to maintain her influence in the region. (This point should be elaborated.)

- The fact that two-third of Europe's **oil** went through the Canal and that the Middle East was so rich with oil, makes this conflict very special. (Egypt cannot however be seen as an oil producer of importance—it was the Canal which was so important for transporting the oil.)
- In Korea, the UN could be used as a tool, while Britain and France could veto any decision in the Security Council in 1956. Consequently there was **no US coalition with active UN troops** in Egypt.
- But the General Assembly in the UN held an emergency session when the resolution supporting a withdrawal of all forces was passed. It was the first time the Assembly was used in this way and it was decided that **UN forces** should be sent, under a **UN flag**, to implement the resolution. They would supervise the ceasefire with peacekeeping UN units. This was new and would be used many times in the future.
- There was no **interference from another world crisis (Hungary)** influencing decisions when the Korean Crisis started.
- The Suez Crisis can also be seen as a way of dealing with the revolt in **Algeria**.

**Conclusion:**

From the beginning most people realised that the outcome of the crises would be of major importance for the continuation of the Cold War. It is also worth noting that none of the superpowers were directly involved in the crises. But if we study the initial aims, why the conflict started from the beginning, it must be concluded that there are many differences (emphasise point 2 above).

**Exercise 10: Compare and contrast the impact and significance of two Cold War crises each chosen from a different region.**

(Show similarities and differences. We choose Korea 1951 and the Suez Crisis 1956 in the below example.)

**Similarities:**

- Both conflicts confirm the **dominance of the two superpowers** in World affairs. Europe, excluding the USSR, is playing a secondary role.
- Both conflicts would have a **major impact** from a Cold War perspective in each region. Both conflicts can be seen as **escalations** of the Cold War (one example is the NSC68 implementation).
- Specific examples of 'major impact' were the US commitment to defend **Taiwan** in 1950 and support to the **French in Indochina**. The USSR stood firmly behind **North Korea and China**. In the Middle East, Eisenhower announced the '**Eisenhower Doctrine**' of 1957 where the US Congress gave him the right to provide economic and military assistance to any Middle Eastern

country threatened with armed aggression or internal subversion. The Suez Crisis **opened up the Middle East for the USSR**. They would now finance the **Aswan Dam**.

- Both conflicts boosted support for the **USSR in the Third World**. In Korea and in Egypt, Western powers were directly involved in armed conflicts against smaller nations.
- In both conflicts the **UN** was involved. (The roles differed somewhat, which is explained below.)

**Differences:**

- While Korea didn't really change the division of Asia from a Cold War perspective, the **Suez Crisis** resulted in many **new opportunities** in the Middle East to the USSR in particular.

- The Suez Crisis did not strengthen **Atlantic cooperation**. Especially France felt betrayed by the US which partly explains France distancing itself from parts of NATO later.
- On the other hand, the Suez Crisis spurred **European integration**. Germany gave strong support to the French during the crisis and in 1957 the European Economic Community was formed.
- The Suez Crisis brought an end to an era. **Decolonisation gained much strength and British and French influence in the Middle East was ended**. Some even argue that this was the end of the British Empire in terms of international influence. Nothing similar could be seen in Korea.
- The role of the UN was very different. In Korea it was used as a tool to fight back the attack from the North. In Suez it should implement the ceasefire and send peacekeeping forces. The UN organiser (the Canadian Lester Pearson) was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957.
- The Suez Crisis had a direct impact on the crisis in Hungary. Focus was in the Middle East and not in Hungary.
- Korea suffered** more in terms of destruction and casualties than Egypt did.

- Nasser and Egypt came out as a clear victor from the Suez Crisis, nothing similar could be seen in Korea.
- The Suez Crisis led to the Canal losing much of its importance as an oil supplier. It led to the Japanese starting to build super-tankers to go round the Cape.

**Conclusion:**

Both these crises were of major significance and affected both regions profoundly. Both superpowers committed themselves to different allies. One example is Truman's decision to implement the recommendations in the NSC68 report.

The Suez Crisis brought many changes. Britain and France lost most of their influence in the Middle East while the Soviet Union became a very important power in the region after 1956. It was a very clear departure from Stalin's foreign policy.

Atlantic co-operation was damaged through the Suez Crisis and Franco-American relations never recovered from this. On the other hand, co-operation in Europe gained from the crisis. The Suez Crisis was one building block in the European Union.

**Cold War Crisis 5: Berlin 1958–1961**

The next Cold War crisis according to the syllabus will be Berlin 1958–1961.

During this period there were actually two crises, one in 1958 and the second one in 1961, when the wall was erected. It is however also possible to see it as one on going crisis between 1958 and 1961.

Berlin would once more be a trouble spot in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The US poured money into West Berlin and soon the city was a **prosperous Western island** contrasting with the areas controlled by the USSR. The worst problem was that many young, educated East Germans fled their country through Berlin and it severely drained the resources of East Germany. It caused a 'brain drain'. Between 1949 and June 1961, **2,600,000 East Germans fled the country**, an average of more than 200,000 per year. The figures from the years when the wall was erected in 1961 were:

Year	1991
1957	261,622
1958	204,092
1959	143,917
1960	199,188
1961 (to 30 June)	103,159

Source: Taken from P. M. H. Bell, *The World since 1945: An International History*, Arnold, London 2001, p. 140.

A solution was needed because:

- The East German state would **collapse** if it continued.
- The difference between East and West Berlin, with its capitalist prosperity, was an **embarrassment** to the communist regime.
- There was no formal treaty where the two German states were fully recognised. Khrushchev wanted **both a treaty and a solution to the Berlin problem**. So Berlin was used as a tool to solve the German problem, which is often forgotten when the crisis is described.

**Step 1:** Khrushchev realised that something had to be done. On 10 November 1958, he made a speech and announced that the time had come to find a solution to the Berlin problem:

*“The time has obviously arrived for the signatories of the Potsdam Agreement to renounce the remnants of the occupation regime in Berlin, and thereby make it possible to create a normal situation in the capital of GDR. The USSR [...] would hand over to the sovereign GDR the functions in Berlin.”*<sup>40</sup>

On 27 November, he followed up with a note to the Western Powers. **Khrushchev wanted a peace treaty where two German states would be fully recognised and that Berlin should be a free city without troops.** He declared the existing agreement on Berlin null and void and that all foreign troops should leave the city within six months and if no solution was reached the USSR would hand over the responsibility for Berlin to the German Democratic Republic. Khrushchev writes in his memoirs: *“We were simply asking the other side to acknowledge that two irreconcilable socio-political structures existed in Germany...”*<sup>41</sup>

This placed the West in a dilemma: if West Berlin remained as a ‘free’ city but the checkpoints would be handled by East Germans officials:

1. The West would be forced to **deal with a regime** they had promised West Germany not to accept or recognise.
2. The West Berliners also remembered the days of the Berlin Airlift in 1948. If the city was cut off in 1958, it would not be possible to support a much larger Berlin from the air.
3. **To accept Khrushchev’s ultimatum** would be a devastating signal to other **allies**.
4. If the Western powers tried to enforce their rights there was always a risk for an **armed conflict**.

Khrushchev gave the Western powers a **six-month ultimatum**.

The Western powers were divided. Eisenhower saw a possibility of seeing East Germany as agents of the USSR, thus accepting East German control of the border. De Gaulle in France was in a phase of building the European Community and had already during the Suez Crisis established strong bonds with Adenauer in West Germany. Both were against any concessions to the USSR. To Adenauer a two-state German solution was unacceptable.

**Step 2:** Khrushchev did not press his point however. In 1959, he went to a much publicised visit to the US and was prepared to once again **postpone his Berlin ultimatum** until a Big Four summit meeting in Paris in May 1960. This summit collapsed on the very first day. In 1956, Eisenhower had authorised reconnaissance spy planes crossing Russian territories. They were out of range of Russian ground-to-air missiles. On 1 May 1960, a US plane was finally shot down by improved missiles and Khrushchev set up a trap. The Russians only announced that a plane had been shot down. The US now claimed it was a weather reconnaissance aircraft, assuming it had not been found. The problem was that the pilot Gary Powers survived and explained that he had not swallowed the cyanide capsule as he had been instructed to do. The Russians also had the wreckage of the aircraft and could later put it on display in Moscow with parts of the aircraft, the pilots equipment etc. The incident angered the Russians and Khrushchev demanded a full apology at the Paris summit. Eisenhower accepted full responsibility for this ‘U-2 affair’, but refused to apologise and the Russians left the conference in anger. No solution to the Berlin problem was consequently achieved.

**Step 3:** In 1961, the US elected John F. Kennedy as president. Khrushchev and the Eastern Bloc wanted more than ever a solution to the Berlin problem due to the damaging number of refugees. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs: *“I know there are people who claim that the East Germans are imprisoned in paradise and that the gates of the Socialist paradise are guarded by armed troops. I’m aware that defects exists...”*<sup>42</sup> When Kennedy met Khrushchev in **Vienna in June 1961**, he had experienced the fiasco at the **Bay of Pigs** the previous April (see ‘the Cuban Missile Crisis’) and couldn’t abandon this outpost

<sup>40</sup> Williamson, D., *Europe and the Cold War 1945–91*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder Murray, 2006) p. 123.

<sup>41</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 453.

<sup>42</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 456.

behind the Iron Curtain. Before the summit he said: *“I’ll have to show him that we can be as tough as he is...”*<sup>43</sup> No solution was reached but **Khrushchev issued a second six-month ultimatum** concerning Berlin. Kennedy asked the Congress for more money to US defence.

**Step 4:** In August 1961, the uncertainty over Berlin became acute. On 12 August, 4,000 people fled the city and the day after the East German government started to erect the **Berlin Wall**, the very symbol of the Cold War. They did it because:

1. They needed a solution to the refugee crisis.
2. This would ease the tension to the US in the long run.

The days when the wall was erected were of course very tense. Shortly after there was a stand-off where tanks from both sides lined up along the border between the zones in Berlin. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs:

*“The tanks and troops of both sides spent the night lined up facing each other across the border. It was late October and chilly.”*<sup>44</sup>

### Impact and Significance of the Berlin Crisis

1. **Berlin ceased to be a major pressure point** in US-Soviet relations.
2. Khrushchev concluded: *“It was a great victory for us.”*<sup>45</sup> For the Russians **the problem of refugees was solved** but the propaganda value in terms of ‘**bad will**’ should not be underestimated. The Berlin Wall became a symbol for communist oppression. In the Eastern Bloc it was however referred to ‘the anti-fascist wall’.
3. The solution of the refugee problem was however important to the East German state and the USSR. With the Wall, Khrushchev concluded that **no peace treaty was needed**.
4. The crisis from 1958 to 1961 put a lot of pressure on **German-American relations**. This side of the crisis has many times been neglected. When Eisenhower publicly stated that he was not prepared to risk a war over Berlin and that the US was prepared to discuss Khrushchev’s ultimatum in 1958, the Germans felt that the US was unwilling to defend them. It was France who stood aside Germany in this crisis. France on the other hand felt betrayed by the US after Suez—together this put a lot of strain on relations between the US and West Germany/France.
5. Officially, it gave an impression that Kennedy had survived his first test after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, no matter what Adenauer thought. West Berlin remained a ‘free city’. Kennedy and the Americans had strong support from the West Berliners. In 1963, he went to Berlin and in one of the most well-known speeches from the Cold War declared:

*“Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free. When all men are free, then we can look forward to that day when this city will be joined as one, and this country, and this great continent of Europe, in a peaceful and hopeful globe. When that day finally comes, and it will, the people of West Berlin can take sober satisfaction in the fact that they were in the front line for almost two decades.*

*All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words “Ich bin ein Berliner.”*<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Edwards, O., *The USA and the Cold War 1945–63*, p. 114.

<sup>44</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 460.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>46</sup> Hanhimäki, J. M. and Westad, O. A., eds., *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, p. 331.

### Cold War Leader 3: Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of the US, 1953–1961

In the beginning, Eisenhower took an even more aggressive stance against the USSR than Truman. We must be aware that in 1953, when Truman came to power, **McCarthy** was at the peak of his career and Eisenhower had won the presidential elections by attacking the Truman administration for being 'soft on communism'. Containment was no longer enough—there should be a rollback of communism. He became the first Republican president for 20 years and introduced a new foreign policy which was referred to as **The New Look**:

Communism should still be contained. His Secretary of State John Foster Dulles even expressed the desire of a '**rollback**' of communist-controlled areas, i.e., a liberation of these areas from communism. Eisenhower supported it but clarified that it had to be achieved by peaceful means.

**Nuclear weapons** were now regarded as weapons of first and not last resort. In practical terms this indicated a policy of **massive retaliation** against possible enemies, and less reliance on conventional forces and Truman's policy of fighting 'limited wars'. So nuclear weapons were produced and the size of the US army was reduced during the Eisenhower years (size of the US army/thousands):

1953	1954	1956	1960
1,534	1,405	1,026	871

Source: Taken from The Encyclopaedia of American Military.

In many ways, Eisenhower must be seen as a Cold Warrior, i.e., he was strongly anti-communist. Consequently a lot of alliances against communism were formed.

- In 1954, the South-East Asian Treaty Organization (**SEATO**) was created by the US, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, with the main aim of preventing communist expansion in South-East Asia.
- In 1955, the **Baghdad Pact** was formed between Britain, Iraq and later Iran and Pakistan with the aim of excluding the USSR from the Middle East. The US did not join for tactical reasons but stood behind the organisation.
- In Europe, Germany was offered full membership status in NATO in 1955, i.e., a decision to allow German troops again.

But this new foreign policy and the idea of rollback would be tested:

- In 1953, there was a revolt in **East Berlin** against communist rule. **No US support** was given.
- In 1956, **Hungary** revolted against Soviet control. The US gave **no support** to the Hungarians.
- During the **Suez Crisis in 1956** the US refused to support her allies Britain, France and Israel. In fact they stood on **the same side as the USSR**.
- During the **Second Berlin Crisis in 1958** Eisenhower declared that he wanted to **avoid a war** over Berlin.

But there are many examples showing that he was a part of the Cold War:

1. In 1954, there was a *coup d'état* in **Guatemala**. It was a covert operation carried out by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which deposed the democratically elected Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz whom the US considered to be too leftist.
2. In 1956, Eisenhower had authorised reconnaissance **spy planes crossing Russian territories**.
3. Eisenhower committed the US to **defend Taiwan** during the Taiwan Strait Crises.
4. The US supported Diem in **Vietnam** after France had left. In 1954, it was Eisenhower who articulated the **Domino Theory**, when looking at communism in South-East Asia. If one country fell to communism it would lead to a domino reaction in Asia.
5. In 1957, the **Eisenhower Doctrine** was passed in Congress stating that the US would defend with arms any state in the Middle East threatened by communist aggression.
6. It was the Eisenhower administration which planned the **Bay of Pigs** invasion in Cuba.

Cold Warrior or not, it is interesting to note the **Farewell Address to the Nation** from President Eisenhower on 17 January 1961. Eisenhower, the former General who had led D-day and had led his country during eight Cold War years said: "[...] *we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.*"<sup>47</sup>

### Student Activities

Make an attempt to answer the question below. After you have written down your main points, compare them with the outline on the next page.

**Exercise 11:** Examine how the Truman Doctrine and the policy of containment were implemented in the period 1947–1961?

(It is a list question. Go through chronologically how it was implemented and don't forget to define and explain the Truman Doctrine and the containment policy in the beginning.)

**Containment** was the US policy that was adopted by President Truman in his Truman Doctrine in 1947 by which the US attempted to **prevent further Soviet or communist expansion** beyond territories occupied in 1945. No long-term co-operation with the USSR was possible and the intellectual basis had been provided by George Kennan in his Long Telegram from 1946. By supporting the 'free world' mainly militarily but also economically, like the Marshall Plan in Europe and economic aid to Japan, the expansion of communism would be prevented. To prevent the expansion of communism resulted in the building of military alliances surrounding the Communists.

**The Truman Doctrine** stated that it should be US policy to support nations who are fighting an internal or external communist threat. Initially intended only for Greece and Turkey but soon extended globally. Not only military means were used. Economical means, like the Marshall Plan, could be used.

There is a lot of information so don't overwrite. Dealing with a question where you may know too many points requires that you emphasise your main points and briefly mention points of minor importance. The most important points are:

1. Help was given both to **Greece and Turkey** and they remained within the Western camp.
2. Truman was able to pass the Marshall Plan through the Congress in 1948. The effect of the Marshall Plan is normally considered as **successful** and led to a massive industrial growth with a GNP growth in Europe of around 15–25% annually.
3. From the late 1940s substantial aid was given to **Japan** to build a stronghold against communism in Asia.
4. Through the **Berlin Airlift** Berlin was saved from a communist takeover.
5. Germany was given both economic and political support. In 1949, the **independence of West Germany** was proclaimed and she received substantial economic aid.
6. In April 1949 **NATO** was founded. Twelve states joined the organisation and according

to article 5, "an armed attack against one or more ..... be considered an attack on them all."<sup>48</sup> Germany became a full member in 1955.

7. In 1950, there was full support for **South Korea** when they were attacked by the North.
8. To achieve containment and to stop the expansion of communism the **NSC-68 report** was implemented from 1950. It led to a massive US military build-up.
9. Containment and the Truman Doctrine were now implemented in Asia. The US started to support the French in the **Indochina War** and support was also given to protect **Taiwan**. The build-up of Japan was strengthened.
10. With Eisenhower a partly new foreign policy was introduced called the 'New Look'. However, this policy was *in essence not different*. The aim was to prevent the spread of communism globally and to contain it. The talk about 'rollback' proved to be rhetorical.
11. In 1954, the South-East Asian Treaty Organization (**SEATO**) was created by the US, France, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan, with the main aim of preventing communist expansion in South-East Asia.
12. In 1954, CIA supported a coup in **Guatemala**.
13. In 1955, the **Baghdad Pact** was formed between Britain, Iraq and later Iran and Pakistan with the aim of excluding the USSR from the Middle East. The US didn't join this pact but unofficially clearly supported it.
14. In January 1957, Eisenhower launched his '**Eisenhower Doctrine**': the US Congress gave him the right to provide economic and military assistance to any Middle East country threatened with armed aggression or internal subversion. As a result of this the US intervened in Lebanon in July 1958.
15. **West Berlin survived 1958–1961**.
16. Trade embargo against **Cuba** and the Bay of Pigs in 1961. 15,000 US advisors in Vietnam.

**Conclusion:** Summarise your main points.

<sup>47</sup> Hanhimäki, J. M. and Westad, O. A., eds., *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, p. 291.  
<sup>48</sup> Edwards, O., *The USA and the Cold War 1945–63*, p. 50.





Figure 2.7: John F Kennedy. White House, 7/11/1963

John F. Kennedy was elected US President in the 1960 elections after gaining a narrow margin over Richard Nixon. Kennedy had served on a torpedo boat during WWII and afterwards he wrote a bestseller about Britain's appeasement policy before the war, *Why England Slept*. His father, Joseph, had been US ambassador to Britain and an outspoken defender of appeasement. Appeasement was the policy where concessions were made to Hitler, to preserve peace. The lesson learned from appeasement was never to give in to a dictator. Would this affect Kennedy later?

As a young senator in the early 1950s and later as a presidential candidate, he was a dedicated anti-communist. He campaigned vigorously, **attacking the Eisenhower administration** for inadequate defence preparations and especially for allowing a 'missile gap' to the Soviets. In 1961, Khrushchev boasted that "*The Soviet Union has the world's most powerful rocketry*"<sup>49</sup> which was not true. He also gave major shock to the Americans when the Soviets had launched the first Sputnik satellite into the space in 1957. Kennedy attacked Eisenhower for being "*second in space, second in missiles*."<sup>50</sup> For a while the Americans were insecure about the size of the nuclear forces in the USSR. As late as 1961, the intelligence service was deeply divided on the question of the missile gap. In his inaugural speech he declared:

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty."<sup>51</sup>

As US President he **increased military spending substantially on both nuclear and conventional forces** by 13% per year. It was the largest and fastest peacetime military build up in US history. Cuts in conventional forces made by Eisenhower were reversed by Kennedy. Military spending had reached its peak in 1953 when the Korean War ended but was partly reduced throughout the 1950s until Kennedy came to power. His new approach in foreign policy was referred to as a policy of '**flexible response**'. The reason behind this policy was that the **communist threat was considered to be more diverse**. Consequently the US must be able to fight a conventional war, a nuclear war with modern technology and to combat revolutionary movements in the Third World. Khrushchev had declared that the ultimate victory of communism would be achieved through '**national-liberation wars**' in the Third World and that he would support such wars whole-heartedly and without reservation. "*The front of the national-liberation movement are multiplying...front of struggle against US imperialism*."<sup>52</sup> The main difference to Eisenhower's policies was less reliance on nuclear weapons. He also attached more emphasis on economic aid as part of a containment policy. This was especially important in the 1960s when the decolonisation process in Africa had started.

<sup>49</sup> Ball, S. J., *The Cold War: An International History 1947–1991*, p. 72.

<sup>50</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994) p. 35.

<sup>51</sup> <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

<sup>52</sup> Hanhimäki, J. M. and Westad, O. A., eds., *The Cold War*, p. 359.

Kennedy was not a traditional Democrat in his foreign and defence policies, especially if we compare him to the Republican Eisenhower. If we compare the two, Kennedy was the **hawk** and it was Kennedy who undertook a substantial build-up of the US defence system. The ex-general Eisenhower on the other hand had warned the US public of the growth of the 'military industrial complex' and in his farewell speech in 1961 he said:

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city...every office of the federal government. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties."<sup>53</sup>

It is very informative to study the size of the armies of the superpowers:

#### Active US Army personnel strength in thousands

1936:	168	1951:	1,532
1938:	185	1953:	1,534
1942:	3,076	1954:	1,405
1945:	8,268	1956:	1,026
1947:	991	1960:	871
1948:	554	1969:	1,510
1950:	593	1975:	781

Source: The Encyclopaedia of American Military.

The size of the Red Army dropped from 13 million during the war, to **3–5 million during the Cold War**, depending on different Western estimates. Khrushchev continued this reduction in the late 1950s and reduced the size of the Red Army from 3.6 to 2.4 million men. Even after this reduction Soviet conventional forces were far stronger than the US army, if we only count the number of soldiers.

There are several interesting things to notice about these figures. The size of the US army before WWII was smaller than the armies of most European states. Two things have been most discussed concerning Kennedy's foreign policy: the **Cuban Missile Crisis** and what his intentions in **Vietnam** were.

#### Cold War Crisis 6: The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

Cuba was liberated from Spain in 1898 and soon a tradition of **US domination** developed, both politically and economically. The US had always seen Latin America as her sphere of influence. The **Monroe Doctrine** from 1823 stated that "*the American continents...are henceforth not be considered as subjects for future colonizations by any European power*"<sup>54</sup> i.e., any attempt by a European power to interfere in the New World was regarded by the US as an unfriendly act. Monroe also stated that "*Our policy in regard to Europe...is not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers*."<sup>55</sup> This tradition of **isolationism** had been established by George Washington in his Farewell Address in 1796 when he advised the US "*to steer clear of permanent alliances with foreign nations*."<sup>56</sup> The development in America had also been quite peaceful in regards to 'wars', except for the US Civil War. Prior to the Second World War, the US army was smaller than the armies in many European states. President James Monroe's declaration in 1823 received little attention at the time but in 1904 **Theodore Roosevelt** announced that the US would interfere in any Latin American country guilty of '**chronic wrong-doing**': "*Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power*."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Hanhimäki, J. M. and Westad, O. A., eds., *The Cold War*, p. 291.

<sup>54</sup> <http://avalon.law.yale.edu> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

<sup>55</sup> <http://avalon.law.yale.edu> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

<sup>56</sup> <http://avalon.law.yale.edu> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

<sup>57</sup> [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Theodore\\_Roosevelt](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Theodore_Roosevelt) <Accessed 5 January 2017>

**Author's Tip**  
This is the first crisis we will study from America. As you will know by now, you have to compare crises from different regions.

### Critical Thinking

Taking the tradition of isolationism in mind and the size of the US army before WWII: What were the effects of the Truman Doctrine, NATO, SEATO and the policies of containment, to the US?

This extension has guided the US to justify intervention many times. In 1947, the **Rio Pact** was signed stating that *“the obligation of mutual assistance and common defence of the American Republics is essentially related to their democratic ideals and that an armed attack by any State against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States.”*<sup>58</sup> In 1948, the **Organization of the American States (OAS)** was formed and its charter stated that international communism was incompatible with American freedom. In 1954, the US and CIA had supported and organised a coup in **Guatemala** which led to the overthrow of a regime which had started a land-reform programme. In Guatemala, over half the population owned only 3% of the land but Eisenhower saw the land reform programme as a first step towards communism.

US domination in many areas also led to economic exploitation. This was the situation in Cuba where most of the economy was controlled by American companies. **Half of the land and most of the industry were owned by US companies.** Cuba was led by a right-wing and corrupt **military dictator, Batista**, with the support of the US. Havana was at the time a popular tourist resort infiltrated by US mafia.

- Fidel Castro was a young radical lawyer and a member of the reformist Cuban People's Party. Elections were scheduled for 1952 and Fidel wanted a seat in the House of Representatives. This year Batista carried out a coup which overthrew the government and the **elections were cancelled.**
- Castro now organised an armed opposition and in 1953 he led a suicidal attack on the **Moncada military barracks** with the intention of starting a general revolt, which failed. Castro was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.
- He was released in 1955 and went to Mexico where Cuban exiles organised the **26th of July Movement**. 26th of July was the day they had attacked the army barracks. The group declared that they wanted a radical social revolution but didn't declare themselves Communists.
- **In 1956, he returned** with 81 men and started to organise a guerrilla war against the Batista regime.
- After two years, in January 1959, Castro's units controlled the country. The **collapse of the regime** and its lack of support became clear considering the fact that Castro had 800 guerrillas and the Cuban army officially comprised 30,000 men. Batista fled the country. Castro went to the US in an attempt to get US support, both economically and politically. Eisenhower refused to meet him. Castro had started a **land reform programme and industries were nationalised** but he was still not an outspoken communist.
- In **1960**, foreign companies were nationalised step by step. In October the US responded with a **trade embargo**. The US was by far the most important market for Cuban sugar cane and the embargo was a serious threat to the new regime. In the same month all foreign companies were nationalised. **A trade agreement was signed with the USSR** and diplomatic relations.

**Was it US actions which pushed Castro towards communism or was it a genuine ideological commitment?**

**Alternative I:** Castro never declared that he was a communist when he seized power. He did so after the Americans started to attack his new regime. With a trade embargo and sabotage actions by the CIA, the Cuban revolution wouldn't be able to survive. From the beginning, Castro's regime and seizure of power was an attempt to achieve Cuban control of the country, a national liberation. With a **US trade embargo** there was no other alternative. **The US pushed Castro** to the USSR and left no options. In December 1961 he declared that he was a Marxist-Leninist, after the Bay of Pigs.

**Alternative II:** Castro was more than aware of what had happened in Guatemala in 1954. The Arbenz regime in Guatemala had been overthrown by the Americans only because they were suspected Communists. If Castro had declared himself a communist from an early stage, he knew that the Americans would never accept such a regime. Consequently **he disguised his beliefs for tactical reasons** in the early stage of the Cuban revolution. But there was no doubt that he was a communist from the beginning.

<sup>58</sup> <http://avalon.law.yale.edu> <Accessed 5 January 2017>

When Kennedy was elected president he inherited, from the previous administration, a plan from the CIA to attack Cuba with the help of Cuban exiles. The US trained the exiles, financed the operation and provided necessary equipment. The aim was for the attack, to spur a spontaneous revolt in Cuba. The plan was implemented at the **Bay of Pigs on 17 April 1961**: everything went wrong and the exiles were easily defeated by the Cuban army. No spontaneous revolt started and when the exiles ran into troubles, no support was given from the US navy. 1,179 Cuban exiles were captured and the US had to pay \$53 million in baby food and medicine to get them released. Kennedy had to take full responsibility for this devastating fiasco. It was not a good start for this young and inexperienced president and Cuba became an obsession with him.

Fiasco notwithstanding, only three days after the Bay of Pigs he gave Castro a warning that the US government would not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations, the security of the nation. The trade embargo was maintained, the CIA continued with sabotage actions and there was strong political and military pressure from the US. In 1962, Robert Kennedy said: *“no time, money, effort—or manpower is to be spared and the budget was over \$50 million a year.”*<sup>59</sup>

Miami was the largest CIA station in the world with 600 full-time CIA officers. The Bay of Pigs probably also taught the young president not to fully trust the army. This was a very valuable experience when dealing with the missile crisis in 1962.

In this situation Castro asked for further military support from the USSR. Khrushchev decided to place nuclear ballistic missiles on Cuba. Why did he do it?



Figure 2.8: Cuban President Fidel Castro embracing Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev

**There were different reasons for the deployment of the missiles:**

1. Khrushchev wanted to **protect the Cuban revolution**. The Foreign Minister explained the deployment as a result of *“the very sharp, aggressive stand of the (Kennedy) administration concerning the new Cuba.”*<sup>60</sup>
2. The US had 100 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and 1,700 intercontinental bombers at the time. The USSR had only 50 ICBMs and 150 bombers. An intermediate range missile in

<sup>59</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 25.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

Cuba would reach major cities in the US and compensate for the lack of ICBMs. The USSR was planning to send 40 medium and intermediate-range missiles (IRBM) to Cuba which would almost double the Soviet nuclear strike capability. In practical terms, with the Cuban missiles, Khrushchev aimed to **reduce his nuclear inferiority** and save a sizeable amount of money for the USSR. The alternative, an expensive build-up of Russian ICBM missiles, was extremely costly. The strategic balance would be altered according to the formula IRBM + Cuba = ICBM. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs: *"In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalised what the West likes to call 'the balance of power'."*<sup>61</sup>

3. The US had nuclear missiles in **Turkey**. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs: *"The United States had already surrounded the Soviet Union with its own bomber bases and missiles. We knew that American missiles were aimed against us in Turkey."*<sup>62</sup> Eisenhower had concluded in 1959, before the deployment of US missiles in Turkey: *"If Mexico or Cuba had been... began getting arms and missiles from them (the USSR), we would be bound to look on such developments with the gravest concern.... (and) take positive actions, even offensive military actions."*<sup>63</sup>
4. A communist-controlled Cuba would provide the USSR with a springboard to spread communism to underdeveloped countries in Latin America. In the late 1950s, Khrushchev declared that the ultimate victory of communism would be achieved by war of liberations in the Third World.
5. He could claim that he wanted to protect a small state against a superpower. It would strengthen his position in the Third World (like in the Suez Crisis).
6. It would put him in a **bargaining position** with the US. 'Quid pro quo' i.e. 'something in return' was typical for the Cold War. Some kind of solution to the Berlin problem was one possible option. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs: *"...if Russian blood was shed in Cuba, American blood would surely be shed in Germany"*.<sup>64</sup>
7. To show toughness to his critics in China and in his own country. Both his domestic and foreign policy were criticised in the Presidium, especially his agricultural policy, the Virgin Land Project, which had failed.

The crisis started when U2 spy-planes established evidence of Soviet medium range missile sites in Cuba on the 14 of October. **Why was this unacceptable to Kennedy?** After all, the Americans had the same type of weapons in Turkey.

1. The **Monroe Doctrine** stated that no interference from a European power in America would be tolerated. This policy had been further strengthened by Theodore Roosevelt and his declaration in 1904 of 'chronic wrong-doing' and the charter of the OAS and its rejection of communism. A communist Cuba protected by nuclear weapons by its ally, the USSR, was very difficult to accept. This was a **US sphere of influence**.
2. Kennedy had attacked Eisenhower for both a 'missile gap' and the 'loss' of Cuba. It was very difficult from a political point of view to accept a communist nuclear build-up so close to the US. An intermediate-range ballistic missile in Cuba would reach the US's major cities. **Politically this could not be tolerated.** From a strict security perspective the importance of this can be questioned. The Russians had 50 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and some 150 intercontinental bombers and could destroy the US anyway. Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defence concluded: *"A missile is a missile. It makes no difference whether you are killed by a missile fired from the Soviet Union or from Cuba."* He also concluded: *"I don't think there is a military problem here [...] this is a domestic, political problem."*<sup>65</sup> There should be mid-term **election to the Congress** in November the same year. Another Cuban 'fiasco' would be devastating, politically to Kennedy and his Democratic Party. The Kennedy brothers even thought that if they had not

<sup>61</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 494.

<sup>62</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 493.

<sup>63</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 43.

<sup>64</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 500.

<sup>65</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 97.

reacted the President might run the risk of being impeached by the Republicans. The President told his brother on his way to an Ex Comm meeting: *"I would have been impeached."*<sup>66</sup>

You may see different terms describing medium-range missiles. The problem is that various terms are used by different countries; making definitions about medium range missiles is subjective and arbitrary.

- **Medium-Range Ballistic Missile**, abbreviated **MRBM** is defined by the US Department of Defence as having a maximum range of 1,000–3,000 km, in other words a short-range missile.
- **SS- is an MRBM** and what started the crisis when it was discovered on 14/10.
- An **Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM)**, according to the US definition, is a ballistic missile with a range of 3,000–5,500 km and would reach the US west coast, i.e., a long-range missile. IRBM sites were discovered in October. It is doubtful if any IRBMs reached Cuba at any time but it was planned and sites **under construction** were discovered.



Figure 2.9: US reconnaissance photograph from Cuba



Figure 2.10: ExComm meeting 29 October 1962

14  
Oct.

**U2 spy-planes** established evidence of a Soviet medium-range missile base in Cuba.

16  
Oct.

**The ExComm**—a group of advisers was formed. **Possible solutions to the crisis:**

- Invasion, i.e., a direct confrontation with the Red Army.
- A 'surgical' air strike which could be followed by an invasion. It was turned down because an air strike would not destroy all missiles.
- A **blockade**, or a 'quarantine', i.e., a naval blockade to prevent the USSR from sending components for the missiles to Cuba. It would give time for a diplomatic solution but what would happen when the Russian ships met the US marines? Was it the start of World War III?

22  
Oct.

Kennedy gave a dramatic **TV speech** to the nation and announced the existence of nuclear weapons 90 miles away from Florida and the **US blockade**.

24  
Oct.

One of the most dramatic days, when the **Russian ships finally turned back**. The US Secretary of State Dean Rusk said: *"We were eyeball to eyeball, and I think the other fellow just blinked."*<sup>67</sup>

26  
Oct.

Khrushchev sent Kennedy a **message** where he offered to withdraw the missiles if the US promised never to invade Cuba. The same day a **US U2 spy plane was shot down** over Cuba and the pilot was killed. Several advisers now recommended an assault on Cuba. What the Americans didn't know was that the nuclear weapons on Cuba were already operational and

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p. 140.

27  
Oct.

that the Russian military commander had been authorised to use short-range tactical nuclear weapons in self-defence without consulting Moscow. This was a very critical day.

Khrushchev sent a **second message** prompting a deal that must include the removal of NATO missiles in **Turkey**. Robert Kennedy now secretly met the Russian ambassador Dobrynin and an agreement about the Turkish missiles was made, but it had to remain secret. Kennedy was aware that a removal required consultations within NATO and there was no time for that, a deal *“could break up the (NATO) Alliance by confirming European suspicions that we would sacrifice their security to protect our interests.”*<sup>68</sup> He was also not willing to officially admit that he had made such a commitment as a result of Soviet pressure.

Two days later, on the **28 October**, Khrushchev informed Kennedy via Radio Moscow that the USSR had accepted the terms. Castro had not been informed and refused a UN inspection of the dismantling of the missiles.

The solution of the crisis:

- The USSR would **remove the missiles**.
- A US pledge to **never invade Cuba**.
- US Jupiter missiles should be removed from Turkey. This was not made public.

Officially, **Kennedy gained** political favour from the crisis. He had made the Russians withdraw the missiles without a war. He had also been able to handle the internal pressure from warmongers, without starting a war. **Khrushchev** on the other hand was **criticised** not only in the USSR but by Mao in China. In 1964, he was forced to resign and even if according to the indictment against him it was mainly due to domestic reasons, the Cuban Crisis played a role. He was blamed for *“erratic leadership, of taking hasty and ill-considered actions.”*<sup>69</sup> The Red Army, already substantially reduced by Khrushchev, found the dismantling of the missiles in Cuba humiliating.

But there are several flaws in these conclusions. **Few or no one knew about the Turkish deal**. It is also clear that the US pledge to **never invade Cuba was a substantial victory to Khrushchev**. Kennedy's initial aim had been a withdrawal without any conditions. By placing missiles in Cuba, Khrushchev was able to secure the Cuban revolution and to remove missiles from Turkey. Another point worth considering is the responsibility for bringing the world to the verge of a nuclear war. It is generally believed by historians, still today, that this is the closest we have been to a nuclear war. Who was responsible for this? **Khrushchev** was responsible for the decision to place nuclear weapons on Cuba. Formally, it was the Presidium, the highest organ of the Communist Party in 1962 (it was the Politburo which was called Presidium between 1952 and 1966), which made the decision but it was Khrushchev's idea from the beginning and he was powerful enough to impose his will on the decision makers. He should have been aware of how serious this must have been to an American president. It was not only the tradition of the Monroe Doctrine. Central America and the Caribbean were under the **US sphere of influence** and it was a very dangerous game to **surprise your enemy with nuclear weapons in such an area**. Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs: *“I had the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States find out that they were there until it was too late to do anything about them.”*<sup>70</sup> Cuba within a US sphere of influence was not comparable to Turkey. The Security adviser McGeorge Bundy said, *“we felt the same way you would feel if we put missiles in Finland.”*<sup>71</sup> The US had their suspicions and Kennedy warned Khrushchev before the crisis that the US would prevent the installation of Soviet nuclear weapons by whatever means might be necessary. Khrushchev had replied that *“we do not have any bases in Cuba”* and *“we do not intend to establish any.”*<sup>72</sup>

**Kennedy** on the other hand had put enormous pressure on Cuba with **the trade embargo, the Bay of Pigs invasion and sabotage in the Mongoose operation and this pressure was one of the main reasons for nuclear aid to Cuba**. In 1962, the US Senate had passed a resolution by 86-1, calling for the use of force, if necessary, to stop Cuban aggression and communist activities in the Western

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, p. 124.

<sup>69</sup> McCauley, M., *The Khrushchev Era 1953–1964* (Harlow: Longman, 1995) p. 83.

<sup>70</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 493.

<sup>71</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

hemisphere. It can also be argued that the US had no right to object to what the Russians were doing in Cuba due to the simple fact that they **were doing the same in Turkey**, or to use Khrushchev's own words: *“The Americans had surrounded our country with missile bases. . . now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemies' missiles pointing at you.”*<sup>73</sup> It can also be questioned if Soviet missiles in Cuba were a serious threat to US security and the real reason for Kennedy's actions. McNamara suggested that *“I don't think there is a military problem here. . . This is a domestic, political problem.”*<sup>74</sup> After his elections campaign attacking Eisenhower and after the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy couldn't afford to look like a **weak president**. The mid-term elections to the Congress in November played a role. A second Cuban fiasco would be devastating for the Democrats. This domestic political factor probably affected his decision-making.

The escalation of the crisis, the blockade and spy planes over Cuba, were Kennedy's decisions. It is a very strong case to argue that a **blockade** on international water against one state is illegal and that Kennedy was responsible for the crisis. Nuclear weapons were already in Cuba when Kennedy risked world peace by setting up this blockade.

Mikhail Gorbachev later concluded that both were to blame: *“The Cuban Missile crisis reminds me of two boys fighting in the schoolyard over who has the bigger stick.”*<sup>75</sup>

**Historiography: Orthodox historians** or traditionalists like Arthur Schlesinger Jr and insiders like Theodor Sorensen (i.e., pro-Kennedy), argue that the missiles were an intolerable provocation and that Kennedy responded due to a desire to defend **legitimate security needs**, to preserve NATO and show American **credibility**. The **quarantine was a successful** strategy and Kennedy was a skilful leader in times of crisis.

**Revisionists** like I. F. Stone and Ronald Steel argue that Kennedy, with his background attacking the Eisenhower administration for the loss of Cuba, risked a war over Cuba for **domestic political gains**. Confrontation would make it possible to get the missiles out before the November **elections**. But it was not only a question of electoral and political pressure. Kennedy also risked a **revolt from the military** and other hardliners in different departments. The **blockade was irresponsible** and Kennedy is seen as neurotic. The US also has to take the blame for the deployment of **missiles in Turkey** which led to the Cuban affair.

**What were the consequences of the crisis?**

1. The US was forced to tolerate a **communist state in the Caribbean**. But the US perception of Cuba being a communist threat against US domination in the region was not solved with the outcome of the crisis. The trade embargo was not lifted.
2. The time had come for a **more constructive dialogue**. The crisis had a profound sobering effect on the nuclear powers.
3. A **Test Ban Treaty** was signed in 1963 forbidding nuclear testing in the atmosphere.
4. A **Hot Line**, a direct telephone line, was established between the White House and the Kremlin.
5. **Khrushchev** was criticised not only by Mao in China but also in Moscow. In 1964, he was forced to resign. In Pravda he was criticised for being *“hare-brained”* and supporting *“wild schemes, half-baked conclusions and hasty decisions.”*<sup>76</sup> The Cuban Crisis was one factor behind his **dismissal**.
6. In a longer perspective it led to renewed **Soviet efforts to close the missile gap**. The consequence was an extensive and very expensive Soviet nuclear build-up which would have far-reaching consequences to the Soviet economy.

The last point is often ignored. It is normally argued that the aftermath of the crisis led to a period of détente. This is true if we focus upon the immediate consequences. But it must be emphasised that the USSR leaders decided never to be humiliated again due to nuclear weakness. The USSR decided, partly as a consequence of the Cuban crisis, to close the only missile gap that existed, i.e., Soviet inferiority.

<sup>73</sup> Khrushchev, N., *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 494.

<sup>74</sup> Lebow, R. N. and Stein, J. G., *We All Lost the Cold War* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 97.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.russianlife.com/stories/online-archive/nikita-khrushchev/> <Accessed 5 January 2017>



Let's study the nuclear balance after the crisis over a longer period:

		1964	1966	1968	1970	1972
US	ICBM	834	904	1,054	1,054	1,054
	SLBM	416	592	656	656	656
	ICB	630	630	545	550	455
USSR	ICBM	200	300	800	1,300	1,527
	SLBM	120	125	130	280	560
	ICB	190	200	150	150	140

ICBM = intercontinental ballistic missile; SLBM = submarine launched ballistic missile;  
ICB=intercontinental bombers

Source: Cold War to Détente by Brown/Mooney, p. 161.

By 1972, the Soviets had finally **closed the missile gap**, and even had an advantage. How much was this policy a **result of the Cuban Crisis**? It is of course a very difficult question to answer but many historians argue that this build-up was a result of the Cuban Crisis. What we do know for sure is that **the cost** of this programme was something that would severely affect Russian society.

The costs for the nuclear arms race were astronomical to both sides. In the 1980s, the US produced five nuclear warheads per day.<sup>77</sup> What was achieved from a security point of view? Gaddis writes:

“McNamara insisted that a 17-1 advantage for the US in 1962 still translated into an effective nuclear parity because the prospect of only a few nuclear explosions on American soil would deter Washington from doing anything that might provoke them.”<sup>78</sup>

### Cold War Crisis 7: The Congo Crisis 1960–1964

After WWII, some European colonies in Africa and Asia began their path towards independence. In 1946, only 51 countries were represented in the United Nations versus the 193 of today, which to a major extent can be explained by this process of decolonisation.

No continent was spared from the Cold War:

- The Suez Crisis in the 1950 made it clear that the Cold War now also involved the Middle East as well.
- The Korean War and the Indochina War showed that Asia was a Cold War battle ground.
- The Congo Crisis in the early 1960 and the wars in Angola and Ethiopia in the 1970 clearly showed that Africa also was a focus of Cold War tension.

1. Congo was given **independence from Belgium in June 1960**. The country was led by **Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and president Joseph Kasavubu**.
2. Only a few weeks after the independence the government ran into difficulties when the army mutinied against their Belgian officers. Acts of **violence** were committed against remaining Belgian and European residents and the Belgian government decided, against the will of the Congo government, to send **paratroopers** to protect the 100,000 European residents who lived in the country.
3. In the southern part of the country, in the **Katanga province**, a rival force led by Moise **Tshombe also challenged the government**. The province was incredibly rich in natural resources and Tshombe was soon supported by European investors and industrialists.
4. In this very problematic situation the Lumumba government appealed to the **UN**. The UN decided, in Resolution 143, **to send troops** to Congo to stabilise the situation. The resolution also made it clear that the UN would not take sides in the conflict. Lumumba's aim had been to get UN help in defeating Tshombe and his faction in the south.

<sup>77</sup> LaFeber, W., *America, Russia and the Cold War 1945–2006* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002) p. 330.

<sup>78</sup> Williamson, D., *Europe and the Cold War 1945–91*, p. 170.

5. **Lumumba** accused the UN for siding with the Europeans or Western powers and **turned to the USSR for help**. Lumumba received massive military aid from the USSR and about a thousand Soviet technical advisers arrived within six weeks. Lumumba now launched an attack on Tshombe in the south which proved unsuccessful.
6. This caused major problems for the president and the army chief of staff, Mobutu. The Americans saw the Soviet activity as an attempt to spread communist influence in Congo. Mobutu came under great pressure. Western nations, which helped pay the soldiers' salaries, as well as Kasavubu and Mobutu's subordinates, favoured getting rid of the Soviet presence. Kasavubu's solution was to dismiss Lumumba.
7. The disintegration of the new state escalated when president **Kasavubu decided to remove Lumumba**. Lumumba had strong support in the eastern provinces and he was also reinstated by the parliament in the country. The USSR continued to support him with weapons. On 14 September 1960 **Mobutu took control in a CIA-sponsored coup**. Lumumba was placed under house arrest and Kasavubu was kept as president. **Lumumba** was publicly beaten and forced to eat copies of his speeches. He **disappeared** and it has later been revealed that he was murdered the same day. **In 1961, four different groups claimed that they wanted to establish political control** of the country and it looked like the country was heading for a full-scale civil war.
8. Finally, the UN decided to pass a resolution which gave their forces the right to **use force**. In this situation three of four factions fighting for the control of Congo convened to form a new government under Cyrille Adoula. In August 1961 5,000 troops started an attack on Katanga and took full control of the province in 1963. Another rebellion led by Pierre Mulele was crushed between 1964 and 1965.

The UN had been able to take action but was criticised by many states, especially the USSR and Belgium. The UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld died in a plane crash when he visited the region. Both superpowers had been involved in the crisis and it has been argued that the CIA was involved in the assassination of the pro-Soviet Lumumba. The CIA also supported Mobutu when he seized power in 1965. Mobutu ruled the country (renamed Zaire) between 1965 and 1996. His regime is normally described as both corrupt and brutal but he remained in power for such a long time due to the fact that he was supported by the US, which was very important during the Cold War. The fact that he finally lost power to the opposition leader Laurent Kabila in 1996 should also be seen in the light of the Cold War coming to an end. Western support evaporated and he was accused of corruption and human rights abuses.

#### Significance:

- The **UN had been able to use force** against civil disturbance, when asked to take actions by the legitimate government. The initial Resolution 143 stated that the UN should restore law and order and prevent the involvement of other countries—not take side in the conflict. But **UN forces finally crushed Tshombe's forces in the south**. The UN gained support from some states but was criticised by others. France, Belgium and the USSR refused to pay their agreed-upon costs which nearly bankrupted the UN.
- The Secretary General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld took an active role in dealing with the crisis—far from a bureaucrat in a powerless organisation.
- Both superpowers took active roles in the crisis, but the Soviet intervention was much more open. However, the support to Lumumba proved to be unsuccessful and the very outcome of the crisis was that **Mobutu seized power. He was considered anti-communist and pro-Western** (but he seized power in 1965 and the syllabus states that we shall study the period 1960–1961).
- The US acted more cautiously. They supported Lumumba's request to the UN in 1960, but couldn't accept that he later turned to the USSR for assistance. The US and CIA were probably involved in the assassination of Lumumba. No US troops were involved in the conflict but support was given to the UN in different ways.