

## Ideological Warfare: Cuban Missile Crisis and its effect on International Peace 1959 – 1962

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### **Abstract**

*This work focused on the ideological warfare between the Western and Eastern blocs and endeavour to find out, how the ideological war between the great powers from these blocs, affected international peace, and the influence of the Cold War over Cuba. This era heralded the advent of the most destructive instruments in the annals of human development – the Atomic Bomb and the Ballistic Missiles. The presence of these instruments in the midst of humanity, gave rational beings something to worry about. The method adopted in the study combines both descriptive and historical narrative. Qualitative research methodology was used in the re-interpretation and analysis of verifiable information collected from different sources. The approach was interdisciplinary and presentation of findings was both chronological and thematic. An analysis of the national interests of the United States of America and Soviet Union showed a divergence of very fundamental goals, goals deeply rooted in the national interests of the two states. The findings show that the influence of the Cold War over Cuba violated international peace and polarised the international system. The paper concluded by investigating the background relationships of the two states and revealed that antipathy existed, but not to a degree strong enough to cause such an open confrontation between the two countries.*

**Key Words:** Ideological, Warfare, Cuban Missile Crisis, International Peace

### **Introduction**

The Cold War is used to refer to the ideological warfare between the Western and Eastern blocs; the former predominantly Capitalists while the latter is predominantly Socialists. The era, had its origin from the East-West relations which before 1945 appeared to be cordial, but the cordiality was however superficial, the true situation of their relations was like atomic bomb waiting to explode. In other words, the relations were far from cordial, it was a situation of mutual distrusts, a form of mutual ambition aimed at colonising the world with either capitalist or socialist ideology which was made manifest in the years of the Second World War, where their intensions were always in disharmony with characteristics of deceit, lies, manipulation and eventually metamorphosed into the concept of Cold War after World War II.

The Cold War era symbolised a period of antagonism, little shock of direct warfare between both blocs. Besides, the period marked by dangerous struggle for supremacy in the world scene, it also witness different type of agonies and new concepts such as interventions, especially in the internal affairs of developing countries, obnoxious practices as sabotage, espionage, subtle military intervention

vis-à-vis coup d'état, economic intimidations, sponsoring of political unrest and upheavals.

The era equally created the concept of Bipolarise, Arms Race and further witness political cum military policies viz détente, deterrence, Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) and moratorium. The intervention of the Cold War into the international system affected international peace and Cuba in particular. This implication of Cold War that endangered international peace as the world stood at the verge of Armageddon.

The Cuban Missile Crisis stands as a seminal event. History offers no parallel to those thirteen days of October 1962, when the USA and the Soviet Union paused at the nuclear precipice. Never before had there been such a high probability that so many lives would end suddenly. Had war come, it could have meant the death of millions Americans and more than a million Russians, and millions of Europeans as well. Other catastrophes and inhumanities of history would have faded into insignificance. Given the odds of disaster—which President Kennedy estimated as 'between one out of three and even'—our escape is staggering.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

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

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

*Balance of Power*: This is a theory of international relations which according to Isaak, “Balance of Power system is an equilibrium made up of approximately equal power or nations set against each other so that no one power can predominate”.<sup>1</sup>

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

*International System*: In the words of Stanley Hofimann, “is a pattern of relations between the basic units of world politics, who is characterised by the scope of the objectives pursued by these units and of the tasks performed among them, as well as by the means used in order to achieve those goals and perform these tasks”.<sup>2</sup>

*Deterrence*: Deterrence “is persuading an enemy that attacking you will not be worth any potential gain”.<sup>3</sup>

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

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

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

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

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**Theoretical Framework**

The theory on which this work stands is 'Deterrence Theory of War and Nuclear Weapons'. The proponent of the theory was Huth. Deterrence theory is based upon the concept which can be defined as the use of threats by one party to convince another party to refrain from initiating some course of action.<sup>4</sup> The doctrine gained increased prominence as a military strategy during the Cold War with regard to the use of nuclear weapons and is related to but distinct from the concept of mutual assured destruction, which models the preventative nature of full-scale nuclear attack that would devastate both parties in a nuclear war. Deterrence is a strategy intended to dissuade an adversary from taking an action that has not yet started by means of threat of reprisal, or to prevent it from doing something that another state desires. A threat serves as a deterrent to the extent that it convinces its target not to carry out the intended action because of the costs and losses that target would incur. In international security, a policy of deterrence generally refers to threats of military retaliation directed by the leaders of one state to the leaders of another in an attempt to prevent the other state from resorting to the use of military force in pursuit of its foreign policy goals.<sup>5</sup>

A policy of deterrence can fit into two broad categories: preventing an armed attack against a state's own territory (known as direct deterrence) or preventing an armed attack against another state (known as extended deterrence). Situations of direct deterrence often occur if there is a territorial dispute between neighboring states in which major powers like the United States do not directly intervene. On the other hand, situations of extended deterrence often occur when a great power becomes involved. Building on the two broad categories, Huth goes on to outline that deterrence policy may be implemented in response to a pressing short-term threat (known as immediate deterrence) or as strategy to prevent a military conflict or short-term threat from arising (known as general deterrence).

A successful deterrence policy must be considered in military terms and also political terms: International relations, foreign policy and diplomacy. In military terms, deterrence success refers to preventing state leaders from issuing military threats and actions that escalate peacetime diplomatic and military co-operation into a crisis or militarised confrontation that threatens armed conflict and possibly war. The prevention of crises of wars, however, is not the only aim of deterrence. In addition, defending states must be able to resist the political and the military demands of a potential attacking nation. If armed conflict is avoided at the price of diplomatic concessions to the maximum demands of the potential attacking nation under the threat of war, it cannot be claimed that deterrence has succeeded.

Deterrence theory holds that nuclear weapons are intended to deter other states from attacking with their nuclear weapons, through the promise of retaliation and possibly mutually assured destruction. Nuclear deterrence can also be applied to an attack by conventional forces. For example, the doctrine of massive retaliation threatened to launch US nuclear weapons in response to Soviet attacks. A successful nuclear deterrent requires a country to preserve its ability to retaliate by responding before its own weapons are destroyed or ensuring a second-strike capability. A nuclear deterrent is sometimes composed of a nuclear triad, as in the

case of the nuclear weapons owned by the United States, Russia, the China and India. Other countries, such as the United Kingdom and France, have only sea-based and air-based nuclear weapons.

The Cuban Missile Crisis provides important empirical evidence for re-examining theories of nuclear deterrence and crisis behaviour developed during the Cold War, and offers new insight and lessons for current and future nuclear challenges. Cuban Missile Crisis sheds new light on the behaviour of new nuclear power, the behaviour of major nuclear powers towards new nuclear states, the dynamics of crises in vastly asymmetric nuclear relationships; and the role of strategic culture in deterrence behaviour.

### **The Influence of the Ideological Warfare Over Cuba**

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

### **Cuban Missile Crisis and its Effect on International Peace**

The trouble in Cuba started in January, 1959 when a radical revolutionist, Fidel Castro, led guerrilla's ousted a pro-American regime headed by Fulgencio Batista, a degenerated dictator. Castro identified with democratic government as well as with social and economic justice during his struggle against Batista and this earned him popularity among the Cubans. As a pure social revolutionist, his government embarked on remedying the conditions of the people, with several social reforms. Castro was extremely nationalistic with his regime being Marxist in character (the first of his kind in the Western Hemisphere), was also anti-American because of American past domination of Cuba. The United States roles in freeing Cuba from Spain, notwithstanding, the Platt Amendment granted America the right to intervene at any time in Cuba "for the preservation of Cuban independence, for the protection of life, property and individual liberty, and for the discharge of Cuba's treaty obligations".<sup>6</sup> America controlled Cuba economically, by 1956, Spanier quoted Muskland, "The United States controlled 50 per cent of Cuba's utilities, 90 per cent of its mines and cattle ranches, nearly its oil, 40 per cent of its sugar and tobacco".<sup>7</sup>

The Cuban revolution could therefore, be said to be against Yankee's imperialism because the Castro's regimes rally point was "Cuba si! Yanqui, no!! And ceremonial burning of American's flag, and the confiscation of American properties, its reward"<sup>8</sup>. The anti-American nationalistic feelings of Castro had a lasting impact – an increasing identification of Cuba with communism and an inevitable clash of American interest with that of Cuba. Wart stated that, "Official relations between Washington and Havana become strained in 1960 after the nationalisation of American property in Cuba and a near embargo on the importation of Cuban sugar into the United States".<sup>9</sup>

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With Cuba, gone red at a time when the Cold War boils, one can hardly expect the United States to grin and bear it. America took a similar reaction, she took in China. She encouraged the training of Cubans exiles for an invasion of Cuba. On April 17, 1961, the Cubans' refugees, invaded Cuba, but the result was a colossal failure at the Bay of Pigs. The failure had a far reaching consequence; Castro domestic support increased, Latin America's fear of Yankee imperialism intensified, and Kennedy's identification of American with anti – colonialism blunted and allies' interest in American leadership pushed Castro further into the communist camp – thus Cuba, disappeared behind the iron curtain for good. The invasion went a long way in bolstering Castro's domestic position and raised his prestige throughout Latin America. Carr in his 'Latin America', succinctly gave credence to this:

Castro, he said, immediately appeared throughout the continent as the symbol of the independence of Latin American nations, although he had defeated an ill-conceived invasion by an ill – supplied group of exiles, he could present himself as the David who had defeated Goliath in all his might.<sup>10</sup>

As a sequel to this event; the next stage of the Cuban crisis – the Cuban Missile Crisis, was one of the critical crises of the Cold War. Castro did not take the invasion lying down. In a bid to prevent history from repeating itself, he decided to take preventive measure, thereby sought the support of the Soviet Union. Consequently, he sent his defence minister, Raul Castro, his brother to Moscow in July, 1962. The significance of the visit was not felt until later July, when the United States navy reconnaissance planes observed a stream of ships heading to Cuba, out of Soviet's ports on the Baltic's and Black seas. This incident raised the temperature of the Cold War so rapidly that the world stood precariously at the brink of Third World War; Wart opined that:

On October 24, 1962, the United States instituted an arms blockade of Cuba, charging that missiles bases has been constructed and manned by Russian personnel. With this bold challenge to the Soviet Union, the world was plunged into the most acute crisis since the onset of the Cold War.<sup>11</sup>

To this, Russell analysed the issue precisely,

Following the reforms initiated by Castro after 1959 revolution, the United States adopted the Monroe Doctrine and, considered that it had a right to dictate what form of government that should prevail in every country of the Western Hemisphere. An unofficial invasion of Cuba, consisting mainly of Cuban émigrés to the United States, viewed with

favour by the United States authorities, but to their regret was ignominiously defeated in 1961 at the Bay of Pigs. The United States, imposed sanction on any importation of arms to Cuba, the Cubans appealed to Russia, and she agreed to supply arms in spite of the United States blockade.<sup>12</sup>

Tension mounted, as the United States spit fire, and threaten the Soviet Union with nuclear invasion, if the missiles were not removed. President Kennedy's broadcast on October 22, 1962; he warned "it shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missiles launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response on the Soviet Union."<sup>13</sup>

The situation was further aggravated by the imposition of naval blockade by the United States against the advancing Soviet cargoes. World war seemed a matter of seconds. In reaction to the United States threats, Russell soberly reflected that:

The President of United States, arrogated to himself the right to threaten the Soviet Union publicly with nuclear destruction unless the Soviet Union, bowed to America's will. The question of whether or not the Soviet had, in fact placed missiles in Cuba was infinitely less important than the action taken by the president for there were missile round the world, all of them reprehensible, but it was the combination of military blockade and the threat of nuclear war which brought mankind to utmost peril.<sup>14</sup>

The world held their breath, waiting for the first to trigger or button to be pressed by either of the bellicose parties. In Robert Kennedy's chilling words, "The world stared at the barrel of the nuclear gun"<sup>15</sup>. Fortunately, reason prevailed ultimately, and the two parties. The United States, and the Soviet Union – opened negotiations which eventually paid off with America promising to desist from invading Cuba again, and the Soviet embarked on instance removal of their missiles and bombers from Cuban shores. Also Kennedy agreed to the dismantling of American's Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Commenting on the Cuban missile crisis Spanier was of the view that:

During the 1962, Cuban missile crises, President Kennedy's administration had one week for deliberation. Had it not received intelligence photos of the Soviet's missile construction before the installation was completed, had it instead been confronted by a Moscow announcement of Soviet Missile strengthen Cuba accompanied by a renewed demand for the West to get out of Western Berlin, nuclear war might have erupted.<sup>16</sup>

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Russell manifested that his mastery of Cuban debacle cannot be challenged:

One of the things shown by the Cuban crisis, he said, was how easy it is for unintended war to result from the practice of brinkmanship. It seems highly probable that Khrushchev never intended an actual clash between his ships and the blockading forces of the United States. But in the hours before he ordered his ships to withdraw, all sorts of accidents might have caused the clash he aimed at preventing.<sup>17</sup>

**The Aftermaths of the Cold War Skirmishes Over Cuba**

Having patiently gone through the issues at stake in Cuba, during the Cold War, it will be worthy to outline its lasting influences on international peace. The Cold War affected international peace, so much, that it balkanised the world against itself. The countries which were affected in these periods, with the exception of Cuba were divided into separate zones.

Another significance of the Cold War in relation to these countries was the violation of international peace. The world was at the brink of war in Berlin in 1948 and 1958. In Cuba, the temperature of the Cold War rose high. World War, was a question of seconds, when sanity and rationality prevailed among the belligerent actors.

The greatest impact of these skirmishes was the preservation of international peace. Men invented the instrument for exterminating one another, but the fear of the aftermath of their usage was so great that none is eager to precipitate the action that will lead to their usage. Thus international peace was preserved.

**Conclusion**

This work has tried to examine the actual influences of the psycho-ideological struggle between the Eastern and Western bloc-nations on international peace, and also find out the extent the brain-child of second World War (Cold War) had encroached on the peaceful coexistence of actors in the international political system.

The Deterrence theory helped me much in dispelling the mist that beclouded the Cold War and my understanding of its obvious impacts on international peace. During the course of this research, the analysis showed that the protagonists of the Cold War, intended to dissuade an adversary from taking an action that has not yet started by means of threat of reprisal, or to prevent it from doing something that another state desires. A threat serves as a deterrent to the extent that it convinces its target not to carry out the intended action because of the costs and losses that target would incur.

I concerned myself with investigative analysis of the Cold War influences over Cuba in inferring the influence of the Cold War on international peace. After what I pass for exhaustive analyses, I concluded, from my findings, that the Cold War violated international peace and polarised the international system, for according to Strauss:

The armed conflict... . The up shoot of the clash in Cuba was the same unsatisfactory result that can be expected in Vietnam. The outcome of the confrontation in Caribbean, with the forces of the two sides being put on a war footing, was by no means an American victory. True, the USSR had to withdraw its rockets from the island, but in return, Moscow received a guarantee that Washington would allow Havana to go unscratched. Consequently, the problem remains unresolved.<sup>18</sup>

What Strauss was saying in actual fact, is that a world divided against itself can never be at peace. The limited wars in these countries can escalate and plunge the world into World War III. Paradoxically, the Cold War which gave birth to the nuclear arms race preserved international peace because the destructiveness of nuclear equipment – to be precise, made global war useless, knowing that its usage will herald the extermination of all lives on earth including the deployer of such dreaded instrument this was shared by Essan Gala:

It is considered likely by many that the system of security which is inherent in the strategic relationship between the superpowers based as it is on a balance of terror, has discouraged them for over three decades from initiating military conflicts directly with each other. It is also assumed that it has prevented regional conflicts in which either side might be involved to escalate to global conflict.<sup>19</sup>

The international system, as constituted during the Cold War era was defective. It was inflexible and rigid. This was manifested in its inability to diffuse and control conflicts within it. The second weakness of international system was its vulnerability to manipulation by international actors, thus making it a mere spring board for the realisation of their selfish ends. The international system stopped serving its originally intended functions of promoting the welfare and stability of international community. The standard of executing international affairs fall short of the desired end, for according to Fleming,

The new United Nations pushed aside by the Cold War, with Truman Doctrine forbidding all future revolutions, least they might turn Red, and proclaiming the “containment” of both the Soviet Union and communism everywhere.<sup>20</sup>

The advent of the ideological warfare reduced international actors to mere clients of nuclear giants. They had to act according to the will of their boss. Any desire for independent initiative, as in the case of Cuba in 1961, was instantly

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suppressed. In the case, the client state became a mere rubber stamp who does what the master asks them to do, and carry it back to the latter. After a journey to Moscow and the withdrawal of his Country's earlier acceptance to attend the Marshall Aids, Jan Masaryk, Czech's Foreign Minister, made a statement that substantiate my above claim. He said, "I went to Moscow as the Foreign Minister of an independent sovereign State, I returned as a lackey of Soviet's government".<sup>21</sup> Though the nuclear giants may have the final say on policy matters, the political actors' satellite states should be free to present, and convince them of policy options. International actors should possess the right skills, and qualities that will enable them handle conflicting interests in international system.

In order to end the Cold War, which theoretically has ended with the death of the Union Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), but practically as a student of international politics, believe that it is still going on between the major powers. The nuclear giants should change their aggressive policies. They have to pursue the arms control measures, and the disarmament programmes religiously and ought to replace Arms Limitation Talks with Disarmament. It is only when the super powers are fully disarmed, that they will become vulnerable to nuclear or conventional aggressions like the Lilliputian actors of global politics. In this wise, they will really be compelled to see peace as the actual ends of humankind.

Finally, peaceful atmosphere has to be created to enable actors interact without threatening the world with global conflict. This can be accomplished through the replacement of bipolarity with multi-polarity as well as collective security in the inter-state relation in international system. This will go a long way in neutralising bipolar system of international politics which will drastically curtail the colossal strength of nuclear mega-powers. Or in alternative, since armament led to "Balance of Terror" and the consequence preservation of global peace, all nations have to arm themselves with nuclear warheads to safe-guard themselves. With all nations armed to the teeth, none will dare strike the other. This will hold water; if rational and God-fearing actors are to occupy strategy roles in international political system or else a Hitler will resurrect to shake the global and inexorable destroy the world.

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