

15. The Cold War World, 1953-1963

- Purpose: to gain an understanding of the development of the Cold War under the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, specifically:
 - The ups and downs of the Cold War in Europe and Asia
 - The situation in the Middle East
 - The impact of the Cold War on US policy in Latin America, esp. Cuba
- Timeframe: ca. 1953-1963
- Not covered: the situation in Vietnam. See lecture 18.

1.1 New Leadership: Eisenhower and Khrushchev

- In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower replaced Truman as US president. He brought to the Cold War a reluctance to enter conventional warfare as well as a certain level of pragmatism. At the same time, Eisenhower relied on nuclear weapons (despite fearing nuclear war), CIA covert ops, and “brinkmanship” in his handling of the Cold War.
- After Stalin’s death in 1953, unclear power structure in the Soviet Union; eventually Nikita Khrushchev emerged as the new Soviet leader. Khrushchev was more pragmatic than Stalin, but ruthlessly committed to maintaining Soviet power. He shocked the West with such provocative statements as “we will bury you,” but also talked of “peaceful coexistence.”



Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971)
was First Secretary of the Communist Party of the
Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, and Premier of the
Soviet Union from 1958 to 1964.

1.2 Policies of Eisenhower and Dulles

- John Foster Dulles (secretary of state): staunch anti-communist. Demanded “**Rollback**” instead of containment. Fired many Asia specialists during McCarthyism, impairing US analysis of Asian affairs.
- Eisenhower more moderate and careful, but together with Dulles shaped key US policies of the Cold War:
- **Massive Retaliation**: the threat to respond to any kind of Soviet or Chinese aggression with nuclear strikes in the hope of deterring the Soviet’s superior conventional forces.
- **New Look**: reliance on US air power and nuclear weapons to keep the military budget limited. “More bang for the buck.”
- **Domino Theory**: if one nation in a critical region fell to communism, its neighbors would follow. Applied esp. in Indochina.



Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969) and
John Foster Dulles (1888-1959)

1.3 The CIA under the Eisenhower Administration

- Eisenhower relied strongly on the CIA in the Cold, which under Allan Dulles became a major foreign policy tool.
- Extremely diverse approach. CIA used money to influence foreign leaders, trained foreign military officers in counter-revolutionary methods, funded propaganda and (mis-)information campaigns and even experimented with mind control drugs.
- Most importantly, covert operations to advance US interests without resorting to war. Overthrew governments in Iran and Guatemala but failed in Indonesia and Cuba.
- Plausible deniability: conduct covert ops in such as way that the president could deny any knowledge of them.



Original sign with seal from the CIA's first building - 2430 E Street, Washington, DC.

1.4 The Politics of Nuclear Weapons

- Eisenhower's presidency coincided with the development of H-Bombs.
- The administration reluctantly endorsed some (unsuccessful) efforts to reduce risk of nuclear war:
- "Atoms for peace": support the advance of nuclear power for civilian purposes.
- "Open Skies": proposal to allow mutual aerial surveillance of US and USSR.
- Small success: both powers stopped atmospheric nuclear testing in 1958, but Soviets restarted in 1961. US also restarted, but only underground.
- US also increased its arsenal of carrier systems. More B-29s, Polaris missiles for the navy (submarines). There was a "missile gap," but in US favor.
- Some talks about disarmament, but no actual reduction.



Polaris missile. The army, navy, and air force all insisted on having their own nukes.

2.1 The Ups and Downs of Cold War Politics

- Soviets crushed uprising in East Germany in June 1953, proving that they intended to hold onto power in Eastern Europe. US did not respond militarily.
- Major breakthrough: 1955 Geneva summit, first since Potsdam in 1945. Agreement to end occupation of Austria, which became a neutral state. "Peaceful coexistence," but no agreement on arms limitations. Still, major "thaw" in the Cold War diplomatic "ice age."
- However, improvement was limited. In 1956 Soviet forces crushed Hungarian rebellion.
- 1960 summit in Paris crashed when an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet airspace.



Dulles and Eisenhower at Geneva, 1955

2.2 Brinkmanship: The Jinmen and Mazu Crisis

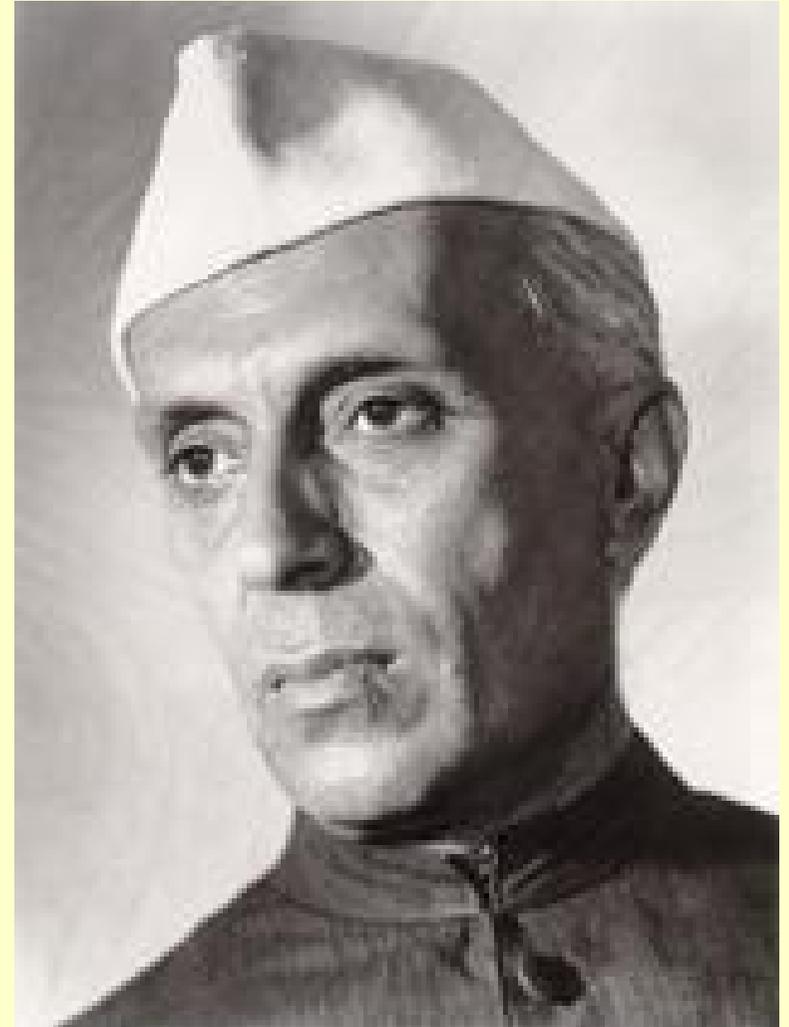
- The Cold War reached one of its sharpest points of the 1950s in a conflict over two tiny islands between “Red” China and Nationalist Taiwan: Jinmen and Mazu.
- Jiang Jieshi used the islands as bases from which to raid the Chinese mainland. Communist China started bombarding the islands with artillery in 1954.
- Eisenhower decided to apply containment policy to China over these islands. Threat of massive retaliation if China should invade. Tactical nukes for Taiwan in 1957.
- In 1958, after 4 years of off and on bombardment, crisis over Jinmen and Mazu flared up again. But this time, US urged Jiang to withdraw troops, and China relaxed its bombardment.
- In 1964, China became a nuclear power, partly in response to earlier US threats over Jinmen and Mazu.



Jinmen (Quemoy) and Mazu (Matsu) islands

2.3 The Nonaligned Movement and the Third World

- Despite ups and down, Cold War fronts in Europe were basically stable in the 1950s
- Jinmen and Mazu crisis with China, but no major conflict since end of Korean War
- Focus of Cold War shifted to newly independent countries of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, as well as to traditional US sphere of influence Latin America.
- Concept of "Third World." US and Soviets tried to extend their influence through military and economic aid, interventions in local conflicts, and covert operations.
- Non-aligned movement: esp. India, Egypt, Indonesia, several dozen countries. Harshly criticized by Dulles; US tried to contain non-aligned movement.
- US diplomatic standing esp. in Africa was handicapped by racial segregation in America.



Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), prime minister of India, one of the most important Third World leaders who refused alignment with the superpowers

3.1 The Middle East

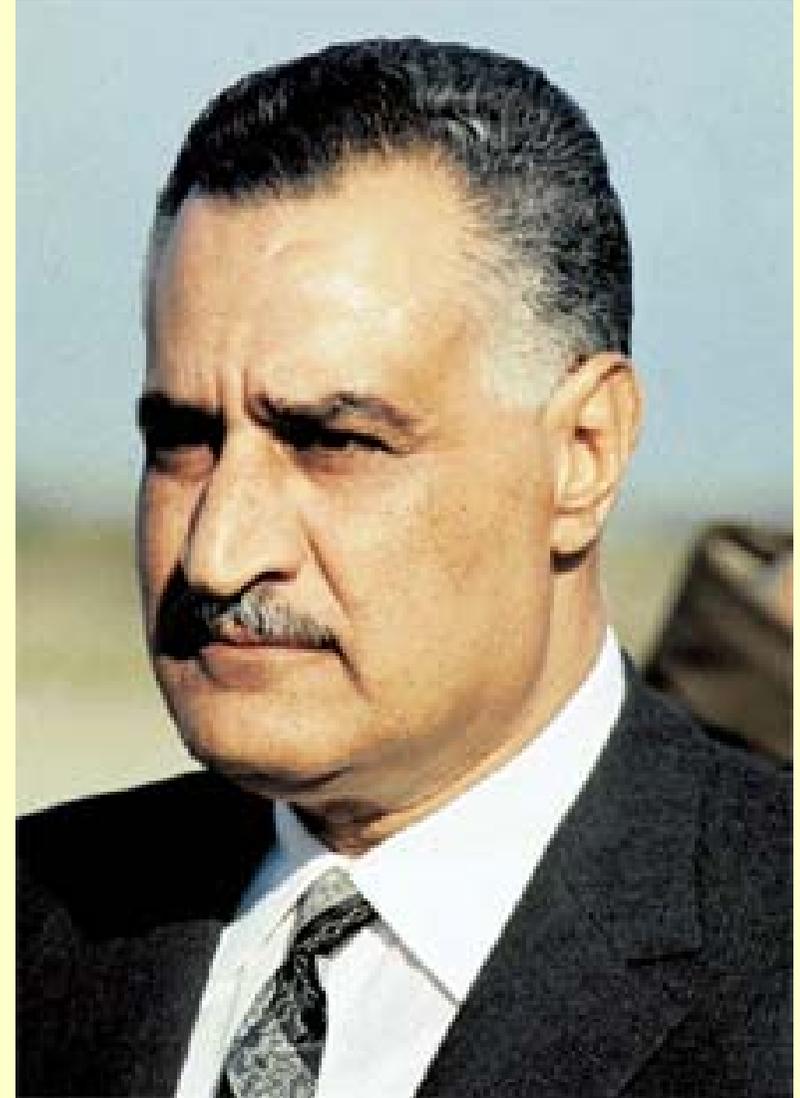
- Oil-rich region of Middle East important to Cold War. US “inherited” many British interests (and problems) in that region.
- 1948 US and Soviet recognition of Israel despite Arab hostility.
- Also US support for monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia.
- Most important ally in the region: Iran. In 1953, the CIA helped overthrow prime minister Mohammed Mossadegh who had nationalized oil industry. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi became a staunch US ally; US oil companies played a major role in Iran’s oil industry. However, dictatorial rule, infamous secret police.
- Major problem for US: Egyptian Gamal Abdul Nasser, pan-Arab nationalist, joined non-aligned movement in 1955.



Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1919 - 1980) briefly left Iran in 1953 but was reinstated with US and British help. Deposed in 1979.

3.2 The Suez Crisis

- US made no direct moves against Nasser but reneged on offer to help build Aswan Dam in 1956.
- Nasser then nationalized the British-owned strategically important Suez Canal.
- Without consulting Eisenhower, UK, France and Israel invaded Suez. Major problem for US: Suez crisis alienated Arabs and distracted world opinion from violent Soviet crushing of Hungarian revolt.
- Danger of Soviet intervention in Suez
- Eisenhower pressured UK, France, Israel into withdrawing their troops, but the damage was done. Suez Canal remained Egyptian (which turned out to be less of a problem than many had feared), but Nasser increasingly sought military and economic aid from the Soviet Union.



Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918 - 1970),
president of Egypt and principal leader of
pan-Arab movement

3.3 The Eisenhower Doctrine

- In 1957 – shortly after the Suez Crisis – Eisenhower declared that the US would intervene in the Middle East, if any government threatened by a communist takeover asked for help.
- In many ways, just Truman doctrine applied specifically to the Middle East.
- But: clearly marked Middle East as a crucial region of US interest, underscoring the globalization of American foreign policy in the Cold War.
- Also: intervention in Lebanon 1958
- Many Arabs (not incorrectly) saw Eisenhower Doctrine as directed against Nasser and Arab Nationalism in general. Helped deepen Arab misgivings about US power in the region.

4.1 At the Door: The Cold War and Latin America

- The Cold War also played a (usually detrimental) role in US relations with Latin America.
- In 1950s, US leaders interpreted a number of crises in Latin America as communist threats and acted to exclude left-wing groups from power
- 1951 newly elected Guatemalan president Arbenz expropriated uncultivated lands owned by United Fruit company
- 1954 CIA organized and aided a coup that removed Arbenz from power and returned United Fruit possessions
- Ensuing civil war destabilized Guatemala for decades.



Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán

4.2 The Cuban Revolution

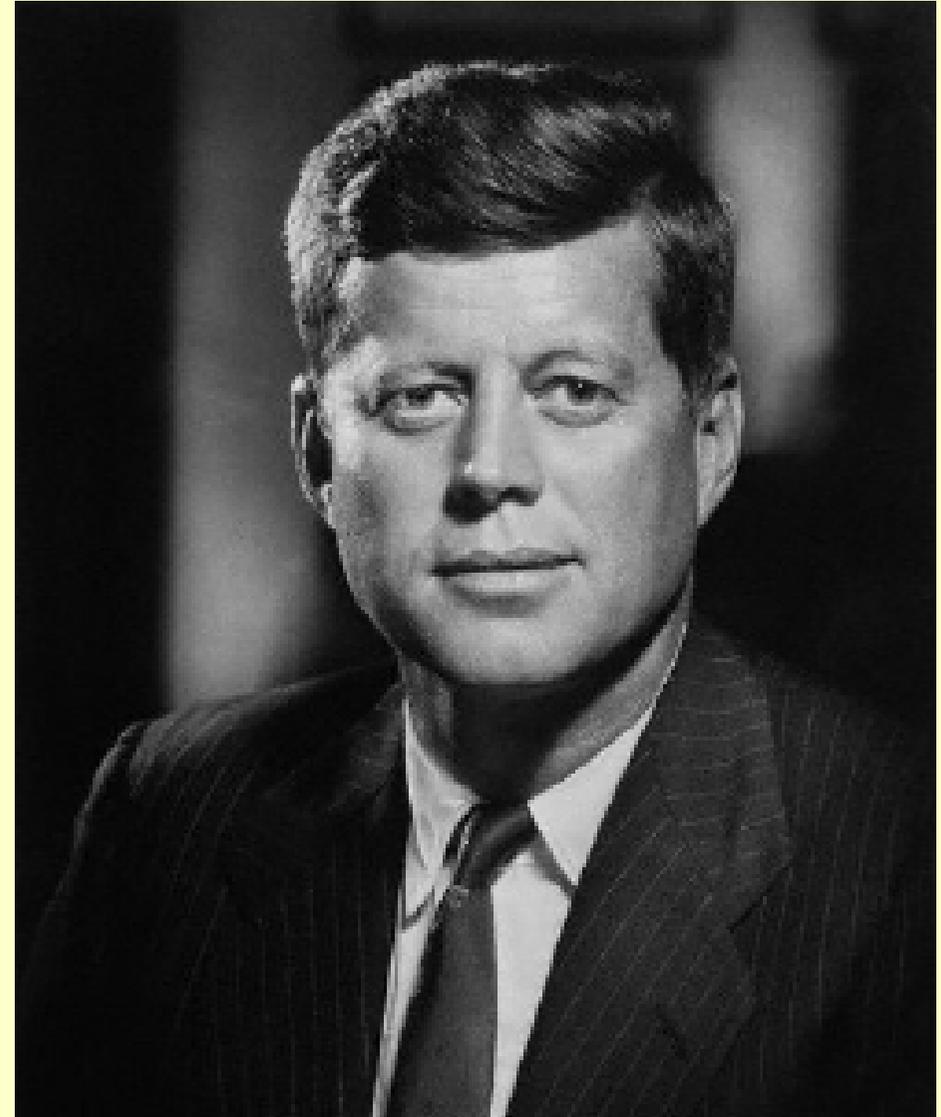
- Since the 1930s, US had supported dictatorial regime of Fulgencio Batista
- Cuban economy US-dominated; Havana popular for vacations and night life.
- 1959 left-wing Cuban revolutionaries ousted Batista despite CIA efforts
- While critical of US and its domination over Cuba, Castro was not originally a Soviet ally.
- Antagonism from Eisenhower administration and continued CIA efforts led to Cuban-Soviet alliance
- Castro ruled Cuba in an increasingly authoritarian manner. Waves of refugees fled to the United states, settling in Florida, esp. Miami
- Nationalization of US property
- Eisenhower broke relations in 1961 and had the CIA draft plans for anti-Castro operations.



Che Guevara and Fidel Castro

5.1 Kennedy and the Cold War

- Eisenhower left office with a speech of warning against a “military-industrial complex” that had evolved during his presidency.
- Kennedy ran in the election of 1960 as a cold warrior. Tough anti-Soviet rhetoric.
- Major buildup of US military strength under his presidency. **Flexible Response** instead of massive retaliation: ability to fight any war from counter-insurgency to nuclear showdown. More nukes, conventional military, and new special forces like the Green Berets.
- But also focus on nation building and development aid: Peace Corps in 1961.
- JFK strongly denounced the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 but took no direct action. In 1963, he traveled to West Berlin and declared his continued commitment to guaranteeing the freedom of Western Europe: “Ich bin ein Berliner.”



John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917–1963), often referred to as Jack Kennedy or JFK

5.2 The Bay of Pigs Invasion

- Kennedy “inherited” the Cuba problem from Eisenhower. The crisis eventually took the world to the brink of nuclear war.
- In 1961, Kennedy authorized a CIA-prepared operation against Castro: Cuban exiles, armed and trained by the US were shipped to the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. It was hoped that they would find support among Cubans and oust Castro.
- The operation was a disaster; Castro’s troops easily defeated the exiles. JFK denied air support in order to avoid open US involvement.
- Afterwards, JFK fired Allan Dulles, the CIA director, but continued anti-Castro policies. CIA “Operation Mongoose” to disrupt Cuban economy and stability, (failed) plans to assassinate Castro.
- Khrushchev saw his only Latin American ally threatened by US invasion.



Map of Cuba, including Bay of Pigs and missile sites of 1962 (next slide). The US maintained a naval base at Guantanamo Bay despite the Cuban Revolution, but Kennedy wanted to avoid the direct involvement of American troops in the overthrow of Castro.

5.3 The Cuban Missile Crisis

- In mid-1962 Khrushchev agreed with Castro to install nuclear weapons in Cuba to deter invasion and threaten the US.
- In October 1962 a US spy plane photographed sites in Cuba where missiles would be stationed.
- Kennedy ordered a naval “quarantine” of Cuba to prevent the missiles from being delivered. US troops stood by to invade if necessary.
- As Soviet ships approached Cuba, war between the US and the Soviet Union seemed imminent.
- In late Oct., Khrushchev backed down, but only after US secretly agreed to never invade Cuba and also dismantle Jupiter missiles in Turkey.
- Afterwards, Kennedy made cautious moves towards better relations with Soviets, like the “red telephone” and the first nuclear-test-ban treaty in 1963. But JFK remained “tough on communism” in many other areas – including Vietnam.



Aerial photograph of Cuban MRBM (medium range ballistic missile) site

Conclusion: The Kennedy Assassination and LBJ

- Historians have speculated whether JFK would have continued escalation of the Cold War or sought better US-Soviet relations. The point is of course moot.
- While campaigning in Texas on 22 Nov. 1963, Kennedy was shot dead by Lee Harvey Oswald. JFK's early death greatly contributed to the myth surrounding him.
- The presidency fell to vice president Lyndon B. Johnson, who had been a powerful Senate leader. "LBJ" inherited a world situation shaped by more than 15 years of global Cold War under Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy.
- LBJ's presidency and foreign policy record were dominated by the deepening US involvement in Vietnam – also a legacy of the Cold War.



Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973), taking the oath of office after the Kennedy assassination

Document Assignment and Sample Keyword

Document Assignment:

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address
(1961)

Available online or from the folder in the library.

Sample Keyword:

Bay of Pigs Invasion

1961. Failed CIA attempt to oust Castro after the Cuban Revolution. US-trained Cuban exiles landed at the Bay of Pigs but were quickly defeated by Castro's troops. President Kennedy had authorized the operation but refused to provide air support or directly involve US troops; he later fired CIA director Allan Dulles. The operation led to the Cuban missile crisis, as Castro and his Soviet ally Khrushchev feared a US invasion of Cuba.