

Historical Security Council

CIMUN

Topic 1: The issue of the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)

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Introduction¹

It is October 25, 1962, and the Cuban Missile Crisis is at its peak and the world is on the brink of a third nuclear world war. The two largest nuclear powers are facing each other and threaten to use their nuclear arsenal on each other. The United States of America is backed by the NATO alliance whereas the Soviet Union is supported by the Warsaw Pact members. The cause of this crisis is that the United States, during its reconnaissance flights, has discovered a considerable quantity of medium-range nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba, directly threatening US soil. The Soviet Union in the meantime claims that medium range rockets stationed in Turkey aimed at the Soviet Union also harm the security of the Soviet Union in the same way. The situation is very complicated and one wrong step might move the world into the abyss of nuclear war. Amid this tense situation, the UN Security Council meets to ease the situation.



The US delegation showing evidence of the missiles stationed in Cuba²

Subject of the dispute³

The main subject of dispute is the nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles stationed by the Soviet side in Cuba and by the US side in Italy and Turkey. These missiles were each capable of reaching the respective country within minutes and had a devastating impact. US -American intelligence expected about 1.5 million casualties if one missile struck a major American city. Long term illnesses, infrastructural loss and long-term radiation of the area add up to the potential damage. The use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is only a part of what damage that nuclear weapons are capable of. Through the arms race, these weapons have been further developed and have become increasingly effective and destructive, for example the

¹ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/cuban-missile-crisis>

² <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/adlaistevensonunitednationscuba.html>

³ <https://media.defense.gov/2012/Aug/23/2001330104/-1/-1/0/Cubanmissile.pdf>

R-12 could release 70 times the energy of the nuclear bomb of Nagasaki. Ultimately, the Cuban missile crisis is also a test of strength to see which of the two parties to the conflict can win the arms race. Behind these medium-range missiles, however, is a much larger national arsenal of nuclear weapons, which can be fired from their own soil or, in the case of the US, also from submarines. These weapons count to the extended subject of dispute.



*of carrying a nuclear warhead*⁴



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History of the dispute and actions taken so far⁶

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers. With the two nuclear powers, two different ideologies, economic and political systems faced each other and escalated into an arms race. Both states were seeking to draw a maximum threat to the other for which it was important to place the missile as close as possible to the enemy to minimize the warning in case of a first strike. In 1959, the U.S. found its nearby launch sites in Turkey, where it placed some missiles. This increased the pressure on the Soviet government significantly. At the same time, there was a coup d'état in Cuba under Fidel Castro, as a result of which a communist revolutionary government came to power. In 1960, the nationalization of U.S. refineries led to a rift between the Cuban government and the U.S. An import embargo was imposed on Cuba, leaving it considerably weakened. This power vacuum was filled by the Soviet Union through military and financial support immediately. An alliance developed that benefited both sides. The Soviet Union was thus able to make up for its strategic deficit vis-à-vis the US and bring ballistic missiles within direct striking distance of the U.S. at the same time, the Soviet

⁴ Public domain: <http://www.redstone.army.mil/history/archives/jupiter/jupiter.html>

⁵ http://www.b14643.de/Spacerockets/Specials/R_and_UR-Missiles/Gallery/R-12/R-12.htm

⁶ <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Impact-of-the-Cuban-Missile-Crisis>

Union served Cuba as a protective power. A failed U.S. invasion by Cuban exiles ended in a strategic fiasco in April 1961, further hardening the battle lines.

Current Developments⁷

It is 1960, the U.S. launches U-2 reconnaissance flights over Cuba and discovers the first combat aircraft on the island. In response, missiles are readied for deployment in Turkey. July 1962, the Soviet Union begins secretly stationing soldiers and nuclear warheads in Cuba, the extent of which is unknown in the status quo. September 1962, a Soviet cargo ship carrying several SS-4 missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead docks in Havana. From October 14-15, a reconnaissance aircraft discovers launch pads for the missiles in question. This confirms U.S. suspicions that nuclear weapons might be stationed in Cuba. On October 22, U.S. President John F. Kennedy responds by announcing a naval blockade of Cuba for October 24 with a radius of 500nm. Any ship attempting to break through this blockade would be fired upon. To underscore this stance, he positions about 200 warships around Cuba. He demands the immediate withdrawal of nuclear-tipped missiles from Cuba and threatens to retaliate if need be. The Soviet government rejects the blockade but does not attempt to break it. The UN Security Council is convened for October 25.

Dimensions of the conflict⁸

The Cuban Missile Crisis is primarily a military conflict. Nevertheless, this conflict is so significant that it has relevant implications for politics and the global economy. Therefore, this section will serve as an overview for the different dimensions.

Military Dimension: The arms race produced the powerful weapons which are the subject of the dispute. Military strength seems eminent to protect national stability. However, an actual use of these weapons would benefit none of the participants. Therefore, the military strategy is mainly based on deterrence. The missiles placed in Cuba could reach U.S. soil within five minutes and are therefore a decisive step for Soviet military deterrence. The important balance of powers threatens to get out of balance. The primary interest is therefore not to disarm, but mainly to maintain this important balance or even to win it in its favor, since this would entail great dominance, which would also affect politics and the economy.

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-missile-crisis>

⁸ <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/fall/cuban-missiles.html>

Political Dimension: The conflict is also a clash of two opposing political ideals: communism and capitalism. The Soviet Union and the U.S. have a political tradition of being unwilling to compromise, as such a stance is often interpreted as weakness by the electorate. As a result, hardliners are often in power on both sides. In this case, too, the fronts are hardened, as both sides are under great pressure from their national legitimization bodies. Moreover, the U.S. in particular fears that it could be repeated in other unstable South American states. If other states in South and Central America were taken over by communist regimes similar to Cuba's, this would pose a considerable threat to the trade interests of the U.S. It is therefore in the great interest of both states to export their ideals. Where their own political ideals are dominant, they also succeed in establishing economic dominance and profiting from it.

Economic Dimension: The protectionist shift in Cuba's economic situation ultimately triggered the U.S. distancing from Cuba and explains why the Soviet Union was able to fill this vacuum and bring Cuba into its own sphere of influence, as well. In the eyes of the U.S., the nationalization was an unnecessary provocation by Castro. This clearly illustrates the cycle of influence. Where there is military influence, there is political influence; political influence allows economic influence and economic influence allows greater military and political dominance vice versa. Cuba is currently situated in such a circle and both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are struggling to influence this cycle for their own cause.

Stakeholders⁹

Soviet Union (Warsaw Pact): The Soviet Union supports the revolutionary government in Cuba politically, financially and militarily, as Cuba provides an important military base. Furthermore, they share a similar political orientation. Together with its fellow Warsaw Pact members, the Soviet Union is the key supporter of Cuba. The Warsaw Pact was founded in 1955 and is a military alliance around the Soviet Union with seven other member states from eastern Europe. By being in the Soviet sphere of influence, they also share its economic and political orientation. Their support is crucial to the stability of Cuba. It is in their interest to keep the missiles on Cuba not only to have a match to the US-American missiles in Turkey, but also to strengthen their negotiation position in the West Berlin-Issue.

United States of America (NATO): The United States of America does not support the revolutionary government under Fidel Castro since his government is responsible for the nationalization of U.S. refineries and agricultural lands without compensation. The Soviet Union threatens the United States by positioning its missiles and guarantees the stability of the Cuban government. Furthermore, the Cuban case might expand to unstable countries in South America, spreading communism further and harming U.S. economic interests. NATO is a military alliance of North American and West European States which share political and economic values. In doing so, it is the direct counterpart to the Warsaw Pact.

Italy & Turkey: As members of NATO and due to their strategic geopolitical location, both states agreed to host launch sites for US-American missiles. This gives both states military security and resources to defend themselves. However, on the downsides this makes them prime targets for Sowjet missiles as well. They are the less known counterpart to the Cuban launch sites.

Cuba: As a revolutionary state, Cuba is naturally not stable and is looking for economic, political and military stability. Since their cause to nationalize valuable economic sources put them in a politically unstable position, Castro's government is glad to accept the Soviet offer to step in and fill the vacuum. Cuba is thus very dependent on the Soviet Union in every dimension because without the Soviet Union, sanctions and embargoes could ruin out the country economically and since the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, a large-scale invasion of the U.S. deems imminent.

Guiding Questions

To make the negotiations easier and to give some perspectives, a possible resolution should address the following questions:

- a. How can the situation between the main conflict parties be defused?
- b. How can such conflicts be prevented in the future?

⁹ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/story?id=79831&page=1>

- c. What would be a long-term solution regarding the nuclear arsenal of each conflict party?
- d. What could be made use of existing frameworks to guarantee future peace?

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