



History of International Relations

**Lecture 7: The Cold War at its Height:
1953-1963**

Leadership changes in the Soviet Union 1953-63

March 1953-June 1953 – 'Troika' – Malenkov, Beria, Molotov

June 1953- March 1955 – Malenkov

March 1955 - October 1964 - Krushchev

Leadership changes in the United States

November 1952-January 1961 – Dwight D. Eisenhower

January 1961- November 1963 – John F. Kennedy

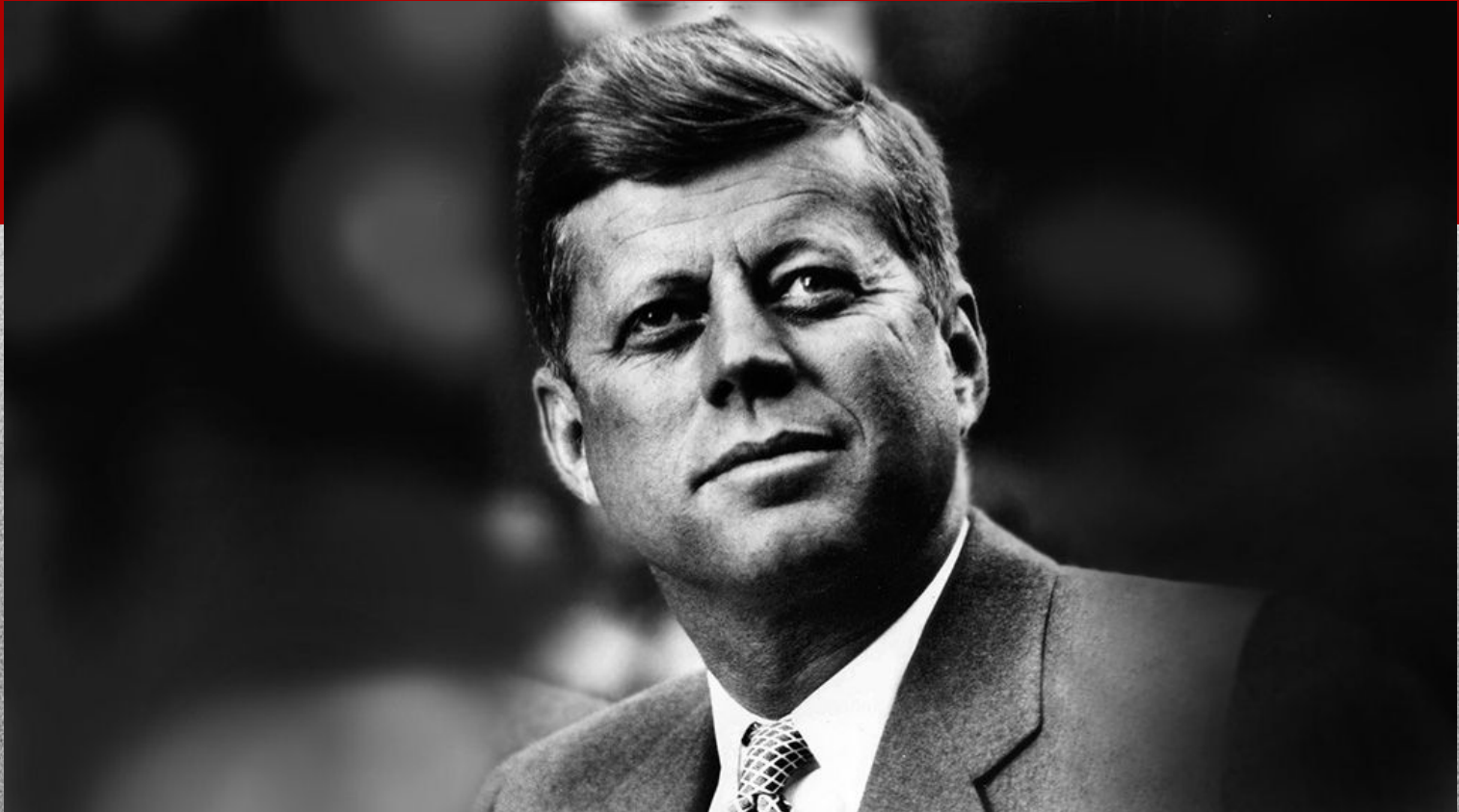
Nikita Krushchev (1894-1971)



Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)



John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)



- 1) The paradox of a 'thaw' and Cold War Intensification after Stalin
- 2) New American strategies of fighting of the Cold War via the use of nuclear weapons
- 3) Fighting the Cold War: US Offensive Strategies
- 4) Post-Stalin peace efforts and arms control 1953-6
- 5) Discussions over the future of Germany 1953-6
- 6) Instability in the Soviet bloc: the East Berlin Revolt 1953
- 7) Instability in the Soviet bloc: the initial Hungarian Revolt 1956
- 8) The revolt's bloody conclusion in Hungary
- 9) The Berlin Crisis 1958-61
- 10) The Cuban Missile Crisis
- 11) Conclusions

Lecture outline

- **Improved relations?**
 - *Reform thinking in the Soviet Union – new approach after death of Stalin?*
 - Soviet leadership troika, Malenkov, Beria, Molotov more conciliatory
 - The importance of avoiding Hot War
 - Beria, proposal of '*de-Bolshevisation*'
 - Molotov's '*peace offensive*'
 - Malenkov – anti-nuclear war agenda - 1953-5
 - **Rise of Khrushchev**
 - Focus on consumerism instead of just military and industry
 - Khrushchev's commitment to peaceful co-existence, disarmament proposals and diplomacy
 - **US Policy – Dwight D. Eisenhower – fight cold war but unsure about excessive rearmament – attempts at coexistence**
- **But Cold War intensification** – covert operations and security – 'Project Control' 'Operation Home run', George Blake
 - propaganda also intensifies
 - growing Soviet interest in the non-European world
 - the strengthening of the two blocs

1) The paradox of a 'thaw' and Cold War Intensification after Stalin

- **Eisenhower turns away from Truman's focus on rearmament – why?**
 - a) Worried about a loss of personal freedoms
 - b) Incredible expense of maintaining regular armed forces
 - Eisenhower supports the Idea of using Nuclear weapons a deterrent
 - **Classic example of this the ‘New Look’ strategy of autumn 1953**
 - Mixture of nuclear weapons, conventional weapons and intelligence + more of a reliance on cold war allies to support the United States
- But this increased focus on nuclear weapons brought new worries in the 1950s - two related examples:**
- **Sputnik October 1957**
 - US hysteria after the launch – fear Soviets have advantage in terms of technology
 - **The Gaither Committee final report November 1957 – how to deal with nuclear attack**
 - Belief that the Soviets were ahead of the US in terms of nuclear weapons – the so-called 'missile gap'
 - Aggressive attitudes within the US military - Curtis Le May if they attack: 'We'll knock the shit out of them.'
 - Luckily Eisenhower doesn't overact to these reports – plays down their importance

2) New American strategies of fighting the Cold War via the use of Nuclear weapons

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969)



- **Criticism of NSC 68 in 1953**

- no disintegration of Soviet power
- no transformation of Soviet ideology and diplomacy
- no precise war plan to overthrow the Soviet regime

Operation Solarium June 1953 – establishes new policy options – 3 teams -

Team A - focuses on rollback in Eastern Europe but also works on peaceful co-existence with Soviets in the short term

Team B – integrates Nuclear weapons into the US' Cold War strategy

Team C - aims at - among other things - the end of USSR control of Eastern European satellite states by 1965

- Becomes clear relatively quickly that Team C's plans were unrealistic
- US focuses more on Team A's work – I.e. peaceful coexistence with the support of covert operations
- Eventual move away from aggressive rollback as the fifties went on

3) Fighting the Cold War: the US Offensive Strategies

- **Fear of nuclear war brings both sides to the negotiating table**
- Dualism of the period – seeking peace publicly but also interested in maintaining their power
- Were these peace moves genuine? Disarmament dilemma of the United States
- **Soviet proposals**
 - Malenkov's 1953 call for an international body to supervise comprehensive disarmament after the creation of the UN Disarmament Commission in 1951
 - no first use agreement, 1954 – both proposals rejected by the USA
- **The American response**
 - Eisenhower's 'Chance for Peace' speech, April 1953
 - This presented a 5 point plan Anglo-American plan for arms reduction
 - Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' speech, December 1953 – issue of nuclear weapons brought into the open

4) Post-Stalin peace efforts and arms control - 1953-6

- 1. The limitation, by absolute numbers or by an agreed international ratio, of the sizes of the military and security forces of all nations.
- 2. A commitment by all nations to set an agreed limit upon that proportion of total production of certain strategic materials to be devoted to military purposes.
- 3. International control of atomic energy to promote its use for peaceful purposes only and to insure the prohibition of atomic weapons.
- 4. A limitation or prohibition of other categories of weapons of great destructiveness.
- 5. The enforcement of all these agreed limitations and prohibitions by adequate safeguards, including a practical system of inspection under the United Nations.

Five point plan – 'Chance for Peace'

Soviet (at least publicly) put a lot of emphasis on the issue of disarmament

- Britain and France also strongly in support of this – fear of nuclear war
 - Soviets in early 1955 propose on-site inspections of nuclear weapons by a central agency – rejection by US
 - **Austrian peace treaty** – relaxation of tension – Austria becomes an independent state
 - **July 1955 Geneva Summit** – big four meet up talk about general issues of global security
- **Eisenhower's 'Open Skies' speech at Geneva** – proposes a free exchange of security information – Soviets reject the proposal – was E serious about this offer?
- Peaceful co-existence at this point basically accepted by both sides
- But high-point of Soviet-US talks – serious discussions don't come again until after the Cuban missile crisis

4) Post-Stalin peace efforts and arms control 1955-6 continued

- **Germany still divided – some sort of agreement needs to be reached**
 - Discussions surrounding Germany's economic and military strength – should it be reunited or not?
 - Both sides seek to contain Germany
 - Soviets afraid of:** German revanchism, West German acquisition of nuclear weapons and the creation of a West European Defence Community with a rearmed West Germany
 - Soviets sought:** the demilitarisation of a future reunited Germany and they thus put forward several proposals regarding German unification
 - Despite this they eventually move to consolidate East Germany – 1956 - part of the Warsaw pact – Soviet troops stationed there
 - US afraid that:** Discussions about the future of Germany would bring divisions among their allies and that Communism might be strong in a united Germany
 - US sought:** to strengthen and re-arm West Germany
 - Eventually the US moves to consolidate West Germany - member of NATO and an independent state in 1955 – US troops stationed there
 - Consolidation of East and West Germany within the two blocs by 1956**

~~5) Discussions over the future of Germany - 1953-6~~

- **How were Soviets supposed to behave towards their satellites post-Stalin period?**
- Liberalisation or continued Stalinism?
- **East German a specific case – Soviets try to:**
 - Stop people seeking to escape to West Germany
 - One way of doing so - make East Germany more controllable through rigid economic discipline
- Attempt to collectivize in 1952
- Unsuccessful reforms – many flee to the West – 100,000 early 1953
- **Questioning of reforms**
- Liberalisation introduced in East Germany – but these reforms move too quickly
- **The 1953 revolt**
 - workers come out on the street to protest – June 16 – June 17 – 20,000 on the streets – Soviet tanks come in to stop the revolt
- **Consequences**
 - greater Soviet incentive to consolidate and formalize the division of Germany
 - slowing of the pace of change in East Germany

6) Instability in the Soviet bloc: the East Berlin Revolt 1953



E. Berlin Revolt June 1953

- **Post-Stalin in the rest of the Eastern Bloc**
- **Watershed moment in Eastern Europe – Krushchev speech at 20th Party Congress – February 1956 – criticising Stalin**
- Greater freedom across the Eastern bloc – Stand off in Poland – October 1956 – Bierut, Gomulka and Krushchev – deal worked out – eventual liberalisation in Poland
- **Hungary – Imre Nagy's reforms (1953-5)**
 - against concentration on heavy industry
 - release of some political prisoners
 - led to replacement by Rakosi in 1955
- **Protests emerge in October 1956 -**
- **Workers wanted factory committees not control through Communist party**
 - resentment at Moscow control
 - student demo in Budapest 23 October – 200,000 on the streets, spreads to other areas
- **Soviet troops arrive 24 October,** Imre Nagy returns to power, appeal to demonstrators to stop violence
- Armed resistance continues on the streets of Budapest – uneasy truce
- 28 October: Soviet withdrawal of troops from Budapest

7) Instability in the Soviet bloc: the Initial Hungarian Revolt 1956

- **Soviet domestic opposition to withdrawal of troops from Budapest**
 - Soviet leaders worry about the propaganda disaster of the revolt
 - But don't want to be too repressive due to world opinion looking on
- **New international developments**
 - Israeli invasion of Egypt 29 October
 - British bombing of Egypt 31 October – **Suez crisis**
- **As a result US announce non-intervention in the affairs of other countries**

US decision + Soviet fear of losing out in Europe and the Middle East convinces Moscow to redeploy troops in Hungary

- Soviets redeploy troops in Hungary, October 31 1956
- 25,000 die, 200,000 escape – Imre Nagy replaced and executed
- **Consequences** – West pull back from offensive cold war strategies due to Soviet actions

8) The revolt's bloody conclusion in Hungary

- **Importance of Berlin – Germany divided but Berlin relatively open**
 - important enough for US to risk general war
 - centre of western offensive Cold War measures
 - tunnel for eavesdropping
- **Soviet concerns over Berlin in the 1950s**
 - Western subversion
 - the flow of refugees to the West
 - West Berlin an embarrassment for the Soviet Union – bad for propaganda – Easterners can compare their economic situation there
- **US concerns**
 - maintaining access through East Germany
 - no practical conventional defence for Berlin in case of a Hot war

Soviet attempts to put pressure on the West - November 1958

- Krushchev demands that Berlin become a free city in 6 months or East Germany should be given full sovereignty over the city
 - Shock and anger from the American side

9) The Berlin Crisis 1958-61



Division of Germany

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Soviet ultimatum expires 1959 - Krushchev in 1960 waits to exploit the new, inexperienced Kennedy administration

- **Pressure from Walter Ulbricht to solve the growing exodus problem – 200,000 escape in 1960. Proposes to:**

- make Berlin a free city
- formalize the division of Germany in a 4 power treaty
- to give East Germany control of access routes to Berlin

1961 - Khrushchev tries to put pressure on Kennedy

- Vienna meeting with Kennedy 1961- attempt at intimidation via a 6 month ultimatum

- **America was determined to preserve the status quo – useful for spying etc**

- America doesn't want to give the upper hand to the Soviets
- West European politicians anxious about potential war

- **Stage was set for another crisis**

- US conventional arms build up
- Soviet defence budget increases by 33%

- Krushchev proposes the building of the wall – August 1961 – Kennedy tacit acceptance

Consequences – spheres of influence accepted – drawback from crisis

9) The Berlin Crisis 1958-61



The Building of the Berlin Wall – August 1961



The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962

- **Why did Krushchev decide to install the missiles on Cuba in April 1962?:**
 - Krushchev likes to take risks – as shown by past actions regarding Berlin
 - to protect Castro from American aggression and assassination – Bay of Pigs – April 1961
 - to show the world the Soviet were strong in terms of nuclear weapons
 - to appease domestic critics
 - Khrushchev believed Kennedy was a weak president
- **US discovers the missiles in October 1962 – provokes strong reactions:**
 - Shock and anger across the United States
 - JFK quickly forms an Executive committee to discuss different plans of action
 - Some members of the Executive committee called for an air-strike
 - **Kennedy and other more moderate members decide on a quarantine**
 - Krushchev writes letters to JFK proposing solutions
 - Krushchev eventually agrees to back down after JFK agrees to remove nuclear weapons from Turkey
- **Consequences for the Cold War**
 - increased need to reduce the risk of Hot War and move towards peaceful co-existence
 - Moves towards discussions regarding disarmament/nuclear weapons
 - US accept Soviet Union as a main power
 - America agrees to accept Cuba as a Communist country

10) The Cuban Missile Crisis

- 1) Initially improved relations between US/USSR after the death of Stalin
- 2) Immediate post-Stalin period characterised by disarmament talks
- 3) **However US** continue to debate how to fight the cold war – importance of a nuclear deterrent and both sides continue covert operations
- 4) **Soviet Union - attempts to reform/liberalise** – has a considerable impact on control over their satellites in Eastern Europe
- 5) Germany a crucial issue in the period – East and West Germany stabilise – but massive tensions over East and West Berlin
- 6) Shock of the Cuban Missile Crisis – would lead to more honest attempts at peaceful co-existence/nuclear arms control after 1963

11) Conclusions
