



# **History of International Relations**

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

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# **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**

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# **Leadership changes in the United States**

**November 1952-January 1961 – Dwight D. Eisenhower**

**January 1961- November 1963 – John F. Kennedy**

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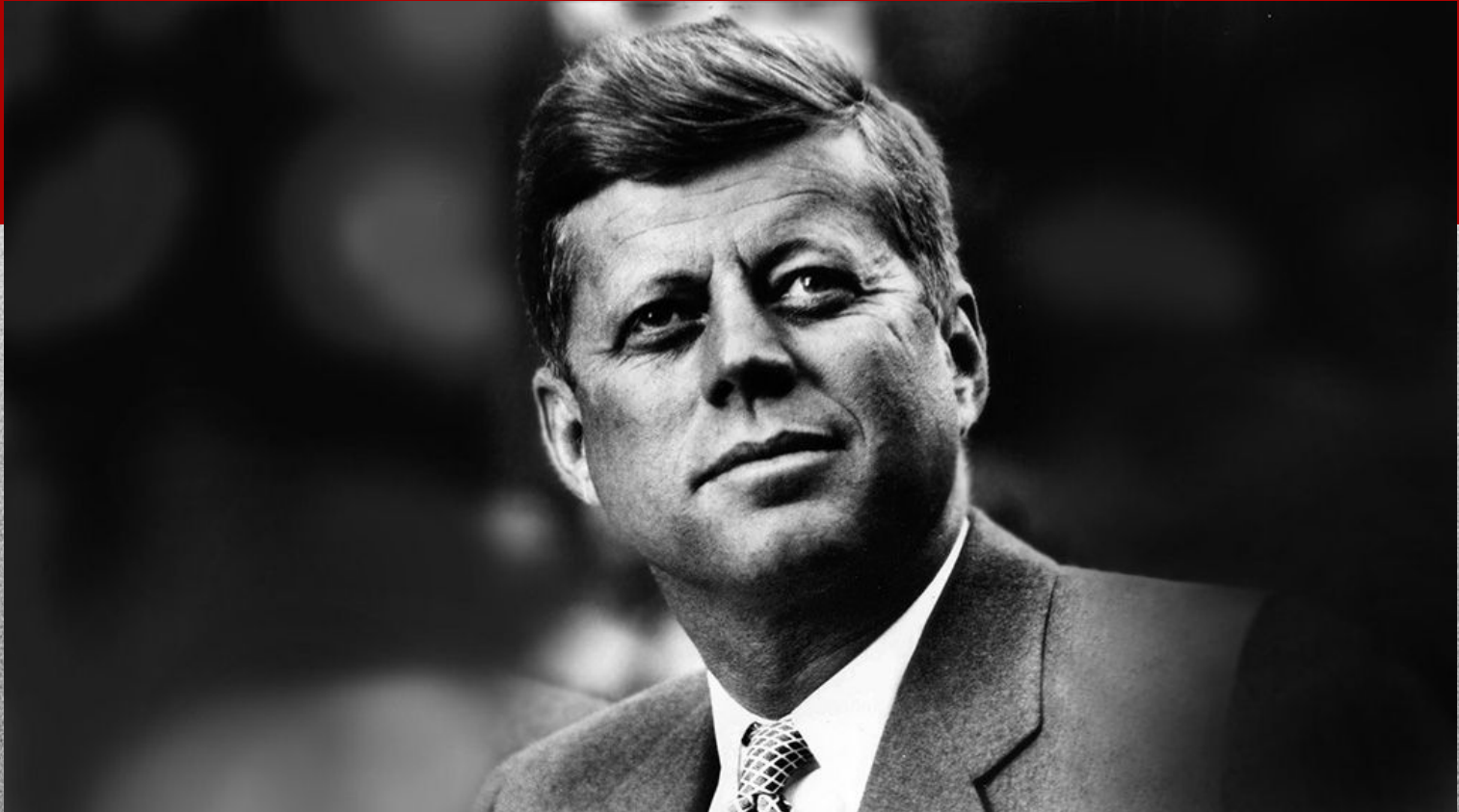
# Nikita Krushchev (1894-1971)



# 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**

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- **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**

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- **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**

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# 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**

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- **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**

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- 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'**

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## **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**

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- **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**

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## **E. Berlin Revolt June 1953**

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- **Post-Stalin in the rest of the Eastern Bloc**
- **Watershed moment in Eastern Europe – Krushchev speech at 20<sup>th</sup> 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**

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- **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**

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- **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**

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## 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**

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## **The Building of the Berlin Wall – August 1961**

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## **The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962**

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- **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**

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- 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**

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