

# Cuban missile crisis essay examples

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The Cuban Missile Crisis is generally regarded as one of the most important events of the so called Cold war between the United States and Russia and which almost ended up in a nuclear conflagration which would have probably ended the world as we know it. It also showed the strong political leadership of President John F Kennedy who was faced with can only be described as an incredible political crisis and one which he handled brilliantly and with aplomb. Intervention of other leading figures such as Pope John XXIII and other Prime Ministers such as Harold Macmillan was also crucial in giving guidance to the young President when faced with such an immense problem (Thorpe 2011).

### **Analysis of John F Kennedy's speech to the nation on the Cuban Missile Crisis:**

John F Kennedy's speech can be seen as masterful and very powerful in the context of what was happening on Cuba. The placement of missiles on certain parts of Cuba by the Russians in collusion with Fidel Castro's regime brought about a strong reaction from the United States which did not want to have such a potential cocktail of nuclear weapons on its doorstep (Axelrod, 2009).

### **Kennedy was immediately to the point with the main thrust of his speech:**

" Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute maximum peril".

Kennedy's statement requires some analyzing in the context of what was happening in the world at that time. His description of the placing of missiles as an incipient threat to the world's peace shows that the actual firing of a weapon was no longer important to create a sense of anxiety within this context. He was also very circumspect about what was going on in the world and did not beat around the bush, actually informing the American people that the placement of missiles on Cuba demonstrated a real threat to world stability. One must also remember that Kennedy was still fresh from the terrible failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion where several Cuban exiles lost their lives in an unprecedented disaster (Axelrod, 2009).

Let us consider another quote from Kennedy's speech where he says that US policy has been one of patience and restraint, as befits a peaceful and powerful nation, which leads a worldwide alliance. " We have been determined not to be diverted from our central concerns by mere irritants and fanatics".

In this statement, Kennedy is saying that although action which will precipitate danger or other disastrous consequences will not be taken, some kind of stand had to be made to show the Soviets that they could not simply do whatever they pleased.

This statement again shows that Kennedy was not prepared to go down the whole hog of warmongering and endangering the world in the process. He was definitely not going to create a situation where the whole world would have to endure untold suffering by a rashly planned attack on the nuclear missile sites. However he did indicate that he was prepared to take any necessary action to halt the crisis through aggressive diplomacy as well as

some other measures which included blockades as well as constant surveillance of the Cuban situation and the strengthening of the American base at Guantanamo Bay. All these measures showed that the United States was deadly serious about all that was going on and would not balk at taking any action which needed to be taken to protect its interests. Although President Kennedy must have taken advice from his top political advisors including his brother Bobby, the speech clearly showed that the President was his own man and would not be brooking any sort of indecision or inaction if the situation called for it.

### **The concluding part of the speech:**

Undoubtedly the greatest part of the speech is its concluding paragraph: where Kennedy makes his appeal to his fellow citizens: “ let no one doubt that this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can see precisely what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred”.

In this great speech, John F Kennedy showed his mettle as a true world leader and as a man who knew what the whole world was facing. It is a great response to a crisis which was threatening to envelop the whole world in darkness and tragedy and the successful resolution of the crisis is one of the testaments to his immortality. His reference to the months which lay ahead was perhaps slightly premature but also showed that he was deadly serious about everything in this crisis. Kennedy showed his mettle during the Cuban Missile Crisis and also demonstrated his aplomb at handling such a difficult and intrinsically problematic situation. His speech is a masterful exercise in

diplomatic restraint, firm but fair but also incredibly direct and inspiring. It is surely one of the defining moments in history.

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