

Changes Kennedy brought to American foreign policy

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Eisenhower believed that there could not be a military solution to Cold War problems and that America could shape the world's destiny. He accepted limitations on America's role. Kennedy did not. The changes he brought to American Foreign Policy were active and bold. This contrasted Eisenhower's passive and cautious approach. Kennedy sought to restore the prestige and primacy of the presidency. His recurring theme was "I think it is time for America to start moving again", and his actions sought to reveal a dynamic militancy.

He set to dramatically increase American strength including increasing the defense budget (\$40 billion to \$56 billion), and arms production (missile launchers, long range bombers, submarines, and CUBISM). This ignited the greatest arms race in the history of mankind. In hindsight we can now see that the more missiles America built, the less secure the country was. However, his changes extended far beyond nuclear delivery weapons. Kennedy wanted to increase America's conventional war capability and guerrilla warfare forces. Unlike Eisenhower, he wanted the ability to intervene anywhere; this new strategy was called flexible response. The Third World provided the key to Kennedy's new American Frontiers. He wanted to be able to respond to Communist aggression at any level and set out to build an interdependency force that could stamp out revolutions in Third World countries. The force came to be called the Green Berets, and its aim was to apply American techniques and know-how in guerrilla warfare situations to solve the problems of national liberation.

Its greatest appeal was that it avoided direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. Vietnam was an ideal battleground for the Green Berets. The US

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Increased economic and military aid in South Vietnam. However, under the SEATO Treaty the US was not able to get involved in a civil war. Kennedy was not willing to and opposition to the government came from within. He courted the removal of forces through a coup of a South Viet leader that was not effective enough. America's active role in Vietnam was a culmination of the policy of containment rather than a military-industrial complex conspiracy.

Kennedy also initiated the Alliance for Progress program. It was a significant aid program to Latin American countries, many of which were at the stage of authoritarian military dictatorships. These were the kind of friendships that the United States attempted to foster. Kennedy's commitment to be part of the new frontier was to combat third world liberation efforts. The USA wanted to ensure that there would be a degree of social and economic development. Through aid and investment, he believed that the Latin American countries would benefit.

However, the Alliance was a failure primarily because there was significant underdevelopment and those who controlled the land, were the ones that benefited from such aid. Unlike Eisenhower, Kennedy initially believed that there was room for peaceful coexistence between the free capitalist world and communism. He attempted to compromise with the Soviet Union but when faced with aggression within Berlin, he returned to containment policies. Berlin was a problem for Kennedy. As a result of his foreign policy decisions, what had occurred was the emergence of a divided city by war.

The Soviet building of the Wall and the eventual Western acceptance of it signified something about Kennedy's diplomacy. It indicated that the

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Germans did not want liberty and demonstrated that the intentions of the Soviet to push the West out of Berlin were firm. However, failure to do so led his search for opportunity elsewhere. He found it Cuba. The issue of Cuba was something of a bear trap by departing Eisenhower. The United States had significant investments in Cuba. But it had undergone a revolution that was led effectively by Fidel Castro, who began to nationalize American properties.

The American response under Eisenhower was to undertake effective covert actions to sabotage Castro. The United States was determined to oust the Castro regime by training, organizing and equipping Cuban exiles in Guatemala and exporting them to the Bay of Pigs. This was an absolute disaster for the United States because Khrushchev saw this as an opportunity to place nuclear warheads close to the east coast of the United States. This crisis represented a direct threat to the United States.

Rather than to listen to military advisors or the CIA (as had been done during the Bay of Pigs), Kennedy's response was to convene Coxcomb, an executive committee of national security counsel. The Committee initiated a minimalist naval blockade to prevent the Soviets from sending any further material into Cuba. This quarantine on all offensive military equipment then allowed Kennedy to warn the Soviet that any missile launched from Cuba would require a retaliatory response. Through meetings with Soviet officials, a deal was made to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba. This was a satisfactory ending