

The cuban missile crisis a success history essay



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In this investigation I am going to answer the question To what extend was Kennedys handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis a success. I will be focusing on John F. Kennedys diplomatic position; Kennedy was also young and did not have a lot of experience as president.

I have chosen this topic because everyone seems to like John F. Kennedy for his actions and what he has done for his country, I am really interested on analyzing his decisions and how he prevented a nuclear war between USSR and the United States. In order to answer this question, I have structured my analysis by looking at different philosophical views, the chaos theory, determinism and the Black Swan theory and I will also be looking at different school of thoughts[1]. I will also be looking at a new term discovered by Nassim Taleb called “ Anti-Fragility”[2]. In order to keep the scope of the study manageable, I have made a variety of carefully selected sources, in particular a wide range of book passages, video interviews, articles and quotes.[3]

b. Summary of evidence:

January 1, 1959 Fidel Castro took over Cuba after the Cuban revolution[4]. This made the United States worry because Cuba became communist and Cuba is very close to the United States. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a very dangerous event that almost caused a nuclear war between the two super powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1962, the United States was much more powerful than the Soviet Union, they were behind the United States in the arms race, the Soviet Union only had enough weapons to attack Europe but not the United States, but the U. S had the weapons to attack the Soviet Union. At the end of April 1962, Nikita Khrushchev decided to place

missiles in Cuba[5]. Fidel Castro was looking for a way to defend Cuba from the United States, because of the “ Bay of Pigs”[6]failure, so he knew the United States would try to overthrow him another time. Castro allowed Khrushchev to deploy the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The United States first found out about the deployment of the missiles on October 15, 1962 when photographs revealed the missile under construction. President John f. Kennedy was immediately told about the news the next day, so he started a meeting with the EX-COMM[7]. After 7 days of the meeting, Kennedy proposed a blockade around Cuba, Kennedy did not want to allow weapons to enter Cuba. On October 22, Kennedy announced to the public that the Soviet Union has deployed missiles in Cuba and he also told the public about the blockade around Cuba[8]. John F. Kennedy also claimed that missiles fired from Cuba would mean an attack from the Soviet Union on the United States, Kennedy wants the missiles removed from Cuba. Khrushchev response to all of this was that the Soviet Union has the same rights as the United States[9].

Since the Crisis has been made public, the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union increased. The tension was so high that low-level reconnaissance missions were ordered once every two hours from the president[10]. On the 25th John F. Kennedy stopped the blockade around Cuba and started DEFCON 2[11]. On the 26th of October, EX-COMM got a letter from Khrushchev, in this letter Khrushchev proposed to remove the missiles and personnel from Cuba if the United States does not plan an attack on Cuba. Day 13 of the crisis, U-2 planes from the U. S side were shot down. When the news about the U-2 plane arrived, Secretary of Defense

Robert McNamara[12] got mad and wanted to start a war with the Soviet Union, President Kennedy's reaction was the opposite, he controlled his anger and was very calm[13]. General Taylor[14] wanted to plan an attack on Cuba. John F. Kennedy decided not to attack Cuba, but to wait and keep calm until they attack another plane.[15]

EX-COMM then received a letter from Khrushchev[16], he is now asking for more, now he wants the United States to remove the missiles in Turkey for Khrushchev to remove the missiles from Cuba. It was hard for EX. COMM it was a hard decision to make, Robert F. Kennedy suggested to accept the first letter by planning not to attack Cuba and ignore the second letter. John F. Kennedy then called 6 men for a secret meeting[17] for the removal of the missiles in Turkey and they sent a letter to Khrushchev. The deal was accepted by Khrushchev and as a response he sent a letter back to the white house[18]. Khrushchev's last letter ended the Cuban Missile Crisis[19].

Word count: 850

c. Evaluation of Sources

Source A: An article from BBC:

In reference to origin, this article was written by BBC[20], BBC is a British broadcast corporation that is very known in Great Britain and even worldwide for its good news. This article talks about Kennedy's handling during the Cuban Missile Crisis and how he prevented a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The purpose of this source is to inform the reader about how good Kennedy's handling was and that his goal is to bring peace to the American citizens. The value of this source is very

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high; because BBC is a well-known broadcast corporation, a lot people around the world check BBC news daily, but because it is well-known around the world they are only going to look at one side of view which is the good side and as we all know the Soviet Union was looked at as the bad side[21], so they will not mention any mistakes John F. Kennedy has done during the Cuban Missile Crisis, like example the “ Bay of Pigs”[22]was a complete failure and it was very embarrassing. The fact that BBC is British and Great Britain is a Soviet enemy, they only looked at the good decisions Kennedy has done during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Word Count: 237

Source B: A Cartoon about Kennedy and Khrushchev by Herbert Block:

In the cartoon we can see John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev trying to keep the beast “ Nuclear War” in his cage, the cartoon was drawn shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis[23]. In reference to origin, the cartoon was made by Herbert Block[24]an American editorial cartoonist his mother was catholic Christian and his father is from Jewish descent. The purpose of this cartoon is for the newspaper reader to understand the Cuban Missile Crisis more and what the leaders of the two superpowers are trying to prevent. The value of this source is that it clearly shows that is comes from a well-known cartoonist, very famous from his cartoons and the people admire his work, and as an American he did not take sides[25], historians would have immediately checked his origin and were his limitations are, in his cartoon he has John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev fighting to prevent a nuclear war. There are no limitations to this cartoon, this cartoon is trustworthy source.

Word count: 182**d. Analysis****Different Interpretations:**

There has been considerable debate amongst historians about Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The orthodox view[26] maintains that Kennedy conducted himself extremely ably from the beginning of the crisis, and all the way through it until its resolution; Kennedy was very calm and controlled during the thirteen days of crisis. However, revisionist[27] historians claim that Kennedy and his advisors almost turned a negotiable Cold War into a nuclear Third World War; in Robert F. Kennedy's book "Thirteen Days" we can see how General Taylor's reaction was very aggressive and he insisted that they should start military attack, but John F. Kennedy refused to start an attack and wait, so Kennedy's reaction was very good, but the revisionist view is supporting source b in section c of my investigation, the Cuban Missile Crisis almost did lead to a nuclear war between the two superpowers. Some post-revisionist[28] historians have revisited the crisis, and many now conclude that, overall, Kennedy handled the negotiations in a statesman-like way, and stood up to the "hawks" who were pushing for some sort of military response, the post-revisionist agree to source 1 in section b the summary of evidence and to source a in section c.

Word count: 200**Critical Analysis:**

Did Kennedy handle the crisis as a statesman? This question is the one which all sources used in this investigation aim to answer. Source A used in part C

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the evaluation of sources and source 1 used in the summary of evidence are sources to prove that John f. Kennedy's handling in the crisis was a success and that he handled it like a statesman, post-revisionist, historians that stick to actual facts agree that Kennedy's handling was a success. Orthodox historians also agree that Kennedy did a good job in making the decisions; they said he was extremely ably from the very beginning of the crisis and all the way through it until its resolution. John F. Kennedy's decisions were good decisions and he handled the crisis well and prevented a nuclear war.

Word count: 150

Philosophical view:

Looking at different philosophical views, the black swan theory refers to unexpected events, what lead to the Cuban Missile Crisis was unexpected because no one at that time expected the Soviet Union to deploy missiles in Cuba and Kennedy first found out about the missiles from a U-2 spy plane spying over Cuba, and this crisis almost lead to a nuclear war. Kennedy was surprised by the Soviets, and at the end they made a deal that prevented a nuclear war, no one was expecting that either. Nassim Taleb makes some really good points in his theory, the deal[29]that Khrushchev offered came out of nowhere too. A chaos theorist would have said that something made Kennedy handle like this because he was in a good mood[30], maybe if he was in a bad mood he would have handled differently. A determinist would say that Kennedy was destined to handle the crisis and he was the right one to handle the crisis.

There is a new philosophical term called "antifragility" which is the opposite of fragility, antifragility is an ability to benefit and grow from random events, <https://assignbuster.com/the-cuban-missile-crisis-a-success-history-essay/>

errors and volatility. What happened to Kennedy can be looked at as antifragility, Kennedy benefited a lot from the Cuban Missile Crisis, he is known for his handling of the crisis and how he prevented a nuclear war. Cuba shot one of the American U-2 planes down and according to what EX-COMM said anything fired on the Americans would lead to war, but Kennedy reacted calmly and waited, so he did not send military forces to Cuba, he did not listen to his advisors and waited. In source A from section C you see how much benefit he gained from the public.

Word count: 313

Conclusion:

Orthodox and the post revisionist historians agree that Kennedy handled the crisis like a statesmen, these historians supported my source A from section C by claiming that Kennedy handled the war like a statesmen and prevented a nuclear war. Revisionist historians interpreted that Kennedy and his advisors almost turned a negotiable war into a nuclear war, but revisionist historians give a differing view on the accepted and current opinion on an historical event. Looking at the philosophical views, the determinists claim that Kennedy was destined to handle the crisis, and according to Nassim Taleb's term "antifragility" Kennedy gained a lot of benefit from the crisis. Kennedy's handling was a success because if not than the missiles would still be in Cuba and a nuclear war between the Soviet Union and the United States would have happened.

Word count: 140

List of Sources:

Books:

The Cold War by Allan Todd, ISBN 978-0-521-18932-3

The Cold War by John Lewis Gaddis, ISBN 0-14-102532-8

Black Swan: The Impact of the highly Improbable, ISBN 0141034599

Thirteen Days by Robert F. Kennedy ISBN 978-0393318340

Video interview:

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Article:

BBC. " John F. Kennedy." BBC News. BBC, 28 Oct. 1962. Web. 04 Oct. 2012. .

Cartoon:

Herbert Block. " Cartoon Cuban Missile Crisis." Editorial Cartoons of John F.

Kennedy. N. p., 1962. Web. 04 Oct. 2012. .