The Cold War: Crises and Detente

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Summary

- Most Cold War crises had a common core:
  - Conflicts over “borders” between spheres of influence
  - Attempts to extend spheres of influence into new regions
- Only once borders in “core” areas clarified was détente possible
- But competition continued in “peripheral” regions
  - Détente ultimately failed in struggle for Third World — especially Afghanistan
Iran 1946

- Iran invaded in 1941 by UK (and later U.S.) and USSR to protect supply route into Russia
- In 1942 treaty with Shah, both agreed to withdraw six months after victory
- U.S. and UK withdraw, but USSR expands presence
  - Creates Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and Kurdish Republic of Mahbad
- Intense U.S. pressure eventually leads to withdrawal of Soviet forces
Korean War

- World War II ends with U.S. troops in control of Korea south of 38th parallel
  - U.S. holds elections (May 1948) and promulgates a constitution (July 1948) for independent South Korea; U.S. troops withdraw 1949
  - Soviet Union establishes communist government under Kim Il-Sung north of the 38th parallel; Soviet forces withdraw 1948
- June 25, 1950, North Korea invades South Korea
  - Stalin gives Kim a “green light” in April 1950
Korean War: Domino Theory

- U.S. immediately identified attack as part of larger global struggle:

  “Communism was acting in Korea, just as Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese had ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. I felt certain that if South Korea was allowed to fall, Communist leaders would be emboldened to override nations closer to our own shores. If the Communists were permitted to force their way into the Republic of Korea without opposition from the free world, no small nation would have the courage to resist threat and aggression by stronger Communist neighbors.” from Truman’s autobiography

- If communist aggression succeeded anywhere, it would succeed everywhere
Korean War

- UN votes to provide military assistant to South Korea on June 27
- U.S. warned about proceeding north of the 38th parallel, when UN forces near the Sino-Korean border, China joins the war (Oct. 1950)
- Armistice declared July 1953

The Korean War, 1950–1953
Berlin 1961

- Periodic tensions over status of Berlin
- Khrushchev-Kennedy Summit June 1961
- August 1961 intra-Berlin border closed and erection of wall begun
- Division accepted, U.S. further expands defense spending
Cuba 1962

- Cuban revolution (1953-1959)
  - Bay of Pigs invasion (1961) conveys open hostility
  - Castro seeks backing from Soviet Union

- Kennedy runs on “missile gap” in 1960, but USSR actually at a disadvantage
  - Seeks to offset disadvantage by placing missiles in Cuba (May 1962)

- Emerging “alliance” between Castro and Soviet Union first open violation of Monroe Doctrine
Discovery of Missile Sites, 10/16
Reaction

- Options (EXCOMM)
  - Do nothing
  - Diplomatic pressure
  - Secret overture to Castro to “flip” to U.S.
  - Blockade to prevent missiles from arriving
  - Invasion to overthrow Castro
  - Air strike to destroy known missile sites

- Direct action blocked by fear Soviets would retaliate in Berlin
  - Invasion/air strike favored by U.S. military
  - Also by Congressional leaders
War Averted

- U.S. blockades all offensive military equipment en route to Cuba (10/22)
  - OAS passes resolution (10/23) calling for withdrawal of all missiles from Cuba
- First ships boarded on 10/25, but cleared; ships with missiles stop short of blockade line
  - Secretary of State Dean Rusk: “We’re eyeball to eyeball, and the other fellow just blinked.”
- Khrushchev offers to remove missiles in exchange for ending U.S. quarantine and assurance it will not invade Cuba (10/26)
- Further offers to remove missiles in exchange for removing U.S. missiles from Italy and Turkey (10/27)
- Kennedy replies (10/27) accepting the terms of the 10/26 letter.
  - Missiles in Italy and Turkey subsequently removed unilaterally
JFK: 1:3 Chance of War

- 10/27 U.S. U2 plane shot down by Soviet surface-to-air missile over Cuba, killing pilot
- 10/27 U.S. navy dropped small depth charges on Soviet nuclear-armed submarine — which was authorized to retaliate if attacked
- 10/27 another U2 made unauthorized overflight of Soviet Union, both sides scrambled fighters
- Deterrence works — but always carries risks
Detente

- As boundaries between spheres of influence settled, U.S. and Soviet Union attempt to ease tensions under a policy of “detente”
  - Arms Control: SALT I treaty (1972)
  - Helsinki Accords (1975)
    - Sovereign equality, territorial integrity, non-intervention
    - Peaceful settlement of disputes, respect for human rights, self-determination
- Simultaneously, U.S. opened to China (1971)
  - Balance against Soviet Union
Competition in the Developing World

- **SEATO: established 1954**
  - U.S., UK, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, South Vietnam
  - Pledged to consider communism as common threat

- **CENTO: established 1955**
  - UK, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey (U.S. participated but not formal member)

- **Bandung Conference 1955**
  - 29 countries (organized by Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India)
  - Developed Non-Aligned Movement
Soviet Expansionism, U.S. Resistance

- U.S. Alliance for Progress (1961)
- Bipolar competition
  - Vietnam War
- Soviet Union begins probing in Africa
  - Horn of Africa: supporting factions in Somalia in 1960s, Ethiopia in the late 1970s
  - Angola 1975: Cuba and Russia support the MPLA, U.S. and South Africa support UNITA
The end of Detente: Afghanistan

- Communist party seizes power in coup 1978
- Mujahideen oppose Soviet-backed government, receive support from U.S.
- Soviet troops enter December 1979, install new leader
- Carter administration embargoes wheat shipments to Soviet Union and boycotts 1980 Olympics in Moscow
- Soviet Union’s “Vietnam,” eventually withdraws in 1989
- Soviet-backed government collapses in 1992; Taliban seizes power