

Cuban Missile Crisis - Impact

Impact of the crisis

There was little evidence to suggest that Khr or Kennedy were taking irresponsible actions that could have led to a loss of control. It showed IN relations cannot be conducted through crisis management methods. It was also quickly accepted that it was insufficient to see the crisis as the epitome of crisis management and a model, therefore, of how many future crises may be managed. The immediate response to this reality was the creation in 1963 of a so-called 'hot-line' connecting the kremlin and the white house. The frequency of the hot line's usage is unknown. Some historians have taken the view that its symbolic value has been greater than its practical application.

The crisis also led to a growing awareness of the need to create some control over the nuclear arms race by placing restrictions on nuclear tests. In october 1963 a partial test ban treaty 'treaty banning nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water' came into force. It was Khr who first proposed nuclear test ban negotiations as early as 30 october 1962. The outcome of the negotiations had been described as a 'watershed, marking an important new era in arms control' but 'while it represented a genuine step toward reducing superpower tensions and building mutual confidence, it fell short of the comprehensive test ban that many had advocated' (Munton and Welch)

The treaty created no provisions for underground tests or for periodic review and inspection. This implicit sanctioning of the testing of the nuclear weapons underground encouraged weapon proliferation among the major nuclear weapons. In addition to this the signatories, after 3 months, could restart testing if they thought that their vital national interests were at stake by doing so. There was no obligation for states to sign up consequently china and france did not do so. They continued to test nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. Despite its many shortcomings, the treaty was a major contributory factor in the development of detente later in the decade. On this R. Crockatt commented 'detente itself showed the impress of the missile crisis'

The crisis had seen the USA using its superior military power to pressure the soviets to withdraw the missiles. This was percieved as a humiliation for the USSR. American's actions may be viewed as an offensive use of military power. The SU had been forced to respond rather than being deterred from taking action. The outcome had been a cold war defeat for the SU and a constraint on soviet freedom of action in the international arena. The SU had strategic parity with the USA, and despite the moves towards detente and controls over nuclear testing, the USSR emerged from the crisis with a determination to restore its international status.

At the end of the crisis Cuba remained a communist state in the USA's 'backyard'. The US commitment to containment and the Truman doctrine had failed. This began to raise the issue of its validity by the 1960's but not to the point where the missile crisis had fundamentally undermined American cold war policy in international relations. US intervention in South Vietnam was only just beginning to develop as the missile crisis came to an end. Cuba's survival may be seen as a spectacular success for Khrushchev. The missile crisis proved to be more than a clash between the USA and the USSR. It was a part of the process of revolutionary change within developing countries. In 1975 Castro sent troops to Angola in support of the state's revolutionary regime following the withdrawal of Portugal from Africa.

Not only did the crisis ensure the survival of Cuba and its communist regime, it also ensured the survival of West Berlin as an outpost of Western capitalist democracy in the heart of the communist bloc in Eastern Europe. Ultimately aspects of the dynamics of international relations and cold war interaction had shifted and moved the bipolar world closer towards greater cooperation prior to the era of détente which was to follow.