

FACTS
FOR NEW
YORK
VOTERS:KENNEDY
FOR PRESIDENT
JOHNSON
FOR VICE PRESIDENTA TIME FOR
GREATNESSU. S. SENATOR
JOHN F.
KENNEDY
FOR PRESIDENT

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

The Democratic Candidate

During the election of 1960, John F. Kennedy's Catholicism became an important issue. Some Americans openly questioned whether a Catholic was independent enough from his church to serve as President. Kennedy dismissed such questions, insisting that a candidate's religion should not be a factor in running for office:

“I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President, who happens also to be a Catholic.”

—John F. Kennedy, address to Southern Baptist Leaders, 1960

◀ Kennedy campaign posters

Kennedy and the Cold War

Objectives

- Explain the steps Kennedy took to change American foreign policy.
- Analyze the causes and effects of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- Assess the results of the Berlin Crisis and other foreign-policy events of the 1960s.

Terms and People

John F. Kennedy
Richard M. Nixon
Fidel Castro
flexible response
Peace Corps
Alliance for Progress

Bay of Pigs invasion
Cuban missile crisis
Nikita Khrushchev
hot line
Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
Berlin Wall

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Understand Effects As you read, list the Cold War crises Kennedy faced and the effects of each event.

Cold War Crisis	Result
Bay of Pigs Invasion	

Why It Matters As the Cold War continued into the 1960s, Kennedy took office facing the spread of communism abroad and the threat of nuclear war. Determined to succeed where he felt Eisenhower had failed, Kennedy's enthusiasm and commitment to change offered the hope that with hard work and persistence the United States could win the Cold War. **Section Focus Question:** How did Kennedy respond to the continuing challenges of the Cold War?

Kennedy Defeats Nixon in 1960

For eight years, President Dwight Eisenhower had presided over a nation that had generally enjoyed peace and prosperity. But even so, there were a number of issues that caused Americans grave concern. The launch of *Sputnik 1* showed that the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union was still intense. The U-2 spy plane incident demonstrated that the Cold War might heat up at a moment's notice. The Montgomery bus boycott provided clear evidence that the *Brown* decision had not ended racial discrimination in the land. Deep, unsettled problems remained—problems for a new decade and a new generation of political leadership.

The Candidates In the presidential election of 1960, Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard M. Nixon were quite similar in a variety of ways. For the first time in U.S. history, both candidates had been born in the twentieth century, Nixon in 1913 and Kennedy in 1917. Both had served in the navy during World War II.

Both had been elected to Congress in 1946 and to the Senate in the early 1950s. Both were passionate about foreign affairs and supported the Cold War fight against communism. Young and energetic, intelligent and hard-working, both wanted to be the first of their generation to lead the country.

Their differences, however, were as significant as their similarities. Kennedy was the son of a wealthy Boston businessman. His grandfather had been a state senator, and his father had served as the ambassador to Great Britain. Kennedy attended Harvard University. Although he was a Catholic and his religion was an issue in the election, he insisted that what church he attended should not be a factor.

Nixon, born in California, did not enjoy the advantages of a wealthy upbringing. His father struggled to make a living. As a young man, Nixon had to balance his time between his school studies and work to help support the family. Many voters, however, respected him for his experiences as Vice President under Eisenhower.

Televised Debates Make the Difference The 1960 election highlighted the growing power and influence of television. The candidates agreed to four televised debates. During the campaign, Nixon was hospitalized with a knee infection. After getting out of the hospital, he committed himself to a grueling schedule of public appearances. By the time of the first debate, held in late September in Chicago and watched by about 70 million people, Nixon looked pale and exhausted. Nixon arrived at the television studio an hour early, but he refused the offer to have makeup applied to hide his newly-growing beard. By contrast, Kennedy, tanned from open-air campaigning in California, looked healthy and confident. His relaxed manner, easy charm, and quick sense of humor added to his appeal.

In many ways, the debate boiled down to how the candidates looked and spoke, rather than what they said. Most Americans who listened to the debate on radio believed that Nixon had won. But the larger audience who watched the debate on television concluded that Kennedy was the clear victor. Although Nixon tried to change his image in the later debates, he was unable to significantly alter the country's initial impression of him. Kennedy's "victory" in the Chicago debate proved crucial in the election.

Kennedy Wins a Close Election

Kennedy not only looked better on television, he also demonstrated an ability to react more quickly to unexpected events. For example, several weeks before the election, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., and a group of African American students were imprisoned during a protest in Atlanta, Georgia. Nixon said nothing publicly about the episode. Kennedy, however, telephoned King's wife, Coretta Scott King, to express his concern. He also worked behind the scenes to obtain King's release on bail. Kennedy's actions attracted the strong support of African Americans in the election.

The election of 1960 was the tightest presidential election since 1888.

Televised Debate

Richard Nixon (left) and John Kennedy (right) face each other in a televised debate. Kennedy won the election by a slim margin. *How did TV change political campaigns?*



The Presidential Election of 1960

Candidate	Electoral Vote	Popular Vote	% Electoral Vote	% Popular Vote
John Kennedy (Democrat)	303	34,227,096	56.4	49.7
Richard Nixon (Republican)	219	34,107,646	40.8	49.6

In an election that witnessed the largest voter turnout in the country's history, Kennedy won by less than 120,000 of the 68 million popular votes cast. Had a few thousand people voted differently in Illinois and Texas, the election would have gone to Nixon. Kennedy's electoral victory was more convincing. He carried enough states to give him 303 electoral votes to Nixon's 219.



Checkpoint How did the television debates affect the 1960 presidential election?

Kennedy Launches New Cold War Strategies

John Kennedy's 1960 campaign stressed the need for the United States to move forward with vigor and determination. Kennedy argued that during the Eisenhower years America had lost ground in the Cold War struggle against communism. He pointed to the new communist regime under **Fidel Castro** in Cuba and charged that there was now a "missile gap" that left the U.S. nuclear missile force inferior to that of the Soviet Union. The first goal of the Kennedy administration would be to build up the nation's armed forces.

Nowhere was the difference between Eisenhower and Kennedy more evident than in two important 1961 addresses. In his Farewell Address, Eisenhower counseled caution in foreign affairs. "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist," he said.

Comparing Viewpoints

How Should the United States Fight the Cold War?

Both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy were strongly committed to containing communism. Their differences lay in their beliefs about the amount of military spending needed to carry out their goals.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

In spite of numerous Cold War challenges, Eisenhower prided himself on having maintained peace. In his Farewell Address, he warned Americans about the effects of heavy defense spending.

Primary Source

"We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations. . . . This . . . immense military establishment . . . is new in the American experience. We recognize the . . . need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved."



JOHN F. KENNEDY

Determined to prepare the United States against nuclear attack, Kennedy supported programs that resulted in a \$6 billion rise in defense spending. He defends his action in a State of the Union address:

Primary Source

"Our moral and physical strength begins at home. . . . But it includes our military strength as well. . . . [W]e must arm to deter others from aggression. We have increased the previous defense budget . . . not in the expectation of war but for the preservation of peace."

Compare

1. How does Eisenhower's plan for containing communism differ from Kennedy's?
2. Which plan may have prevented an attack on the United States? Explain.



As the first President born in this century, Kennedy proclaimed that a “new generation of Americans” was ready to meet any challenge. In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy warned his country’s enemies:

Primary Source

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

— John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961

Kennedy issued a challenge to Americans: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

Building the Nation’s Military Eisenhower’s defense policy of “massive retaliation” had emphasized the construction of nuclear weapons. Although Kennedy did not ignore the possibility of a nuclear war, he wanted to make sure that the United States was prepared to fight both conventional wars and conflicts against guerrilla forces. Kennedy therefore gave increased funding to conventional United States Army and Navy forces as well as to Army Special Forces, such as the Green Berets. He wanted a “**flexible response**” defense policy, one that prepared the United States to fight any type of conflict.

Pursuing New Initiatives in the “Third World” The “Third World,” as it was known at the time, was the developing nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that did not align with the United States or the Soviet Union. According to Soviet propaganda, Western capitalism created poverty and inequalities in the Third World, whereas communism promoted equality.


Like previous American leaders, Kennedy believed that democracy combined with prosperity would contain or limit the spread of communism. Therefore, he initiated programs to economically and politically strengthen the Third World. The **Peace Corps**, created in 1961, sent American volunteers around the world on “missions of freedom” to assist developing countries. They worked to provide technical, educational, and health services. Other programs stressed purely economic development. The **Alliance for Progress** promised to resurrect America’s Good Neighbor policy toward Latin America. During the 1950s, many Latin Americans had grown increasingly resentful of the United States, claiming that it had too much influence in their region. Kennedy hoped to change that view with this program. It promoted economic assistance to Latin America. Unlike the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress was not successful.

Kennedy’s Plan

Special fighting forces (left), such as the Green Berets, were ready at all times for any attack. But Kennedy’s Cold War strategy also involved creating goodwill among nations. The establishment of the Peace Corps (right) fulfilled that goal. *How could the Peace Corps help America win the Cold War?*

Vocabulary Builder

align—(uh LIN) *v.* to decide to publicly support or not support a political group or country

 **Checkpoint** What strategies did Kennedy use to improve relations between the United States and developing countries?

Confronting Communism in Cuba

Vocabulary Builder

regime—(ruh ZHEEM) *n.*
particular administration or
government

In 1959, Cuban revolutionary Fidel Castro had succeeded in overthrowing the **regime** of Fulgencio Batista. Initially, the United States attempted to cultivate good relations with Castro. However, it soon became clear that the Cuban leader was determined to nationalize land held by private U.S. citizens, enforce radical reform measures, and accept Soviet economic and military aid. Thousands of wealthy and middle-class Cubans fled their country, many settling in Miami and southern Florida. Proud of their heritage and deeply anticommunist, they made new lives for themselves and their families in the United States.

Bay of Pigs Invasion After breaking diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961, the Eisenhower administration authorized the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to plan an invasion of Cuba to overthrow Castro. The CIA recruited Cuban exiles and trained them in Guatemala. But when Eisenhower left office, the invasion plan was still that—an unexecuted, untried plan.

Pressured by members of the CIA and his own aides, Kennedy decided to implement the plan. On April 17, 1961, a CIA-led force of Cuban exiles attacked Cuba in the **Bay of Pigs invasion**. The invasion was badly mismanaged. The poorly equipped forces landed at the site with no protective cover. All but 300 of the 1,400 invaders were killed or captured. Not only did the Bay of Pigs invasion fail, it probably strengthened Castro's position in Cuba. It also turned many Cuban Americans against Kennedy.

Kennedy took personal responsibility for the failed invasion. However, he emphasized that the United States would continue to resist “communist penetration” in the Western Hemisphere.

Effects of the Cuban Missile Crisis

Quick Study

- The Soviet Union removes missiles from Cuba.
- The United States removes missiles from Turkey.
- The United States and the Soviet Union avoid nuclear war.
- Kennedy and Khrushchev establish a “hot line” telephone system to keep communications open.
- In 1963, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The Cuban Missile Crisis Kennedy's efforts to contain communism were severely threatened during the **Cuban missile crisis**. In August and September of 1962 U.S. intelligence discovered that the Soviets were building nuclear missile sites in Cuba, apparently to protect Castro from another American invasion. When the sites were completed, major East Coast cities and the Panama Canal would be in range of the missiles.

Kennedy demanded the removal of the missiles. In a dramatic television address on October 22, 1962, he blamed **Nikita Khrushchev**, the Soviet premier, for causing a “reckless and provocative threat to world peace.” He also announced that he had approved a naval quarantine (blockade) of Cuba to prevent the Soviets from completing the bases. Behind the scenes, however, Kennedy worked toward a diplomatic settlement. He indicated that he would remove U.S. missiles in Turkey and Italy if the Soviets removed their missiles in Cuba.

After six tense days when nuclear war seemed a real possibility, Khrushchev agreed to honor the blockade and remove the missiles. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk later told a reporter, “Remember, when you report this, that, eyeball to eyeball, they blinked first.”

The Results of the Crisis During the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy and Khrushchev stood on the edge of a nuclear war and then slowly backed away. In the Soviet Union, Khrushchev lost prestige and more hard-line leaders chipped away at his power. In the United States, Kennedy emerged as a more mature and thoughtful leader, one who had faced a frightening test and had remained calm and resolute. The crisis prompted both leaders to move toward détente. They installed a “hot line” telephone system between Moscow and Washington, D.C.,

The Cuban Missile Crisis



Aerial photographs such as the one below, taken by an American U-2 spy plane, revealed the presence of Soviet missile bases in Cuba.



Map Skills Kennedy, aware of the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba, faced a difficult crisis.

- Place** Which U.S. city shown on the map was in the greatest danger from a nuclear attack? How long would it take a missile to reach that city?
- Draw Conclusions** How did the crisis affect U.S. relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union?

Cuban Missile Bases



The location of missile bases in Cuba posed an immediate threat to several major American cities.


to improve communication. In 1963, the year after the crisis, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union signed the **Nuclear Test Ban Treaty**, the first nuclear-weapons agreement, which ended aboveground nuclear tests. Thirty-six other nations soon signed the agreement.

 **Checkpoint** Why was the United States concerned about the missile sites in Cuba?

The Berlin Crisis

Since 1958, Khrushchev wanted to sign a peace treaty that would put the western zones of Berlin under control of East Germany. His actions were motivated by the steady flow of skilled East German workers into West Berlin. Desiring to show his strength, Kennedy stood firm on America's commitment to defending the rights of West Berliners and West Germans. At a conference in Vienna in June 1961, Kennedy and Khrushchev focused on Berlin as the key issue. Khrushchev called the present situation "intolerable." He demanded that the United States recognize the formal division of Germany and end its military presence in West Berlin. Kennedy refused. He did not want to give up occupation rights he considered critical to defending Western Europe. In a tense atmosphere, Khrushchev said, "I want peace, but if you want war, that is your problem." Kennedy answered, "It is you, not I who wants to force a change." The meeting ended abruptly. The conference, meant to relax Cold War tensions, only increased them.

After returning home, both world leaders made moves that threatened the peace. Kennedy asked Congress to dramatically increase military spending. Khrushchev ordered the construction of a wall between East and West Berlin. The **Berlin Wall** became a visible symbol of the reality of the two Germanys and the gulf between the communist East and democratic West. Kennedy responded by sending 1,500 U.S. troops to West Berlin. For a time, Russian and American tanks moved within sight of each other. Yet, neither side could fully claim a victory.

 **Checkpoint** How did the meeting in Vienna affect relations between Kennedy and Khrushchev?

SECTION

1

Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-1503

Comprehension

1. Terms and People For each item below, explain its significance to the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

- John F. Kennedy
- Fidel Castro
- Bay of Pigs invasion
- Cuban missile crisis
- Nikita Khrushchev
- Berlin Wall

2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

Understand Effects Use your chart to answer the Section Focus Question: How did Kennedy respond to the continuing challenges of the Cold War?

Writing About History

3. Quick Write: Support a Point of View Identify one point of view regarding President Kennedy's actions in starting the Peace Corps. List three arguments in favor of this point of view. Then, prioritize them by identifying the most persuasive argument.

Critical Thinking

4. Draw Conclusions Television played an important role in the 1960 presidential election. How influential is television in presidential elections today? Explain.

5. Synthesize Information The flexible response policy increased the military budget. How do you think this affected the nuclear arms race?

6. Identify Point of View How did the Cuban missile crisis affect public opinion about President Kennedy?