The Cuban Missile Crisis

IPCS NIAS Workshop April 5th, 6th 2015
Batista – Dictator from 1952 to 1959 – US supported – rich people landlord support – repressive exploitative

Ideological Differences and the world order

Fidel Castro – leader of the revolution

Raul Castro – Che Guevara
Bay of Pigs – Disaster for the US

CIA sponsored invasion of Cuba – exiles in the US - sponsored by the CIA – first year of the Kennedy administration – the belief was that the invasion would spark off internal revolt resulting in the overthrow of the Castro Marxist Leninist government.
"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.” Winston Churchill
The Vienna Summit – June 1961 – Kennedy seen as weak not experienced
Nuclear Weapons – devastating effects – weapon of unparalleled destructive power

Missiles deliver weapons over intercontinental ranges

Hiroshima before

Hiroshima after
Nuclear Weapons, Missiles & Nuclear War Deterrence Strategies
### Stability in the US USSR Game – single shot no second strike

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- US Strategy: Proactive offensive
  - USSR Strategy: Defense oriented
    - Outcome: Loss, Loss
- US Strategy: Defense oriented strategy
  - USSR Strategy: Proactive offensive
    - Outcome: Gain+, Loss
  - USSR Strategy: Defense oriented
    - Outcome: Loss, Gain+
Weapons and War – A brief introduction

Aircraft – relevant to our case – two types – fighters to defend and bombers to attack IL 28 supplied to Cuba are bombers. Today these distinctions are blurred – both attack and defence same aircraft.

Other Aircraft – significant at that time – the famous or infamous U2 – High altitude reconnaissance aircraft.

Radar – tracking and locating objects of interest – aircraft and missiles – also used to aim and shoot – both offensive and defensive.

Missiles – Ballistic Missiles – ICBMs IRBMs SRMs – Cruise missiles – fly within atmosphere – very much like planes

Can we determine or separate out – offensive and defensive weapons?
KASIMOV WITH IL-28 FUSELAGE CRATES ENROUTE TO CUBA

28 SEPTEMBER 1962
Soviet ship carrying Konar Patrol boats to Cuba
CIA Identification of the patrol boat
The famous U2 plane
COMOR Reconnaissance Objectives over Cuba
Completed SAM sites. Surface to Air Missiles (SAM) used to defend critical facilities against aircraft attack.

The Star of David pattern seen is the one used by the Soviets to defend missiles against an aerial attack.

The standard pattern used by the Soviets in Cuba making it easy for the Americans to know that these sites were for Missiles.
 Missile launch site being readied

MRBM launch site under construction
Fuel tankers seen in the left middle.
Oxidiser tanks seen in bottom right.
Missile erector and missile tent seen middle top
Warhead storage bunker under construction
Original CIA briefing to President Kennedy on the ranges of the various MRBM and IRBM if launched from Cuba.

The innermost circle may represent the range of the tactical missiles that may have also been deployed or of the IL-2 bombers.
Why did Khruschev Place Offensive missiles in Cuba?

As a bargaining counter to get US Jupiter missiles out of Turkey

The missiles in Cuba were a trap to invite a US attack and precipitate a crisis that would make the US look bad and erode their international credibility

The missiles were provided to help Cuba defend herself against a US attack

It was a probe to test US intentions. If the US did not respond in the appropriate way maybe more things could be moved to Cuba

Enhance first strike capability against the US
How consistent are the Soviet Actions with respect to these objectives?

The number of missiles – the kind of missiles – bombers – SAM to defend missile silos, 10000 Soviet personnel indicate what – a probe - a test of US intentions to provoke a crisis – help Cuba defend herself - a bargaining counter to get the Jupiter missiles out of Turkey. Not consistent with hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4.

If it is reduce the impact of the missile gap and restore parity why did the Soviet Union openly exhibit missile silos, weapons bunkers and use the standard star of David pattern for the SAM sites. To make missiles in Cuba a fait accompli it should have been concealed from observation by U-2 flights. Otherwise there is a window of opportunity available where they could have been taken out by an air strike. Why was it all out in the open?
The US response

Missile shipments started in early September yet Kennedy came to know of it only on October 14th. Why did such an important issue not get adequate scrutiny and attention within the US national security complex?

What does Kennedy do as soon as he hears of this problem? What does he do differently and why does he do what he does? What does this indicate about Kennedy’s concerns?

What are the views of the various EXCOM members on the course of action to be taken by the US? What do these views reflect? Are all these views rational? How does this view of rationality differ from the rationality that we looked at in our core course on competition and strategy?
Kennedy’s Decisions

What was the option first preferred by Kennedy after he found out about the Soviet missiles in Cuba?

Why did he rule out the option of an Air Strike? Was the Air Strike option abandoned for sound reasons? Could the Air Strike have triggered a nuclear war?

How did the idea of a blockade come about?

What is the framework within which we can look at the Khruschev Kennedy confrontation over Cuba? How does this link with strategy in crisis situations and the larger question of leadership in such situations?
What can we learn from the film and the case?

What is the nature of the problems that confront Kennedy and Khruschev? Is the nature of the problem the same during normal times – how is it different in a crisis mode?

How to we view the actions of Khruschev from a US perspective and make sense of what is seen as evidence on the ground.

Nation States – especially the more powerful and advanced states are complex systems – the National security complex within them powerful entities occupied by powerful people

In a crisis mode – they respond and act in ways that are difficult to understand and predict – simultaneously constrain or broaden the areas of concern – Multiple interests, multiple problems, multiple organisations, multiple actors, multiple geographies – interactively coupled – no simple explanation for understanding behaviour.
Graham Allison in his brilliant analysis of the origins, evolution and resolution of the crisis provides three different lenses through which he views this crisis. These are:

the nation state behaves as a rational actor

National Behaviour is the outcome of the behaviour of a set of organisations that constitute the National Security Complex – each of which is behaving rationally to optimise its power and influence. In this context organisational interest may not be the same as national interest – sub-optimal outcomes – not always derivable if the perspective adopted is of a rational nation state.

National Behaviour is the outcome of a set of power plays between important players in the National Security Complex – power games – links to power centres arising from position within the complex or people perceived to be powerful and influential.
The rational Black box

National behaviour = rational behaviour of leader

Problem
Options
Rank
Choose
Act

Rank implies superior choice

Static selection

Basis gurudom Microeconomic theory
The Games People Actually Play – its link to assumptions of Game Theory

Individual action is Instrumentally rational (Ont)
Common Knowledge of Rationality (CKR) – degrees of CKR (Epist)
Consistent Alignment of Beliefs (CAB) - Epist
Rules of the Game (Ont)

I think that he thinks I will do….. Therefore I will do…

He thinks that I think that he thinks I will do …. Therefore he will do….
Organisational interest is not overall interest – second law of organisations

Tacit Assumption of system rationality

Output = Sum of Action 1 + Action 2 + Action 3 = Optimum system maximising output.

Never so in practice

Intervention?

Gurus Herbert Simon, Cyert & March – many others
Individual Power, Bureaucratic Politics, Multiple games perspective

Player, Position, Game games, Rules, Actions – ongoing. Gurus game theorists, classical evolutionary
If we look at US interpretations as to why Khruschev did what he did through these different lenses – many anomalies disappear.

The decision to place missiles in Cuba – apparently a top level decision taken by Khruschev – to redress the missile gap – which had become clear – a logic consistent with the state and its leader acting in rational way to improve the nation state’s competitive position. Both the nature of the arsenal and its composition are consistent with this logic.

It simultaneously takes care of Cuban defense against US attack concerns – also consonant with Party doctrine – influence in the Communist world – China as a competitor for global influence – optimised model under rational actor model.

Inconsistency – in terms of project execution – part of the operation such as moving the shipments to Cuba in a secret way – part of it like erecting the missiles in an obviously open way can be understood through the organisation self interest model and partly through the power influence model. GRU – powerful foreign intelligence agency – responsible for shipments. Other not so powerful entities such as the technical teams – not obviously told about the whole thing – secrecy need to know basis – left hand right hand problem – flaws.
The National Security Complex within both the US and the Soviet Union – though functioning under two different political systems – are not very different.

The Division of work and the Coordination of work – require very similar organisations – the Task structure routines are not very different – systems behave in similar ways.

Apart from the National Security complex - though the US is a democracy and the USSR a Communist regime – domestic agendas and political power equations are equally important factors affecting decision-making.

Leaders of both systems – need to make tradeoffs – between various constituent elements – these are normally complicated but when coupled with crisis – create a set of special problems – not easy to understand or cope with.

True test of a leader – how well does he perform in a crisis

cuban missile 2.pdf

cuban missile 3.pdf
How do the two Leaders Compare -Understanding the problem

Khruschev – realised that there was a missile gap – to restore parity and become competitive – had to redress it.

Also knew he had to deal with powerful organisations within the National security system – powerful organisations – powerful players – the Soviet Army which won World War II – the artillery corp which was responsible for the missile programme – saw it more as defending Europe rather than projecting Soviet power globally – focus on MRBM and IRBM rather than ICBM.

Saw the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban desire for defending themselves against the US as an opportunity to redress the balance – same time helping a friendly Communist country – add to the prestige of the USSR globally – especially in the context of China – where Chairman Mao was beginning to emerge as a competitor to Chairman Khruschev.
How do the two Leaders Compare - Understanding the problem

Decision – typical rational player – optimising under constraints – in tune with the rational actor model – but in-built into the optimization part – personal power aspiration

The Plan and who supported and crafted it – not very clear – obviously younger elements within the Soviet military – small select group – obviously not broad based – secret operation within the Soviet complex – Who was in the know within the Politburo also not clear – clearly many willing helpers within the hierarchy – Power politics Indians Chiefs and Big Chief model.

Brilliant in concept – takes care of many issues – if done without US knowledge – difficult to believe Kennedy would go to war – why could the US not have nuclear weapons aimed at it from one of its neighbours – when the Soviet Union was literally surrounded by them – rational actor model – consistent – High risk – high gain strategy – maybe so only in retrospect.

Did not worry too much about Strong reaction – either underestimated Kennedy or wished such reaction away. Seasoned veteran – arrogance of power and success?
How do the two Leaders Compare - Understanding the problem

Kennedy – initial bewilderment – even shock – betrayal - imagines the possibility that it could escalate to nuclear war – Maybe clear he would like to avoid such a situation – if possible – realises in an election year crisis could have other implications.

Has already gone through the Bay of Pigs Disaster – does not trust his major operational agencies – the armed forces as well as the CIA. Learning by Doing – experiencing

Realises the need for understanding the action - also requires a set of options for actions.

Does not follow Standard Operating Procedure – creates EXCOM – includes operational as well as outside elements – tries to get the best expertise to chart action in a risky situation.
How do the two Leaders Compare – End Objective and How to Get there

Both Kennedy and Khruschev are clear that they do not want to get to a situation of a nuclear war – same end objective

Both are clear that while this was so – they wanted to do this in such a way that they did not compromise on what the perceived to be a core interest. They also realised that in order to take care of various constituencies in their respective countries they might have to give something away to the other side.
How do the two Leaders Compare – End Objective and How to Get there

Though not threatening nuclear war directly, by activating the NSC they try to deter the other side by raising the risk of escalation to nuclear war – though no side wants it

Kennedy’s delay in announcing the missile shipments, his handling of the UN and the Organisation of American States (OAS) via Adlai Stevenson – the release of the recon pictures at the UN – the readying of the US military machine – project willingness to negotiate – show firmness and resolve – also indirectly to coerce, to deter and move towards a win - win situation – reveal great skill
How do the two Leaders Compare – End Objective and How to Get there

Khruschev – after the decision – also worried about the consequences.

May not have known about the internal US problems that delayed the knowledge about missiles to the US. May have been lulled into the belief that they knew and did not want to act on it. Does try through his Ambassador to find out?

Once the announcement from the US has been made – understands that the game has gotten complicated – still believes US will back off – takes it to the last stretch – runs the blockade - then of course has no choice but to withdraw – however does not commit on dismantling missiles until US reveals resolve through mass mobilisation. Need to still negotiate some face saving gain from the adventure.

Two letters – one unconditional – the other linking missile removal to Jupiter missiles in Turkey – indicate some confusion in action – possibly not through the possibility of failure or partial success. Internal politics – secrecy

Objective and path and tactics affect each other – path strewn with various kinds of risks – navigation skills – both emerge as statesman rather than politicians.
How do the two Leaders Compare – Flexibility

As the initiator of the actions that triggered the crisis – Khruschev did not have to worry to much about measured and calculated responses except when the crisis really escalates after Kennedy’s Public Statement about the presence of missiles in Cuba.

Does he run the blockade? Why or Why not?

Does he shoot down an intruding U-2 plane that overflies Soviet territory?

Linking Cuba with Turkey and Jupiter Missiles – to save face

Does he finally withdraw the missiles from Cuba or not?
How do the two Leaders Compare – Flexibility

What about Kennedy once he knows that offensive missiles are in Cuba. Control over the sequence of actions?

Air Strike? Air Strike followed by invasion?

Why blockade over Air Strike? Accident or luck or intent?

Moving the quarantine line?

Giving up Jupiter missiles?

Response to US U2 being shot down during reconnaissance over Cuba
Khruschev Kennedy Comparison - Operating at several levels simultaneously

Kennedy moves from the grand heights of strategy and understanding of Soviet actions to matters of mundane detail as he tries to grapple with the set of potential problems that could jeopardise the situation.

The interlude about Barbara Tuchman’s “Guns of August” – his worry about minor things like Russian interpretation as the blockade becomes real – his worries about communication problems and the OAS vote – election issues including a question asked by a student – show something of the continuing ferment in his mind as he grapples with the various contradictions and their resolution thrust on him by the crisis.

The desire to control directly the course of events – his instructions to McNamara – the exchanges between McNamara and the Navy – all point towards his constant worry – that a small oversight could result in a major problem – Shows that his understanding of the complexity of the problem and its evolution is quite extraordinary.

We do not have much evidence about Khruschev – but he too must have had to deal with similar issues
Khruschev Kennedy Comparison – Making the Right Tradeoffs

For Kennedy – the crisis creates a number of dilemmas

Public position on Cuba especially after the Bay of Pigs – directly affects or constrains actions – especially after his defensive offensive categorisation of Soviet actions – Not doing anything therefore not possible – how to reconcile that position with action he should take to preserve national interest especially in an election year and without escalation to a nuclear war – a big worry.

What action to take – diplomacy, threat or actual action – quite complicated choice

Secrecy versus acknowledgment that a problem exists – especially knowing that there is a wily opponent on the other side.

Control and delegation – different degrees – Stevenson UN free hand – military CIA more direct orders – earlier experience

Khruschev – personal power versus national interest – Politburo problems – Cuba and Castro – being used as stool pigeons vis a vis trusted ally – standing in the Communist world vis a vis Mao – Chinese victory over India
Managing Teams and People

Kennedy – choice of people for EXCOM – operational plus outside entities – Khruschev apparently had a similar team.

Dealing with Stevenson and his point of view – against popular opinion – Kennedy admires him – also after the OAS vote sends him a personal note.

After the U2 shoot down over Cuba – personal concern over welfare of family.

Wants a consensus on the quarantine – could have easily overruled EXCOM – detached and involved at the same time – takes vote when he knows he will win.

Not manipulative – concern based on genuine appreciation - sincerity.
Learning and Unlearning

Kennedy – experienced in politics to some extent – Khruschev far more than Kennedy – both active in World War 2 – understand from inside the structure and organisation of the military and the National Security Complex

Kennedy – Bay of Pigs – baptism by fire – powerful but feels use should be reasoned – also constraints – learning by doing

Khruschev – maybe less constrained – power – seasoned warhorse – master of strategy – though nuclear problem especially with the US – untrodden ground - underestimates Kennedy and the US reaction – different phases in their evolution as leaders – does experience help or is it a handicap – crisis situations – each different – may require a new approach – Experience good or bad – difficult to say except to say depends on context and situation
Kennedy & Khruschev – How do they Compare?

How do they compare with other leaders

George W Bush and Iraq

Musharaff – Nawaz Sharif and Kargil

Mao and the Korean War

Deng and the war in Vietnam

Does experience help or hinder? Learning and Unlearning?

Is it necessary to understand complexity to deal with it

Or is it just we who are making it complex -
Khruschev’s Gamble

USA

Missile Project
Open

Do nothing

Attack

Diplomacy

USSR

Another Game
Tit for Tat

Do nothing

USSR

10, -3
-10, -1
10, -2

USA

Diplomacy

Prior to ops
-10, 6

USSR

-50, -50
Counter

USA

-200, -200

Counters

-10, 2

USSR

-50, -50
Counter

USA

-200, -200

Counters

-10, 3

USA

-50, -50
Counter

USA

-200, -200

Counters

-10, 2
Final Words

Knowing all this Would they have gone to war?

Thank God that Khruschev decided not to push the envelope

But even with the best of intentions – both Kennedy and Khruschev did not want war – but came pretty close to it during the 13 day missile crisis?

Allison’s concepts – the particular context – the qualities of the leader – interact in complex ways?

The notion of linking deterrence with the risk of escalation rather than directly threaten with nuclear weapons – complex national security complexes – Schelling

How stable and accident prone is the world of nuclear weapons and geo-political strategy? Can we deter – China US relationship
Complexity – Crisis - Strategy - Leadership – Business

Leader of an Advanced Nation State

Multi - Conglomerate – Multiple market – single geography

Unknown or not so well-known Territory

Conglomerate – Multiple market – single geography

Conglomerate – Multiple market – Multiple geography

Multiple business – Multiple market – single geography

Multiple business – Multiple market – Multiple geography

Single business – Single market – single geography

Single business – Single market – Multiple geography