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Dwight Eisenhower, The Warrior, & John Kennedy, The Cold Warrior: Foreign Policy Under Two Presidents

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Dwight Eisenhower, The Warrior, & John Kennedy, The Cold Warrior: Foreign Policy Under Two Presidents

Abstract

This paper presents a comparison between President Eisenhower and President Kennedy's foreign affairs policies, specifically regarding the Cold War, by examining the presidents' interactions with four distinct Cold War regions.

Keywords

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Kennedy, John F. Kennedy, Foreign Affairs, Policy, Foreign Policy, Cold War, President

Disciplines

American Politics | Anthropology | Defense and Security Studies | European History | History | Political History | Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration | Public Policy | Social and Cultural Anthropology | United States History

Comments

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Andrew Nosti

Dwight Eisenhower, The Warrior, & John Kennedy, The Cold Warrior:

Foreign Policy Under Two Presidents

Introduction

The date was November 19th, 1963, the centennial of the Gettysburg Address. A person living in and around Gettysburg, Pennsylvania picked up that day's copy of *The Gettysburg Times*. Looking up at the reader were two different presidents who represented two different political philosophies and ideologies of American history. One picture was of Dwight David Eisenhower, the retired war general and America's 34th President. The other photograph was of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a former war hero, accomplished author and the current president of the United States, Eisenhower's successor. Letters addressed to Paul L. Roy, an editor for *The Gettysburg Times*, accompanied both photographs, one written by Eisenhower and another by Kennedy. Both letters focused upon the same theme: the legacy of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. These two letters, so similar in subject but so different in meaning, present an opportunity to compare and contrast the foreign policy stances between President Eisenhower and President Kennedy; a portrayal that goes beyond their opinions on the Gettysburg Address and outwards to their views of America and the world around it (Eisenhower, *The Gettysburg Times* and Kennedy, *The Gettysburg Times*).

Throughout this paper, I touch upon different instances of foreign affair policy that connect to the ideals these presidents set forward in their letters. I start with the letters themselves then branch off to broader topics, such as Cuba, Vietnam, or Berlin. To do this, I use speeches, letters, or interviews given or written by the presidents themselves that reflect their ideology, and then provide historical evidence that support their rhetoric in action. I found this

copy of *The Gettysburg Times* while doing research in the Adams County Historical Society, located in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. *The Gettysburg Times* is a local periodical, founded in 1800, that publishes every day except for Sundays and certain holidays. I accessed the article online with the assistance of a volunteer within the historical society by typing in a date and pulling up the issue I desired (“Welcome to the Newspaper Archives of the Gettysburg Times”).

Letters from *the Gettysburg Times*

A little background on the significance of this time period and of Gettysburg should be understood before diving into the broader complexities of these presidents’ foreign affairs stances. After President Eisenhower left office in early 1961, he retired to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and would spend the remainder of his days as its most illustrious resident, passing away on March 28, 1969. President Kennedy, unable to speak during the centennial celebrations, had made a visit to Gettysburg on March 31st of the same year, but only took a private tour instead of making a public appearance. In 1963, the Cold War was at the height of its tensions. President Eisenhower spent eight years trying to contain the Soviet Union and the spread of communism abroad. President Kennedy had already guided America through a little over two and a half years of escalating tensions between the world’s two premier superpowers. The strains of the Cold War formed the basis of both presidents’ foreign affair policies.

Both articles were fairly brief, Eisenhower’s containing three paragraphs and Kennedy’s four, and fit into the headlining position, directly at the top center of the first page. Despite their brevity, these letters predominantly take up the top portion of the front cover of the newspaper and are surrounded by a black outline, creating a box that encompasses the two letters. Outside of the two letters, the cover page consists of eight other columns, five of which discuss the celebrations throughout the previous and present day (Eisenhower and Kennedy).

These two short letters contain hints of a complex dynamic between President Kennedy and former President Eisenhower. Each president used his letter to discuss more than just the Gettysburg Address; each man took the content of Lincoln's famous discourse and shaped it to convey his views of America's role in the propagation of liberty at home and abroad. Although Eisenhower had already left office, his letter still displays his opinions on foreign affairs that he expressed throughout his tenure in office. And despite the fact that Kennedy's assassination three days after the publication of his letter overshadowed its importance and left it in the vast darkness of forgotten history, his letter still accurately portrays his foreign affairs up to and including that moment in time. Eisenhower staunchly believed in liberty as an American ideal while Kennedy was a vehement Cold Warrior, considering liberty to be a right America should uphold throughout the entire world. This disparity is what I address throughout this paper; starting with the two letters written to Paul L. Roy and then branching out to a broader historical perspective, I use these letters to construct a literary illustration on the dissimilarities between Eisenhower and Kennedy's foreign affair ideologies.

The letters found within the November 19th *Gettysburg Times* edition were written as follows. Eisenhower's letter (Eisenhower, *The Gettysburg Times*):

"Dear Mr. Roy:

On the 100th Anniversary of his immortal Gettysburg Address, the nation pays tribute to one of history's towering figures, Abraham Lincoln. Of all our great national leaders, Lincoln was most typically American. His achievements from the humblest beginnings to the final crowning years of his life stand as a lasting inspiration to every citizen to respect and defend the fundamental principles on which our governmental system of personal liberty and individual opportunity was founded.

The Nation calls on us now for the same faith and devotion so deeply felt by Lincoln as he stood here amid the havoc of Gettysburg to memorialize our way of life as a government 'of the

people, by the people and for the people.’ More than ever we need the example of Abraham Lincoln to guide, influence, and uphold us.

The wise compassionate, challenging words of his Gettysburg Address should be etched on the minds and hearts of every American. They will ever be one of the brightest jewels in the nation’s rich heritage.

Sincerely,

Dwight David Eisenhower”

Kennedy’s letter (Kennedy, *The Gettysburg Times*):

“Paul L. Roy
The Gettysburg Times Gettysburg, Penn

From the past man obtains the insights, wisdom and hope to face with confidence the uncertainties of the future. Abraham Lincoln was keenly aware of this when, a century ago, he journeyed to Gettysburg to make ‘a few appropriate remarks.’

Today, as we honor Lincoln’s immortal eulogy to the dead on Cemetery Ridge, let us remember as well those thousands of American patriots whose graves at home, beneath the sea and in distant lands are silent sentries of our heritage.

Lincoln and others did indeed give us a ‘birth of freedom,’ but the goals of liberty and freedom, the obligations of keeping out a government of and by the people are never-ending.

On this solemn occasion let us all re-dedicate ourselves to the perpetuation of those ideals of which Lincoln spoke so luminously.

As Americans, we can do no less.

John F. Kennedy”

There are two significant lines within these two letters that hint at the beliefs of each president. For Eisenhower, the line is: “More than ever we need the example of Abraham Lincoln to guide, influence, and uphold us,” (Eisenhower, *The Gettysburg Times*). Eisenhower wished for Americans to take up the mantle that Abraham Lincoln had left behind; a mantle that included supporting liberty in lands outside of America itself, just as Lincoln did with the

Confederacy. Kennedy, on the other hand, wrote, “On this solemn occasion let us all re-dedicate ourselves to the perpetuation of those ideals of which Lincoln spoke so luminously,” (Kennedy, *The Gettysburg Times*). President Kennedy did not only want Americans to value the principles the Lincoln set forth, but he also urged them towards the “perpetuations of those ideals” to other lands. Kennedy believed that, “As Americans, we can do no less” than propagate these values throughout the entire world. Both presidents believed in the proliferation of liberty and democracy abroad. As a result, you can see these basic principles reflected in their foreign affair policies in interactions with places such as Cuba, Southeast Asia, and Berlin.

Cuba

Beginning in 1956, Fulgencio Batista, the American supported dictator in Cuba, faced a growing rebellion led by Fidel Castro that had broken out into civil war (Warner: 804). During this civil war, despite American unhappiness about some of the actions taken by Batista, Eisenhower sent aid to the regime in order to keep Castro’s forces at bay (Warner: 804-805). By early 1958, America had sent roughly \$774 million to Batista and was taking steps to send weapons as well (Warner: 804-805). At the end of June, 1958, some of the rebels kidnapped Americans on Cuba, setting the tone for the future relationship between Castro and the U.S., (Warner: 806).

By the end of 1958, communist forces had penetrated the rebel movement and began to influence Castro; Allen Dulles, the CIA director at the time, said, “...communist elements can be expected to participate in the government” if Castro was to take over (Warner: 808). Despite American efforts, in January of 1959, Batista fled the country and Castro entered Havana, thus taking over the government (Warner: 809).

Castro visited America on April 15th, 1959, and met with then Vice-President Richard Nixon (Warner: 811). The conversation between Nixon and Castro would play a significant role in the Eisenhower administration's actions against Cuban revolutionaries. Neither seemed able to agree on much; Nixon spoke a lot about his opposition to communism and Castro spoke about the will of the people (Warner: 811-812). It was the only direct interaction between Castro and Eisenhower's administration, and it comprised a conversation between ideological counterparts that did not come close to an agreement being made by either side (Warner: 811-812).

On November 9, 1959, President Eisenhower approved and signed a statement that said, "based on an assessment...of the Castro government...US objectives for Cuba and Latin America will not be altered except as a result of Cuban opposition to Castro's present course and/or a change in the Cuban regime," (Warner: 813). Finally, on March 17, 1960, President Eisenhower gave the go-ahead for the CIA to implement a plan to forcefully overthrow the Castro government through an infiltration into Cuba of anti-Castro guerilla fighters (Warner: 813). This authorization by President Eisenhower marked the first step in a long-lasting effort to overthrow Castro, one that would carry on into Kennedy's tenure.

Cuba was a defining point in Eisenhower's foreign affair practices. President Eisenhower opposed Castro's revolutionary forces by sending aid to a dictator. The reason for this opposition stemmed from a fear that Castro's revolution would cause similar revolutions to rise up throughout other portions of Latin America and allow communist forces to infiltrate the western hemisphere (Warner: 813-814). Eventually, despite American efforts, Batista fled from Cuba and Castro succeeded in establishing a new government. But Eisenhower did not simply permit Castro to rule Cuba as he saw fit; instead, Eisenhower signed a plan to overthrow the revolutionary that he had sent aid to oppose. Eisenhower set the standard for American

interaction with Cuba, as I will show below with an examination of John F. Kennedy's Cuban policies.

In President Kennedy's first State of the Union Address on January 30, 1961, he laid out what his administration's plan in Cuba would be. "Our objection with Cuba is not over the people's drive for a better life. Our objection is to their domination by foreign and domestic tyrannies... Communist domination in this Hemisphere can never be negotiated," (Kennedy, *Public Papers...1961*: 23). President Kennedy would spend the entirety of his time in office in a constant power struggle with Cuban leader, Fidel Castro.

The first major event in Kennedy's American-Cuban relations occurred in the first year of his presidency with the Bay of Pigs Invasion beginning on April 17, 1961, the same plan that Eisenhower had signed (Stoll: 142). The operation was "an invasion of Cuba by a force of anti-Castro exiles who had been trained by the CIA in Guatemala," (Stoll: 141-142). The operation failed miserably, becoming one of the blackest stains on President Kennedy's time in office. However, instead of easing relations with Cuba, Kennedy went on to defend his tough stance of Cuban-Soviet relations by saying on an April 20th address, "...the final report from the refugee forces on the beach came from the rebel commander...He has gone now to join in the mountains countless other guerrilla fighters, who are equally determined that the dedication of those who gave their lives shall not be forgotten, and that Cuba must not be abandoned to the Communists. And we do not intend to abandon it either!" (Kennedy, *Public Papers...1961*: 305). President Kennedy knew that the invasion failed, but he would not "abandon" those in Cuba.

"The climax of the tension between Kennedy and Cuba came in October of 1962, with the thirteen days of the Cuban Missile Crisis," (Stoll: 144). On October 16, the president was shown photographs of Soviet "offensive missile sites under construction in Cuba," (Stoll: 145).

Kennedy, however, had been assured by the Soviet Union that they had no intention of placing offensively capable sites in Cuba (Stoll: 145). In a televised address occurring on October 22, 1962, six days after learning about Soviet weapons sites only 90 miles from America, President Kennedy said, “Neither the United States of America nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small...this sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil – is a deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country,” (Kennedy, *Public Papers...1962*: 807). President Kennedy then laid out his plan to place a naval blockade on the island to disallow the continuous weapon buildup in Cuba and begin talks of disestablishing the sites already in place (Kennedy, *Public Papers...1962*: 807-808, Stoll: 146, Matthews: 369). The operation worked; within a week of the placement of the naval blockade, Soviet Premier Khrushchev had agreed to dismantle and remove the missile sites from Cuba (Matthews: 372, Stoll: 151).

Outside of the two major events involving Kennedy and Cuba, an operation entitled “Operation Mongoose” was in effect for the entirety of the Kennedy administration following the debacle of the Bay of Pigs Invasion. The operation “involved an array of secret plots to topple the Cuban dictator,” (Matthews: 364); meaning an ongoing effort to dispose Fidel Castro from power in Cuba. The operation involved around 400 CIA officers and cost anywhere between \$50 million and \$100 million. The operations never proved to be a success, but Kennedy never gave up on his desire to oust Castro; “Richard Helms, the CIA’s Deputy Director of Operations under Kennedy, later recalled ‘He was *wild* with Castro, and the whole government was pushed hard to see if there wasn’t some way to unseat him. The fact that the agency was not able to get the results was something that did not please him,” (Stoll: 154).

Middle East

Following World War II, the Middle East became a hotbed for Cold War conflicts (Holbo: 249). “The central objective of American policy in the region [the Middle East] during the 1950s and 1960s was to encourage Muslim countries to co-operate and support Washington's containment of the Soviet Union and global Communist influence” (Jackson: 240). By the time Eisenhower came to office, Truman had already sent millions of dollars to Greece and Turkey in an attempt to better relations with these countries and secure democratic allies in this part of the world (Holbo: 249).

On January 5, 1957, President Eisenhower gave a speech that summed up his reasons for involvement in the Middle East and what that involvement should mean. The ideology became known as the “Eisenhower Doctrine,” and would form the basis for Middle East – US relations. Eisenhower said, “The reason for Russia’s interest in the Middle East is solely that of power politics. Considering her announced purpose of Communizing the world, it is easy to understand her hope of dominating the Middle East.... If the nations of that area should lose their independence, if they were dominated by alien forces hostile to freedom, that would be both a tragedy for the area and for many other free nations whose economic life would be subject to near strangulation.... All this would have the most adverse, if not disastrous, effect upon our own nation’s economic life and political prospects.... The action which I propose would have the following features....it would authorize the United States to cooperate with and assist any nation or group of nations in the general area in the Middle East in the development of economic strength....authorize the Executive to undertake in the same region programs of military

assistance and cooperation....authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism,” (Eisenhower, *Public Papers...1957*: 8-9, 12-13). Eisenhower clearly stood against Communist influence in the Middle East.

The most prominent conflict for Eisenhower in the Middle East was a little-known military incursion into Lebanon beginning on July 15, 1958 (Little: 27). Lebanon was, for the most part, an American ally in the Mid-East; America had supplied the country with weapons to defend itself, all for its “self-defense,” or in other words, its defense from communism (Little: 33). In 1957, “claiming that American inaction would open up the door to similar Soviet gains in the region, Ike won congressional authorization in early March to spend up to \$200 million in economic aid and, if necessary, to send U.S. troops to any Middle-Eastern nation threatened by aggression, whether direct or indirect, ‘from any country controlled by international communism,’” (Little: 34). Then, as elections approached in Lebanon, Eisenhower sent even more aid over to support the campaign of the candidate that supported American interests, similar to the Eisenhower policy in Cuba (Little: 34). Political issues permeated Lebanon and tempers flared, resulting in a plethora of internal conflicts. As a result, Eisenhower then sent an additional \$2 million to help end the Lebanese in-fighting, which could destabilize the government and subject it to communist rule (Little: 36).

In May, 1958, tensions reached a peak and violence broke out between the two opposing sides (Little: 39). On May 13, Eisenhower pledged to his Lebanese ally, Chamoun, that he would send troops to support his increasingly autocratic, but American-friendly, regime (Little: 40). On July 14, after months of diplomatic stalling by the U.S., Chamoun finally demanded that

America uphold its agreement (Little: 43). Eisenhower did not love the idea of military intervention into a foreign country, but believed that inaction would be worse than any other possible option (Little: 44). By the morning of July 15, over 1,700 American marines were landing in Lebanon, with many more, up to 5,000 overall, to come (Little: 27).

Typically, Eisenhower was against military intrusion, especially with ground troops, into other nations. He always upheld that intervention should only occur under the direst of situations. In most locations, these circumstances were never met and we are left to wonder what would have happened if they were. However, in Lebanon, the required conditions for intervention were met, and Eisenhower did not disappoint his allies. Eisenhower clearly had a willingness to militarily intervene in foreign lands to combat communism if he believed it was a necessity. Eisenhower exercised his right to send both aid and troops to Lebanon, reflecting his Middle Eastern Cold War ideology, known today as the Eisenhower Doctrine.

Some historians have concluded that Kennedy was the ““foundation of the US-Israeli Alliance,”” (Reich: 196). Kennedy took a more active approach to moving towards an Arabian-Israeli solution than Eisenhower had, working together and communicating with Middle-Eastern leaders to reach this goal (Reich: 196). He also believed that peace was rooted in a military equality between Israel and its enemies, and in September of 1962, agreed to sell missiles to Israel in order to defend itself ““against the jet aircraft supplied to the United Arab Republic by the Soviet Union and also against the potential threat of Egypt’s missiles,”” (Little: 196).

The basis for Kennedy’s support of Israel did not stem from a Zionist attitude or a love of the newly formed Jewish nation, but instead from a couple major, but not as simplistically moral, reasons. First, a desire to help an enemy of Egypt, a Soviet-ally and major power-player in the Middle East (Ben-Zvi: 229). As the saying goes, the enemy of your enemy is your friend.

Secondly, he wished to make Israel an American-led example in the Middle East, “believing that ‘American money, American technology, and the force of the American example could provide the impetus for a successful process of economic development to unfold in many Third World countries, the president and his top advisors remained convinced that the use of these resources and means could help ‘mitigate or remove conditions’ that made these countries susceptible to pressures for revolutionary change” (Ben-Zvi: 230). These “revolutionary changes” are what made Middle-Eastern countries susceptible to Communist influence. A nation is much less likely to look for outside help if it is already economically stable.

Kennedy took a stance against Communist influence in the Middle-East, primarily in an effort to stem Communist impact on Egypt and strengthen American ties in that nation (Ben-Zvi: 235). He sold weapons to Israel and pumped money into the region in order to prevent it from falling into destitution and, possibly, communist hands; overall, all actions that were supported by the Eisenhower Doctrine. The extent to which President Kennedy affected the Middle East in his Cold War, anti-communist efforts can still be seen today; Israeli-American relations can principally be traced back to John F. Kennedy’s support of it in a potentially communist-leaning portion of the world.

Southeast Asia

A second region of major concern throughout the Cold War was Southeast Asia. Eisenhower’s interactions with communist forces in the area are not as significant as Kennedy’s, and therefore, I will discuss Kennedy’s positions and actions more in-depth than those of Eisenhower. For Eisenhower, problems in Southeast Asia included primarily Korea and Vietnam, while for Kennedy, it was chiefly Vietnam alone.

It is important to understand that both Eisenhower and Kennedy were supporters of the Domino Theory. This theory stated that if one nation in Southeast Asia was to fall into communist hands, others would follow (Holbo: 273-274). The terminology for this theory was first spoken by President Eisenhower on April 7, 1954. While speaking about the Indochina, which we know as Vietnam, he said, "...you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences," (Eisenhower, *Public Papers...1954*: 383).

When General Eisenhower became President Eisenhower in 1953, he inherited a war in Korea that he had promised to end (Tama: 43). Despite Korea being a hotspot for Cold War conflict and the probability of a North Korean, communist victory, Eisenhower moved forward with promoting an armistice in Korea (Tama: 43).

When the French left in 1954, Vietnam split and broke out into a violent turmoil; South Vietnam had become a democratic nation led by Ngo Dinh Diem and supported by the United States while the north had become a communist nation led by Ho Chi Minh and supported by the USSR (Craig: 1371). Eisenhower sent only a small amount of military advisors in comparison to his successor, roughly 900 by the end of his terms (Craig: 1371). However, despite the number being overshadowed today by the much larger numbers sent later on, it should still be noted that Eisenhower was the very first president to make an American presence known in Vietnam.

President Kennedy and his administration "regarded South-East Asia (in particular...Vietnam) as a key component in its larger policy of waging a more vigorous and effective Cold War in the Third World," (Craig: 1371). During his time in office, Kennedy

increased the amount of aid sent to South Vietnam in the hope that the nation would win its fight with its communist counterpart, North Vietnam, and establish a democratic stronghold in south-east Asia (Craig:1371). One source states that in December, 1960, one month before Kennedy took office, there was a total of roughly 900 US military personnel in South Vietnam (Tucker: 1744). Another source, however, states that Kennedy's administration inherited even less military advisers: only 500 ("Kennedy and the Cold War"). One year later, in December, 1961, the end of Kennedy's first year in office, the number of military advisers in South Vietnam had increased to 3,200 military advisers (Tucker: 1745). That is an increase of 356% in just his first year. In President Kennedy's second year, the number of US military advisers in Vietnam increased to 9,000 and the amount of aid going to the effort almost doubled (Snead and Peterson: 81). By the time of Kennedy's assassination, 16,000 American military advisers were present in Vietnam, an increase of at least 1778% from when he entered office ("Kennedy and the Cold War").

President Kennedy did not simply take action in Vietnam by placing military advisers in a foreign nation or by pouring federal aid into the conflict; he also did so by disposing of South Vietnam's president Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem has been a brutal leader and, by 1963, the Kennedy administration viewed the South Vietnamese president as "an impediment to winning the war," ("Kennedy and the Cold War"). Due to this view of Diem, Kennedy signed off on a decision that would remove his former ally from power. "It was JFK who authorized the coup that resulted in Diem's overthrow...on November 1, 1963," ("Kennedy and the Cold War"). With Kennedy's assassination coming only 21 days after the coup of Diem, the decision to do so stands as a testament to Kennedy's unerring efforts to assist in the resistance of communism abroad; even if it meant intervening in other countries to the extent of political assassination

Berlin

When Germany was split into a Soviet controlled east and an American controlled west, the country quickly became a symbol for the stance between Communist and Democratic forces. Berlin had also been split, just like the rest of the country. The difference was that Berlin lied fully in the east, and therefore, was surrounded by Soviet forces. Berlin had already proven to be a vital location in the Cold War struggle with the Berlin Airlift during Truman's presidency, but its significance would continue into both Eisenhower and Kennedy's presidential terms (Giangreco and Griffin).

"Having inherited the Berlin problem upon taking office in January of 1953, the Eisenhower administration quickly reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to West Berlin and actively exploited it as a part of a broader program aimed at undermining Soviet power in Eastern Europe" (Coleman: 5). Eisenhower upheld the stance begun in the Truman administration; a stance that marked Berlin as a pivotal locale in the Cold War struggles. Throughout the early portions of Eisenhower's administration, the Soviet Union loomed as a serious threat to the protection and freedom of West Berlin. An uprising in East Berlin left both nations with a tough decision to make about the future of the divided city (Coleman: 17). The uprising struck a major blow to the legitimacy and public opinion of the Soviet Union (Coleman: 15). Eisenhower decided to take advantage of this temporary weakness. In 1953, he signed off papers that sent supplies over to the East, such as food, to act as almost a propaganda technique against his Soviet counterparts (Coleman: 17). Eisenhower made it clear that he would support protests against the Soviet Union, but did not ever voice that he would send in troops to assist demonstrations or start open warfare with the Soviets (Coleman: 19).

Eisenhower did not simply use propaganda techniques to influence East Berlin residents; he also took steps to insure that West Berlin never fell to his enemies. On October 1, 1953, Eisenhower's secretary of state presented the National Security Council with an Eisenhower-supported agenda that was meant to insure the protection of West Berlin by providing a plan if the Soviets were to ever enter into aggressions (Coleman: 20). The program was written in a way that clearly demonstrated the Eisenhower administration's opposition to open warfare, but it did not completely rule out the option. The program supported diplomatic resolutions to the conflict, but still stated that if the situation got out of hand, America would militarily intervene (Coleman: 20).

Eisenhower did take steps that displayed an escalation in tensions over Berlin throughout his tenure. He declared that if the Soviet Union would blockade West Berlin again, like they did under Truman, it "would be tantamount to a declaration of war" (Coleman: 22). Later, in December of 1953, Eisenhower even stated that if he had been president during Truman's time, he would have tested the Soviet Union's Berlin blockade with military forces instead of simply engaging in a long-time airlift (Coleman: 23).

Due to Eisenhower's criticisms of the NSC's (National Security Council) weak stances, a final agreement was reached in late January, 1954, an agreement that would guide Eisenhower's interactions with East Berlin for the next few years (Coleman: 25). The paper "contained strong and repeated recommendations that the United States react 'vigorously,' 'quickly,' 'forcefully,' and 'promptly' to any new Berlin crisis" and stated "if the Soviet Union continued to challenge U.S. interests once Washington's intentions had been made clear, the United States would be compelled 'to take immediate and forceful action to counter the Soviet challenge, even though

such countermeasures might lead to general war,” (Coleman: 25). Eisenhower clearly viewed Berlin as a focal point in the Cold War fight from the moment he took office.

Throughout his time in office, stockpiles of weapons were sent to West Berlin, propaganda programs were implemented to undermine Soviet credibility and further internal conflicts, and agreements were made to defend West Berlin with the might of the American military (Coleman: 17, 25, 32). Throughout his tenure, Eisenhower and his administration treated Berlin as “the front line of the Cold war” (Coleman: 33). In a speech on March 16, 1959, President Eisenhower summed up his stance on Berlin, “Our position, then, is this: we will not retreat one inch from our duty. We shall continue to exercise our right of peaceful passage to and from West Berlin. We will not be the first to breach the peace; it is the Soviets who threaten the use of force to interfere with such free passage....we shall have to remain continuously ready to repel aggression, whether it be political economic, or military,” (Eisenhower, *Public Papers...1959*: 277-278).

In August of 1961 President Kennedy “ordered the 18th Infantry’s 1st Battle Group up the autobahn, through Soviet-controlled East Germany, to reinforce West Berlin,” (Stoll: 161). On July 25th of the same year, just a short while before sending the troops in, President Kennedy gave an address regarding Berlin. In the address he said, “We cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin, either gradually or by force. For the fulfillment of our pledge to that city is essential to the morale and security of Western Germany, to the unity of Western Europe, and to the faith of the entire Free World,” (Kennedy, *Public Papers...1961*: 534). A couple months later, in October, ten American tanks faced off overnight against ten Soviet tanks, and the Soviets retreated first (Stoll: 161).

Kennedy critics have faulted him for not standing strong in Berlin when he “allowed” the Berlin Wall to be built (Stoll: 162). Many others have proclaimed that the only manner in which Kennedy could have done so was through force and by acting as the aggressor in an incursion into East Berlin, a place American military forces had no right to be in (Stoll: 162). The debate is ongoing, but I believe Kennedy had no choice but to allow the Berlin Wall to be built, which was actually simply the continuation of a wall that the Soviet Union had built along most of the east-west border in Europe (Stoll: 162).

One of President Kennedy’s most famous speeches occurred on June 26, 1963, in Berlin. The speech was a political slap in the face to the country that built the wall through the city that Kennedy spoke in. It was one of Kennedy’s greatest insults to the Soviet Union. In the speech, President Kennedy said, “There are many people in the world who really don’t understand, or say they don’t, what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin. There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin. And there are those who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. Let them come to Berlin... Freedom is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free,” (Kennedy, *Public Papers... 1963*:).

Kennedy undoubtedly intended Berlin to be an integral part of his stance against the Soviet Union and the proliferation of communism. It was one of the first locations that Kennedy took steps to secure. President Kennedy made one thing clear on Berlin: he believed that it was an indispensable point of dissension and would do anything he could to defend it from the Communists. If anyone wanted to see how Kennedy interacted with the Soviets, let them look at Berlin.

Conclusion

When I read the two letters during my time in the Adams County Historical Society, I could not help but think about how the Cold War culture and the personal, political beliefs of the two authors bled into the letters they wrote. These two presidents, often portrayed as counterparts due to their historical proximity, party-opposition, and the brutal 1960 Campaign, had very similar foreign affair ideals. In two simple letters, written about nothing more than the Gettysburg Address, a topic that encompasses only America and an American president, the power and influence that the Cold War had on the United States and its leaders can easily be seen. Without knowing a single thing about American or world history, an individual could pick up the same copy of *the Gettysburg Times* that I looked at, and understand that at this time, in 1963, these two individuals cared deeply about American ideals and the perpetuation of them abroad. With a little more historical knowledge, one can make the conclusion that these beliefs must have made a presence in the presidents' foreign affair policies, as I have shown above.

Both President Eisenhower and President Kennedy opposed the spread of Communism around the world. They remain two of the most prominent defenders of democracy abroad, and defending it in very similar manners. From the jungles of Southeast Asia, to the Caribbean nation of Cuba, to the sandy deserts of the Middle East, and to the urbanized streets of Berlin, Kennedy and Eisenhower took every step possible outside of all-out war to insure the proliferation and safety of democratic, American ideals abroad. The same beliefs that spurred on their foreign policy actions also impelled their words in their letters to *the Gettysburg Times* on November 19, 1963. Eisenhower used Lincoln as an example to “guide, influence and uphold” his policies concerning the Cold War; which he believed to mean defend democracy around the world at nearly any cost. Kennedy found within Lincoln's Gettysburg Address the same

principles in which he wished Americans to “re-dedicate” themselves “to the perpetuation of;” which he had done throughout his tenure in office.

I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the honor code. – Andrew C. Nosti

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