

During this 2021-2022 competition period for National History Day, the annual theme was Debate and Diplomacy. When thinking about this topic, one of the first topics that came to mind was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Having studied the Cuban Missile Crisis in my AP U.S History class and as a part of the 2020-2021 Academic Decathlon competition, I had gained interest in the event. I was fascinated by how the world could have gone into a nuclear war because of the placement of these missiles in Cuba, but it was prevented because of the interactions with President John F. Kennedy with his advisory council, the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm), and the diplomacy between Kennedy and Premier of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev to prevent a catastrophic outcome. Because of these interactions between two largely opposing nations, the Cuban Missile Crisis fits into this year's theme, Debate and Diplomacy.

Once I established that I was going to pursue this topic as my NHD project for this competition period, I began my research. I re-familiarize myself with the event and the timeline of what happened. After I gained a grasp on this information, I began reading through personal accounts of those involved in the event, the letters between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, the meeting notes and recordings of the meeting with President Kennedy and ExComm, and the speech President Kennedy gave to the general public. I accessed these documents through internet archives that detailed the event and autobiographies written by the individuals involved. Once finishing this research, I consolidated all of my notes in order to form a narrative on what happened during the Cuban Missile Crisis, what caused different actions, and how the reactions of President Kennedy and ExComm influenced the outcome of the event. While doing this, I created the historical argument that guided my National History Day project. My historical argument is "Despite advice from President John F. Kennedy's Executive

Committee of the National Security Council to pursue a militaristic approach, President Kennedy's coercive diplomatic exchanges with the Soviet Union through a naval blockade and letter communication prevented a full-scale nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union from occurring.”

My last step in completing this research project was creating a title. The title is “The Cuban Missile Crisis: How Coercive Diplomacy Became the Salvation of the World”. Throughout my research, I had encountered the phrase “coercive diplomacy” consistently as a reference to the acts of compellence during this conflict. As a result, I decided to incorporate this phrase into my project’s title to emphasize the importance of this strategy during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The Cuban Missile Crisis is largely significant in the world’s history as the world was on the brink of global nuclear war. Additionally, Premier Khrushchev’s losses through this event increased, which could have influenced the slow decline of the Soviet Union that ultimately led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.