

The Limits of the 1963 Détente: Superpower Negotiations and Alliance Politics after the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962-63

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After the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, the United States and the Soviet Union moved toward the relaxation of tension that culminated in the conclusion of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in July 1963. They, however, failed to achieve broader détente through agreements on such issues as Berlin, nuclear non-proliferation, and a non-aggression pact between the two blocs (NAP). What brought about the limit of superpower détente in 1963? This article intends to answer this question from the following three perspectives. First, it sheds a new light on the impact of the Cuban experience on Washington's attitude toward Moscow. Contrary to the commonly-held view, the incident in the Caribbean did not directly lead to the superpower rapprochement. Rather, in one aspect, it intensified the Americans' suspicions of the Soviets. Second, this essay explores what impact the alliance politics in the East and the West had on the superpower relations after the Cuban crisis. Third, this piece offers a comprehensive analysis of the superpower negotiations on the four most important issues in 1963: nuclear test-ban, Berlin, non-dissemination of nuclear weapons, and NAP. A close look at the international politics in 1963 reveals that a complex combination of all these developments prevented the superpowers from achieving a broader détente.