Security and Ideals

The Cuban Missile Crisis and the choices behind U.S. policy

USG.C.7.2.B "Explain why and how the United States of America pursues its national interest and to what extent the pursuit of national interest harmonizes with the pursuit of American ideals."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one U.S. goal and two actions taken to reach it. Circle one American ideal the actions supported, then number two details that show where the actions put an ideal under strain.

A Crisis Close to Home

1. In October 1962, U.S. reconnaissance planes photographed Soviet nuclear missile sites under construction in Cuba, about 90 miles from Florida. President John F. Kennedy and his advisers feared that missiles so close could threaten American cities and reduce the United States' ability to deter an attack. They also worried that accepting the missiles would weaken U.S. promises to defend its allies. Their goal was not simply to win an argument with the Soviet Union. They wanted to lower the danger to Americans while keeping the United States and its allies secure. Those aims were national interests.

2. Kennedy announced a naval quarantine to stop further shipments of offensive weapons to Cuba. U.S. ships watched vessels approaching the island, while American officials demanded that the missile sites be removed. Kennedy avoided an immediate air strike, which might have started a wider war. Behind the scenes, Washington and Moscow negotiated. The Soviet leader agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba after the United States pledged not to invade Cuba. The United States also privately agreed to remove its Jupiter nuclear missiles from Turkey. These choices combined military pressure with compromise rather than relying on force alone.

3. The policy partly matched American ideals. Trying to prevent nuclear war protected human life, and negotiating instead of attacking reflected a preference for peaceful solutions. Yet the United States used warships near Cuba and made decisions about the island's security without Cuban leaders at the bargaining table. That raised a question about respect for another country's independence. The secret deal about missiles in Turkey also kept the public from judging a key concession at the time. The crisis shows that national interest can support ideals, such as peace, while the methods used to protect it can put other ideals under strain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did Kennedy and his advisers see the missiles in Cuba as a threat to U.S. national interests?

2. How did the United States use both pressure and compromise to pursue its goals?

3. Which American ideal did the U.S. response support? Explain how one action supported it.

4. To what extent did the response match American ideals? Use two details from the passage to explain a limit.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A major earthquake strikes a country that is not a U.S. ally. The United States can send rescue teams and supplies, but supplies are limited. Write four or five sentences recommending a response. Explain one U.S. national interest, one American ideal, and a possible conflict between them, then judge how well your plan balances both.

ANSWER KEY

Security and Ideals

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.7.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one U.S. goal and two actions taken to reach it. Circle one American ideal the actions supported, then number two details that show where the actions put an ideal under strain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did Kennedy and his advisers see the missiles in Cuba as a threat to U.S. national interests?	**They feared the missiles could threaten American cities, weaken U.S. deterrence, and undermine promises to defend allies.**
2	How did the United States use both pressure and compromise to pursue its goals?	**It used a naval quarantine and demanded removal of the missile sites, then pledged not to invade Cuba and privately agreed to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey.**
3	Which American ideal did the U.S. response support? Explain how one action supported it.	**The response supported peace: Kennedy negotiated rather than launching an immediate air strike that might have started a wider war.**
4	To what extent did the response match American ideals? Use two details from the passage to explain a limit.	**It matched ideals only partly. The United States sought to prevent war, but Cuban leaders were absent from talks about their island's security, and the public could not judge the secret deal about missiles in Turkey at the time.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The United States should send rescue teams and medical supplies, even though the country is not an ally. Helping limit a health emergency can protect regional stability, a U.S. national interest. Delivering aid based on need supports the American ideal of equal human worth. Limited supplies could tempt officials to favor places with stronger U.S. ties over harder-hit communities. I would direct supplies to the hardest-hit areas first, so the plan mostly serves both stability and fairness.

Accept other passage-supported ideals or tensions if students explain the connection. For the open task, look for a plausible response that identifies a national interest, an ideal, a conflict, and a reasoned judgment.