Major great power confrontation: The Cuban Missile Crisis

Bruce F. Thompson

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A MAJOR GREAT POWER CONFRONTATION:

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

By

Bruce F. Thompson

B.A., University of Montana, 1969

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Date

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INTRODUCTION

Problem

A very eminent scholar of war and peace, Raymond Aron, once said: "Relations between sovereign states may be more or less bellicose; they are never essentially or ultimately peaceful."\(^1\) Although the remark can hardly be contested, the curious questions of why conflicts (i.e., especially international conflicts between foreign nations) are so pervasive and what causal\(^2\) conditions bring such conflicts into being are questions which have not been adequately resolved, and for that matter may never be. "Conflict, of course, is inherent in the nature of man."\(^3\) But this does not necessarily negate our efforts in attempting to resolve such questions. History provides us with the raw material for analysis and study of conflict and conflict avoidance, but often times this analysis is


lacking in perspective; and has to some degree been confused with the study of crisis behavior. A significant fact to realize concerning a crisis is that "... it occurs as the result of failure of decision-making at much earlier stages." The Cuban missile crisis was no exception.

This research project has been addressed to the problem of answering several questions concerning the crisis that, in this author's opinion, have remained wholly unresolved and inadequately answered. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 has been described by one foreign policy strategist in the following manner:

Few will deny that the recent establishment of a Communist government in Cuba, coupled with the decision of the Soviet Union to invest almost a billion dollars in the creation of a strategic missile base for the first time beyond the borders of its contiguous satellites, produced the most serious crisis of the nuclear age. (Italics mine.)

Robert Osgood has described the crisis in a somewhat different perspective: "... the Cuban Crisis grew out of grossly erroneous estimates of national interests and behavior between states with years of hard experience in

---


5Robert D. Crane, "The Cuban Crisis," Orbis, VI (Winter 1963), 528. This view of the magnitude of the crisis is commonly held by many writers, most notable of these being Bernard Brodie, Thomas Schelling, Herman Kahn, Arnold Horelick, and Herbert Dinerstein.
confronting each other."\(^6\) That this crisis brought the bipolar nuclear powers "eye-ball-to-eye-ball"\(^7\) in the first nuclear Cold War confrontation is a well-known fact. What is not clearly understood is why Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev attempted such an adventurous and risky scheme.

Directly related to the reasons for Khrushchev's placement of strategic, offensive missiles in Cuba are his calculations of the possibilities and probabilities that such an action, i.e., deployment of missiles in Cuba, either would provoke a hostile and aggressive response from the United States involving great risks of retaliation, or that the act of implacing missiles in Cuba would involve only a marginal degree of risk, associated with maximum gains from penetration of the U.S.'s core interest,\(^8\) and only a verbal show of force by the U.S. These calculations bring into question the state of American foreign policy and deterrence strategy.\(^9\) It can be assumed that in any international


\(^7\)This particular comment was attributed to McGeorge Bundy, who was a member of President Kennedy's special "think tank" committee of the National Security Council during the actual crisis of October 1962. See for example Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

\(^8\)Traditionally, a core interest has always involved a geographical area deemed so vital to the security of a given nation-state that it would consider a threat to that area as a threat to its own security. The Cuban missile crisis of 1962 bears out this relationship.
conflict the respective aggressors and deterrers base their political maneuvers and military postures on certain definable strategies, calculations, and objectives to be achieved—be they political or military.9 Soviet pre-crisis calculations of probable U.S. behavior were based on some of the following criteria: informational signals, words and actions of executive leadership, past performance in international affairs, employment of force, images, and U.S. resolve.

"The international system," according to Kenneth Boulding, "consists of a group of interacting 'nations' or 'countries.'"10 Since the international system is composed of a group of interacting nations11 involving reciprocal relations between political entities, where each nation bases its decisions and policies towards the others on certain value patterns, such as interpretation of images, actions and words of statesmen, and expectations, then it is a truism to say that it is what nations' leaders

9For the sake of brevity in my Introduction, I will define only those terms essential to the reader's understanding. Chapter I will be devoted to a more elaborate explanation of terms.


11The term "interacting nation" will be discussed in Chapter I (see infra, pp. 22-24).
think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines their behavior.¹² "The image is always in some sense a product of messages received in the past."¹³

The importance of national images can be clearly understood when we attempt to provide a logical explanation for Khrushchev's deployment of missiles in Cuba in 1962. A question often asked after the event and as often tentatively answered was: What was the Soviet purpose or objective in putting in the missiles? Rarely asked, but more urgent for future policy guidance, is the question: What did we do to make them think we would let them get away with it? To this specific question, this research project is addressed.

Hypothesis and Research Design

In a television interview not long after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, President John F. Kennedy observed that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had made a serious miscalculation in the Cuban affair. "I don't think we expected that he [Khrushchev] would put the missiles in Cuba," he said, "because it would have seemed such an


¹³ Boulding, op. cit., p. 53.
imprudent action for him to take. . . . He obviously thought he could do it in secret and that the United States would accept it." Obviously Khrushchev did think that he could do it, and such calculations were based on certain assumptions he had formed concerning the behavior of the U.S. government, its nuclear deterrence strategy, its credibility, and its young President--John F. Kennedy.

That deterrence strategy did in fact fail to deter the Soviet Union from placing offensive missiles in Cuba, which has been traditionally and geographically a U.S. sphere of influence and a recognized core interest of the U.S., is well known. I think Bernard Brodie best described the ineffectiveness of American deterrence strategy when he said:

Actually, the greatest single challenge to the status quo, the greatest "failure of deterrence"--though we must avoid confusing an occasionally necessary confrontation with failure of deterrence--was precisely the Cuban Crisis of October 1962. . . .

Specifically, this thesis will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Why did deterrence strategy fail?
2. What led Khrushchev to believe he could successfully deploy missiles in Cuba?

---


Hypothesis Statement

Since this thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the cause of the missile crisis can be attributed to the "failure of deterrence," it is necessary to explain what deterrence is, how it is used, and what its psychological functions are.

This thesis will focus on American deterrence strategy as stated and implemented during the Kennedy Administration. This strategy will be evaluated for its relevance to serve as a deterrent. To evaluate American deterrence strategy, a deterrence model will be constructed from the major deterrence theories that prevailed at the time of the crisis. This model will be a synthesis of the primary elements that comprise deterrence strategy.

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16Deterrence has been defined by many writers. Glenn Snyder's definition is highly descriptive and qualitative: "Deterrence is a species of political power. It is the capacity to induce others to do things or not to do things which they would not otherwise do or refrain from doing; deterrence is simply its negative aspect. It is the power to dissuade another party from doing something which one believes to be against one's own interests, achieved by the threat of applying some sanction." "Deterrence and Power," Journal of Conflict Resolution, IV (June 1960), 163.

17A model, as defined and used by this writer, is: A structure embodying a set of variables having a specified set of interrelations, but which variables and relationships need have only limited correspondence with the empirical phenomena and relations among the empirical phenomena to which they refer. See for example Robert T. Golembiewski, William A. Welsh, and William J. Crotty, A Methodological Primer for Political Scientists (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), pp. 427-446. A model is a theoretical
Deterrence theories of several writers\(^1\) will be scrutinized, and the components of their strategies will be constructed into a representative model of deterrence strategy. By constructing a deterrence model, it will be possible to evaluate American deterrence strategy and, more specifically, determine why it failed. Such an examination may help explain Khrushchev's actions in Cuba.

This thesis will analyze and evaluate American deterrence strategy through the application of the deterrence model to determine whether it can serve as an explanation as to what led Khrushchev to believe that he could successfully deploy missiles in Cuba.

It is the position of this thesis, and it will be demonstrated through the analysis adopted, that a possible answer to what led Khrushchev to believe that he could successfully place missiles in Cuba can be found in the examination of the following hypothesis:

Certain subjective factors of American foreign policy toward the Soviet bloc convinced the construct of isomorphic design that describes, explains, and predicts reality, and is a low-level theory by definition.

\(^1\)The most notable among these so-called "war thinkers" are: Herman Kahn, Thomas Schelling, David Singer, Bernard Brodie, Henry Kissinger, Albert Wohlstetter, Morton Halperin, George Lowe, Fred Green, and Glenn Snyder. It should be noted that this author has borrowed quite liberally from the work of Glenn Snyder. (See supra, p. 7, n. 16.)
Russians and Khrushchev that the U.S. would not respond with military force to the creation of an offensive Soviet missile base in Cuba.

Simply stated, the hypothesis is a repudiation of the ability of American deterrence strategy to deter aggressive acts by a potential enemy (i.e., the Soviet Union). Implicitly, the hypothesis states that certain behavior patterns of U.S. leaders in conducting foreign policy indicated to the Russians: irresolution, inaction, unwillingness to use force, vacillation, undefined policies and goals, willingness to negotiate, discrepancies between words and deeds, and an obsession with pursuing peace. The fact that the U.S. had just elected the youngest man in its history to fill the most powerful seat of government in the world--the presidency of the United States--also brought doubt on the U.S.'s determination and resolution to meet its commitments.

The preceding subjective factors (i.e., irresolution, inaction, and vacillation) are perceptions held by an individual which are of a psychological dimension. These perceptions are normally involved in the calculation of what is known in the deterrence language as "credibility." Snyder defines credibility as,

... the perception by the threatened party [in this thesis the Soviet Union] of the degree of probability that the power-wielder [in this thesis the U.S.] will actually carry out the threat if
its terms are not complied with or will keep a promise if its conditions are met. 19

To demonstrate the validity of the hypothesis statement, five international crises have been chosen which can be analyzed through the deterrence model to determine whether the subjective factors were present. These five crises can be considered as limited probes of American resolve: Russian-Cuban relations, the Bay of Pigs, Laos, Vienna, and the Berlin Wall. If it can be shown that the subjective factors were present in each one of these crises, then we can logically conclude that what led Khrushchev to believe he could succeed in deploying missiles in Cuba was in fact a "failure of deterrence" and the expectation that the U.S. would not act.

Method and Sources Used in Study

Such an analysis, as using the deterrence model, also includes the description of the "role" 20 of the

19 Snyder, op. cit., p. 164. Throughout the remainder of this paper, reference to deterrer will mean the U.S., and reference to the aggressor will mean the Soviet Union.

20 Role is defined as "the behavior expected of a leader, the predictable behavior which others adjust and respond to, the acts and functions of each leader that together create the structure of international society." See Burton, op. cit., p. 103. For a more detailed discussion of role and role systems, see Heinz Eulau, The Behavioral Persuasion in Politics (New York: Random House, 1963), especially pp. 13-79.
Chief Executive in foreign affairs and the role of the Premier in Soviet foreign policy. The problem of establishing, with a relatively high degree of accuracy, foreign policy objectives for the U.S. and the Soviet Union is a basic requirement to this study. The method chosen for this investigation utilizes the concept of "elite articulation." This concept is based on a single presumption: "foreign policy" objectives are what the foreign policy elite say they are.

Stated generally, decision-making elite consist of those individuals who perform the function of political authorization in the foreign policy arena. Political authorization may be defined as authorization sanctioned by the conventions of the system.

The foreign policy elite is normally composed of the head of government, his executive secretaries, and his foreign

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22 In this discussion "foreign policy" means the courses of action and the decisions relating to them that a state undertakes in its relations with other states in order to attain national objectives and to advance the national interest. See Charles Lerche, Foreign Policy of the American People (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 4-5ff; also John G. Stoessinger, The Might of Nations (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 211-29. Stoessinger simplifies Lerche's definition by saying, "A nation's foreign policy is the expression of its national interest vis-a-vis other nations" (p. 27).

minister. In the U.S., the President is delegated the powers by the Constitution to conduct foreign affairs and represent the U.S. The office of the President, the Secretaries of Defense and State are the American elite structure for defining the national interests, objectives, and policies. In the Soviet Union, the top foreign policy-making elite are members of the powerful party organization known as the Politburo.  

The foreign policy of every nation-state is at all times presumably designed to promote the "national interest." The national interest is what the nation's leaders say it is. Interests are inescapably involved with security and well being; objectives are the specific applications of interests to meet particular international situations; and policies are means designed to attain

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25For another conception of the "national interest," see Hans Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest (New York: Random House, 1951). Morgenthau advocates that American foreign policy should follow "one guiding light--the national interest." Morgenthau is thinking strictly of "national interest" defined in terms of power. In his Politics Among Nations (4th ed.; New York: Knopf, 1967), Morgenthau stated his much-quoted theory of international politics: ". . . international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power. . . . We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out . . ." (p. 5).
objectives. It will be an assumption of this thesis that the national interests and core interests of a particular nation-state (e.g., the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.) are in specific cases the statements and actions of the national leaders. But it remains useful or even essential that policy-makers act as if there were such a thing as the national interest and endeavor to promote it. It is often apparent, because of bad policy, that policy-makers have not so acted. The failure of deterrence to dissuade Khrushchev from putting missiles in Cuba is a good case in point.

The conceptualization of the deterrence model will serve as a theoretical construct to analyze deterrence strategy in the five international crises mentioned earlier (see supra, p. 10). This discussion will be developed in Chapter I.

Chapter II is a discussion of President Kennedy's policy statements concerning national interests, objectives, and foreign policies. This chapter will examine deterrence strategy as applicable to Cuba, the Soviet Union, Western Europe, Laos, and Berlin.

Chapter III, which comprises a large portion of this thesis, will involve the application of the deterrence model to the five international crises. It will become apparent through this analysis that the "subjective
factors influencing Soviet behavior were present in these events. Each case was a clear example of the weakening of deterrence strategy. Stated policy interests and objectives were not backed by force, decisive firmness, or action. American threats and verbal statements of policy were not credible because they were not buttressed by force and action. "A threat that is not credible is no deterrent." As Hans Morgenthau has so aptly stated: "In the nuclear age, the very purpose of threat and counterthreat is to prevent the test of actual performance from taking place." The Cuban missile crisis was indeed a reality, a crisis of such tenuous brinkmanship that one wonders if Herman Kahn's odd locution that nuclear war is "unthinkable" may very well have been the case of "thinking the unthinkable." "In our times," writes Kahn, "thermo-nuclear war may seem unthinkable, immoral, insane, hideous, 


28Herman Kahn's known detachment and cold calculations concerning the possibilities of nuclear war may be rather insensitive to human suffering, but his rationalizations of the effects of war are strikingly clear to a point of disbelief. Similar thoughts are also expressed in Kahn's other two significant contributions: On Thermonuclear War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960) and On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios (New York: Praeger, 1965).
or highly unlikely, but it is not impossible."29 These are indeed very sobering words.

Chapter IV is a discussion of Premier Khrushchev: his attitudes, his behavior, and his politics. This chapter will develop the proposition that Khrushchev, given his propensity towards opportunism, coupled with rational calculations, was not a "reckless, adventuresome, and highly irrational" leader, as described by some scholars.

This thesis will not discuss the political and military objectives behind placing missiles in Cuba. These objectives have been described by several authors,30 and this writer finds their calculations accurate.

Chapter V is a discussion of Soviet pre-crisis calculations. This chapter will attempt to answer the question: What led Khrushchev to believe that he could successfully deploy missiles in Cuba? The hypothesis statement will be tested in this chapter to determine whether it can serve as an explanation of Soviet behavior. Risk-taking of Soviet leaders will be examined and


30See for example Arnold L. Horelick, The Cuban Missile Crisis (Santa Monica, Calif: Rand Corporation, Mem. RM-3779-PR, September 1963), pp. 4-21; and Nathan Leites, Kremlin Thoughts: Yielding, Rebuffing, Provoking, Retreating (Santa Monica, Calif: Rand Corporation, Mem. RM-3618-ISA, May 1963), pp. 1-24; and also Crane, op. cit., pp. 528-563.
interrelated to Soviet decision-making. And finally, the Soviet leaders' expectations regarding U.S. response will be evaluated.

At this point a possible critic may question whether Soviet motives and behavior can be accurately interpreted and described. This writer agrees to some extent with the remarks of one Soviet scholar, Alexander Dallin, concerning Soviet behavior, when he said:

To weigh the continuing changes in the Soviet situation—real and apparent, deliberate and unintended, lasting and transient—the observer must reach judgments based on uncertain data and frequently contradictory impressions.\(^{31}\)

Unless Khrushchev and his colleagues choose to reveal the considerations and calculations that actually guided their decisions and actions in the crisis, as opposed to the superficial propagandized version of them as "saving the peace" that was announced by the Soviet Premier and his cohorts, the questions I have set out to answer will necessarily not be susceptible to definitive resolution.

Fidel Castro reportedly told a friendly French correspondent that Khrushchev's motives were unknown to him and were a complete mystery. They may not be known by historians "in 20 or 30 years."\(^{32}\) Yet if we are to derive any


useful foreign policy and defense lessons from the Cuban missile crisis, we cannot wait for history.

As earlier stated, I discovered through my initial research on this thesis many questions totally unresolved and inadequately answered. The treatment of President Kennedy's behavior and role as a determinant leading to the crisis has not been examined. This thesis is as much a repudiation of the effectiveness of American deterrence strategy as it is an incriminating indictment of President Kennedy's failure to exhibit leadership in the White House. As Richard Neustadt has cogently written:

He [the President] makes his personal power impact by the things he says and does. Accordingly, his choices of what he should say and do, and how and when, are his means to conserve and tap his sources of power. Alternatively, choices are the means by which he dissipates his power. The outcome, case by case, will often turn on whether he perceives his task in power terms and takes account of what he sees before he makes his choice.\(^3\)

The performance of the Kennedy Administration in foreign affairs is of dubious quality. President Kennedy's famous statement, "Let's get moving again," surely could not apply to foreign policy. The record is replete with foreign policy failures: the Bay of Pigs, Laos, Vienna, Cuba policy, and the Berlin Wall. And the greatest one of them all was the Cuban missile crisis.

Searching for the answers to the questions I have posed can be of great value, particularly when they are tested against Soviet behavior in the coming months and years.

Finally, a word should be said about the validity of my research design. It does not purport to answer all the questions concerning the Cuban missile crisis. The criteria used in evaluating models generally agreed upon by theoreticians are: (1) validity, (2) flexibility, (3) generality, (4) measurement of sophistication, (5) significance, and (6) internal logic.\(^\text{34}\)

The deterrence model on which this thesis bases much of its conclusions is a general, low-level theory. It is the belief of this writer that the deterrence model meets the requirements of being descriptive, explanatory, and predictive. A model is a central tool of political science and "fundamentally, all explanation proceeds in terms of models."\(^\text{35}\)

The conclusion will include some general remarks the author has formed in light of the research done on this topic. These remarks might be collectively entitled

\(^{34}\)Golembiewski, Welsh, and Crotty, op. cit., pp. 430-31ff. Definitions of terms are given on these pages and the following.

"A Reaffirmation of Decisive Action in Achieving Foreign Policy Goals." The conclusions of this thesis may be able to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How should a President administer foreign policy to best protect and guard his personal power?

2. How can a President make policy choices that build rather than dissipate his influence and power?

When attempting to conduct a study of this nature, it becomes somewhat of a problem to identify those written materials which most honestly reflect the assumptions, intentions, attitudes, and policies of national leaders ("elite"). This researcher has found the following sources most useful: Public Papers of the President, the Department of State Bulletin, the Department of Defense Bulletin, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, Foreign Affairs, the Rand Corporation, Committee Reports and Hearings, and the biographies of John F. Kennedy.

For sources of Soviet statements concerning policy, The Current Digest of the Soviet Press was used. Included are English translations of Pravda, Kommunist, and Izvestia.
PART I

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

1961–1962
"Deterrence through military power," according to Arnold Wolfers, "is as old as the multistate system itself: *si vis pacem para bellum* was a classic commentary."¹ With the advent of nuclear weapons after World War II, deterrence assumed a much more commanding role in defense policies, security objectives, and the attainment of national interests. If self-preservation is the first law of nature, it is also the first law of foreign policy.² Deterrence is a means for providing for the security and well-being of a nation's national interests and its citizens.

In its most fundamental sense deterrence is "... the discouragement of military aggression by the threat (implicit or explicit) of applying military force

¹Wolfers, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

in response to the aggression." Deterrence, similar to all forms of power, functions in an inducing capacity to dissuade individuals from doing things that they would not otherwise do or refrain from doing. We speak of individuals in this case for the simple reason that the international system is composed of "actors" and "nations" interrelating and interacting with each other. Walter Clemens, Jr. has described it in the following manner:

The international political system is a product of both voluntarism and determinism. It is an artifice that men make; and it is an organism that grows in unforeseen ways as a result of the forces impacting upon it.

Because states are abstractions, or at best conglomerates of personalities, it is not the nation or state that makes the political or military decisions and acts but always individuals (though they be politicians or statesmen). Since decisions are translated into strategies by individuals, "human elements are the real keys to the making

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3Snyder, op. cit., p. 167. This definition is a simplified definition of deterrence given in the Introduction of this paper (see supra, p. 7, n. 16). This simplified definition will be the meaning of the term in the remainder of this paper.

4Clemens, op. cit., p. 3.

5Strategy is here defined as: "The art of applying force so that it makes the most effective contribution towards achieving the ends set by political policy." In Andre Beaufre, An Introduction to Strategy (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 22.
and execution of strategy."⁶ Leaders, statesmen, and politicians make decisions, not states. Governments are made up of persons and we have, through the use of more sophisticated research methods, learned a great deal about the behavior of persons.⁷ This point need not be labored; in the final analysis: "It is a truism that all action within the international system can be reduced to the action of individuals."⁸ The international system is a dynamic system, not a static one. It involves the transmission and communication of nations' policies, attitudes, and intentions. (Through the medium of "elite articulation," a nation's stated objectives and national interests are expressed) It is through the manipulation of political power as well as military power that such interests are achieved. To this end, deterrence is the means through which they may be secured.

Although the aim of deterrence strategy can


⁷This point is emphasized by Bernard Brodie, On Escalation, op. cit., see pp. 130-140.

hardly be misinterpreted, "To deter direct nuclear attack on the United States . . . ," the deterrent system also must be able to " . . . deter any kind of aggression, whether military or non-military." Deterrence strategy must not only be functional at the level of deterring a major nuclear war, but it also must provide for the unforeseen, for technological or enemy-inspired surprises, for various options to insure that strategy can serve policy, and for a margin of error or miscalculation on both sides. The outcome desired in implementing deterrence strategy can be described as follows:

... to force the enemy to accept the terms we wish to impose on him. In this dialectic of wills a decision is achieved when a certain psychological effect has been produced on the enemy; when he becomes convinced that it is useless to start or alternatively to continue the struggle. 1

As one author has stated: "Deterrence is the real world, not a game." A bipolar world loses the perspective for

11 Beaufre, op. cit., p. 23.
12 Arthur Waskow, The Limits of Defense (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 12. In Waskow's reference to "game," he is referring to the mathematical games Thomas Schelling plays in his Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963). There are two main types: (1) "non-zero-sum game" and (2) "zero-sum game." The "zero-sum" game is considered by strategists as the "pure form of conflict."
nuance: a gain for one side takes the form as an absolute loss for the other. The international system is like a "delicate balance of terror"\textsuperscript{13} in which a serious miscalculation by either super power may lead to the mutual destruction of both.

The capacity to deter is a function of several factors: (1) military capabilities, (2) military preparedness, (3) credibility of threats, and (4) the total cost-gain expectations of the party to be deterred. The summation of such factors may be called "political power."

Described in another fashion, Robert Dahl has written that power consists of four basic components: base, means, amount, and scope. These four components are ultimately transformed through the use of deterrence strategy into national power. National power is "... the ability to influence the behavior of another nation in accordance with the goals of one's own action."

Dahl\textsuperscript{15} states that the power base is the material or attribute (capability) that provides the capacity to affect the value positions of others, e.g., military force

\textsuperscript{13}See Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," \textit{World Politics}, XXXVII (January 1959), 211ff.

\textsuperscript{14}Dean G. Pruitt, "National Power and International Responsiveness," in Sondermann and Olson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 293.

and economic assets. The means, according to Dahl, is the method by which the power base is brought to bear, for example, by threat, ultimatum, or force demonstration. The amount of power is the degree of influence over potential actions. The scope is the range of potential actions by the other party which can be influenced by the threat or promise of applying the base. To translate this into the terms of deterrence, the following would apply: the base in graduated deterrence is the capacity to inflict unacceptable punishment on the enemy; the means is the threat of retaliation; the scope refers to the various forms of aggression, the probability of which may be reduced by the threat; and the amount is the reduction in probability of each of these moves which results from the threat.\(^\text{16}\)

Aside from the four components just mentioned, two other factors need to be mentioned: the object values and the credibility of a threat or promise. Object values are the values of the other party. They are typically his total cost-gain expectations in pursuing a certain act and they are subject to being decreased or increased by the actual carrying out of the threat or promise. The sixth component, credibility,\(^\text{17}\) is the least.

\(^{16}\)For a definitive discussion of these categories, see Snyder, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 163ff.

\(^{17}\)For an operational definition of credibility, see \textit{supra}, p. 9.
tangible and most crucial element in the strategy of deter­
rence. "Credibility," states David Singer, is "... making
the potential attacker believe that the threat will be
carried out." Interpreting what the author has so far
said, it can be seen that the political power and the
foundation of deterrence reside in two distinct elements:
capabilities (i.e., the capacity to affect the object
values of the aggressor by application of a power base) and
the deterrer's intent to use these capabilities if one's
demands are not met. Political power is the ability to
persuade or influence which results from threat or promise
to inflict deprivations to object values; physical power
is the ability to affect object values. Physical power,
which in a state is transformed into military power, is
"... ultimately the power to destroy and kill, or to
occupy and control, and hence to coerce." Deter­
rence is a form of power relation--the power to dissuade. Deter­
rence is the discouragement of military aggression by
threat of applying military force in response to aggres­
sion. And as Henry Kissinger has said: "There can be no

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18 David Singer, Deterrence, Arms Control, and Dis­
armament (Columbus, Ohio: State University Press, 1962),
p. 57.

19 Snyder, op. cit., p. 165.

20 Klaus Knorr, On the Uses of Military Power in
the Nuclear Age (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University
gap in deterrence. Deterrence is either effective or it is not.  

The Logic of Deterrence

Deterrence, like all political phenomena, is not likely to operate as a strict law or principle. However, it does have a consistent and logical foundation.

The object of military deterrence as stated is to "deter aggression," whether it is of the military or non-military type. This involves reducing the probability of enemy military (aggressor) moves inimical to one's self. Snyder states that the probability of any particular attack by the aggressor is the result of four factors which exist in his mind. All four taken together are the aggressor's risk calculus. Snyder defines them in the following manner:

(1) The aggressor's valuation of an objective;
(2) The cost which he expects to suffer in an attack on the objective, as the result of various possible responses by the deterrer;
(3) The probability of various responses, including no response;
(4) The probability of winning the objective with each possible response.  

These are the basic factors the aggressor must assess in determining whether an action is likely to result in a net gain or a net cost. The "risk calculus" is in part a


22 See Snyder, op. cit., p. 167.
psychological matter. "It rests principally upon an enemy's judgment of the likelihood of various possible outcomes of an attack." The third factor in the aggressor's "risk calculus" represents the credibility of various possible responses by the actions of the deterrer. The deterrent effectiveness of a possible or threatened response is a function of all four factors.

The Concept of Credibility

The "credibility factor" in deterrence strategy has an essential function inasmuch as it is through the aggressor's calculation of the deterrer's "credibility" and "perceived intentions" that he bases his decisions to act.

A restatement of this concept may be useful at this time:

23Kahn, Thinking the Unthinkable, op. cit., p. 111. Kahn presents a penetrating discussion of deterrence strategy and states that U.S. military policy seeks to achieve at least six broad strategic objectives:

(1) Type I Deterrence—to deter a large attack on the military forces, population, or the wealth of the U.S.;
(2) Type II Deterrence—to deter extremely provocative actions short of war on the U.S.;
(3) Improved War Outcome—to limit damage to the U.S. and to improve the military outcome for the U.S.;
(4) Stability—to reduce the likelihood of an inadvertent thermonuclear war;
(5) Comprehensive Arms Control—to control and limit both arms race and the use of force in settling disputes;
(6) Type III Deterrence—to deter provocations not covered by Type II Deterrence, such as Controlled Reprisal, other limited wars, mobilizations, negotiations, and so forth. This author cannot disagree with these objectives. These were valid military objectives actively pursued by our national government in the early 1960's.
Credibility is defined as the perception by the threatened party [aggressor] of the degree of probability that the power-wielder [detrerrer] will actually carry out the threat if its terms are not complied with or will keep a promise if its conditions are met. (See supra, p. 9.)

"The paradoxical consequences," when the aggressor attempts to calculate his risk calculus, "is that the success of military policy depends on essentially psychological criteria." The aggressor's "risk calculus" is determined by estimating the expected costs involved in pursuing a certain objective should that objective not be obtained, and also the expected net gains are calculated. The potential aggressor is presumably deterred from a military move not simply when his expected cost exceeds his expected gain but when the net gain is less or the net cost is more than he expects when he refrains from the move. Expectations are based on the calculations of the detrerrer's image system, attitudes, intentions, and credibility factor. The images created by the credibility factor are crucial. "Images guide human behavior. . . .

Most decisions are made on the basis of facts as seen by

24 Kissinger, op. cit., p. 12. For a socio-psychological approach to international policies, see David Singer, Human Behavior and International Politics (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965); also Joseph de Rivera, The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy (Columbus, Ohio: C. E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1968).

25 Snyder, op. cit., p. 166.
the decision-maker.  The power base of nuclear deterrence which provides the capacity to affect the value positions (expectations) of the aggressor is the arsenal of weapons available to the deterrer.  (As Hans Morgenthau has indicated, nuclear force has a "psychological function pure and simple." He further states that,

the prospective opponents are kept constantly aware of the inevitability of their own destruction should they resort to nuclear force, and this awareness prevents them from resorting to it. . . . In the nuclear age, the very purpose of threat and counterthreat is to prevent the test of actual performance from taking place. The appearance of possessing both the ability and the resolution to make good the threat and counterthreat becomes, then, of paramount importance as a condition for the success of mutual deterrence. . . . The nature of this condition, it will be noted, is political rather than military for what is essential is the appearance, not the reality, of possessing the ability and resolution to make good threat and counterthreat.27  

26Stagner, op. cit., pp. 55-69ff. For matters of clarification a decision is defined as "... any act, symbolic or overt, which is socially defined as a commitment to carry out a specified task, to take the responsibilities of a specified social role, or to execute a specified course of action in the future." See Irving L. Janis, "Decisional Conflicts: A Theoretical Analysis," Journal of Conflict Resolution, III (March 1959), 6.

In the mechanics of mutual deterrence an element of bluff, either real or supposed, is required. Deterrence works only because there remains in the minds of both sides a doubt as to whether the other side is really bluffing. This creates a condition of mutual deterrence which is "... the ability—mutually recognized—of each side to destroy the other, no matter who strikes first."  

Deterrence strategy is clearly based on a belief system involving such criteria as the following: interpretations of images, psychological dispositions of both parties, perceived intentions, and credibility factors. Since decision-makers act upon their definition of the situation and their images, it is imperative that threats and counterthreats be implemented in such a way as to reinforce positively the aggressor's expectation of net loss rather than anticipated net gains. The deterrer's credibility factor must impress upon the aggressor through the perceptual mechanism of threats and counterthreats that certain objectives are valued highly by the deterrer. The problem of deterrence thus becomes the problem of

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29For an illustrative analysis of national "belief systems," see Ole R. Holsti, "The Belief System and National Images," Journal of Conflict Resolution, VI, No. 5 (1962), 244-245ff. Holsti notes that a belief system "orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him its salient characteristics" (p. 245).
credibility." The purpose of a threat is to prevent an undesired action (i.e., military or non-military aggression) without actually engaging the aggressor in conflict. "A threat will be credible if there is reason to believe that the one who makes the threat is both able and willing to carry it out." (Italics mine.) Thomas Schelling has stated the matter quite definitively when he said:

We have learned that a threat has to be credible to be efficacious and that its credibility may depend on the costs and risks associated with fulfillment for the party making the threat. We have developed the idea of making a threat credible by getting ourselves committed to its fulfillment, through the stretching of a "trip wire" across the enemy's paths of advance or by making fulfillment a matter of national honor and prestige. . . .

Schelling further states that a threat must be backed by action not words, both the threat and the commitment have to be communicated. If not, he (detterrer) may deter the threat itself. Schelling goes on to say:

Any loopholes the threatening party leaves himself, if they are visible to the threatened party, weaken the visible commitment and hence reduce the credibility of the threat.

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31Fink, op. cit., p. 54.

32Schelling, op. cit., p. 6.
It is essential, therefore, for maximum credibility, to leave as little room as possible for judgment or discretion in carrying out the threat. The threat must invoke overt acts rather than intentions; it must be attached to the visible deeds not invisible ones.

And finally, the act of punishment must be one whose effect or influence is clearly a discernible one.33

A summary remark concerning the above might be helpful:

Deterrence requires a combination of power, the will to use it, and the assessment of these by the potential aggressor. Moreover, deterrence is a product of those factors and not a sum. If any one of them is zero, deterrence fails. Strength, no matter how overwhelming, is useless without the willingness to resort to it.34 (Italics mine.)

Schelling states that the deterrer must threaten that he will act, not that he may act, if the threat fails. To say that one may act is to say that one may not, and to say this is to confess that one has kept the power of decision—that one is not committed.35 In order for threats to be credible and for the deterrer to be able to pledge his reputation behind a threat, there must be continuity between the present and subsequent issues that will arise. (The deterrer must exhibit a uniformity and continuity in expressing threats.)

It must be remembered that "deterrence fails when

33Ibid., pp. 40-41.
34Kissinger, op. cit., p. 12.
the attacker decides that the defender's threat is not likely to be fulfilled. A successful threat is one not implemented.

It is somewhat of a paradox that deterrence strategy's logical core is based so much on psychological factors. A good example is the matter of a threat which is meant as a bluff. If taken seriously by the aggressor the bluff is more useful than a serious threat which is interpreted as a bluff. When bluffs are tested and found wanting, "the nuclear threat will lose a measure of its plausibility," and in consequence "it will lose a measure of its restraining effect." 38

At this point a word should be said about the element of "rationality." To act "rationally" means simply to choose from among the available courses of action (i.e., objectives in "risk calculus"), the one which promises to maximize expected values (or minimize expected cost) over the long run. 39


38 Morgenthau, Four Paradoxes, op. cit., p. 24.

39 The most usual concept of rationality is that it is a process of means-ends analysis. The simplest case of means-ends analysis involves a single goal sought by the decision-maker. Rational choice is the selection among alternatives of the action that maximizes the goal. See Sidney Verba in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, The
society," says Thomas Milburn, "will not, for example, seek loss but only some kind of win." An example will suffice to explicate the definition of rational: A rational individual will be reluctant to participate in a game of chance in which he may lose his entire capital, even if his mathematical expectation is one of substantial gain. The deterrence model assumes rationality of both deterrer and aggressor. "Deterrence is not a game, it is the real world." A potential aggressor for example will not start or attempt a first strike if he knows that such action will ultimately lead to his own destruction. Such calculations are the workings of "madmen." But as Kahn has said:

Our deterrent must be powerful enough to withstand all of the stresses and strains of the cold war, of sudden and unexpected crises, of possible accidents and miscalculations, of satellite revolts, of limited wars, of fanciful calculations by optimistic gamblers or simple-minded theoreticians, and of these situations in which "reciprocal fear of surprise attack" might destabilize an inadequate deterrent. . . . Moreover we want to deter even the mad.  


Kahn, Thinking the Unthinkable, op. cit., p. 111. Kahn's remarks concerning deterring the "mad" may not be comprehensible to the layman, but Kahn is sincere. Perhaps the "living would envy the dead" as Kahn remorselessly states.
In summary, for deterrent effectiveness, according to Snyder, the deterrer must make sure that his military posture and threats pose greater costs than gains for the aggressor and to make sure that his threat is believed. The deterrer must estimate how much evidence supporting the threatened intent would be necessary to achieve credibility.

Rhetoric is no substitute for action in foreign affairs. Power and influence are the means of facilitating deterrence, and "... they share the role of being the means par excellence of foreign policy." Power and influence are inextricably interrelated to will and determination. The first law of foreign policy is self-preservation. The two basic goals of foreign policy are: (1) to enhance the security of the nation and (2) to provide for the well-being of its citizenry. To these ends, deterrence strategy must address itself.

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42 Wolfers, op. cit., p. 104.

43 Security is here defined as physical safety, territorial integrity, and political independence.

44 Well-being requires the preservation of cultures and values of its way of life.
The Requirements of Effective Executive Leadership

The role of the Chief Executive in foreign affairs is indisputable--his is the "vital center of action" in the formulation, initiation, and implementation of foreign policy. Throughout history, writes a leading student of the Constitution, "the greatest single force in setting the course of American foreign policy has been the presidential initiative." The many roles the President performs in the Twentieth Century reveal the enormousness of his tasks and his duties: he is the chief executive; he is the chief legislator; he is the chief of foreign policy and the commander-in-chief and party leader and chief of state--the states' unifying symbol. Herman Finer, one of the outstanding scholars of the presidency, has quite

45 John F. Kennedy, a Pulitzer Prize winner for his Profiles in Courage, was the thirty-fifth President of the United States (1961-1963). This speech was delivered to the National Press Club on January 14, 1960, as quoted in Robert S. Hirschfield, The Power of the Presidency (New York: Atherton Press, Inc., 1968), p. 131. This particular quote was paraphrased by Kennedy from a sentence written by Woodrow Wilson in his chapter on "The President of the United States" in Constitutional Government in the United States (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), pp. 54-87. This sentence read: "His is the vital place of action in the system." See also Hirschfield, op. cit., p. 95.

realistically described not only the dynamism of the office but also its overshadowing burdens in the following remark:

The quality of the government of the American nation is staked almost entirely on a gamble—the gamble of the sufficiency of one man's personal qualities of mind and character and physique, pitted against the appalling tasks that history has thrust on the Office of the President of the United States.47

It may indeed be true, as Woodrow Wilson once said: "The President is at liberty, both in law and conscience, to be as big a man as he can,"48 but as history has revealed law and conscience must often yield to time and circumstance. But the fact remains: "He himself must integrate and decide. He must lead; his decisions define what the national interest is."49

As Richard Neustadt sees it, the problem of the President involves personal power and politics. "Presidential power is the power to persuade."50 The President's dilemma is power: what it is, how to get it, how to keep it, and how to use it. The power to persuade and influence is inextricably involved in foreign policy, for


49 de Rivera, op. cit., p. 131.

50 Neustadt, op. cit., p. 10.
"All foreign policy depends on the ability to get other nations to do what one wants them to do or to desist from doing what one does not want them to do." The President is the prime strategist in foreign policy. He defines and articulates the national goals, security objectives, and foreign policy. But government is not merely contemplation: "It is action, the solution of problems and the subdual of difficulties. Conviction and consciousness propose the direction and suggest the means." The act of conducting foreign policy successfully, Walter Lippmann has contended, "consists in bringing into balance, with a comfortable surplus of power in reserve, the nation's commitments and the nation's power." The President, in order to preserve the security of the nation, must act purposefully in the face of the challenges confronting the nation. (Since American policy is so explicitly based on deterrence strategy, our strategy must pay particular attention to determining how the aggressor is calculating his risks). Strategy must be able to assess the forces which move contemporary events and discover the means for shaping them in the desired direction. "A good strategist," according to Robert Ginsburg,

52 Finer, op. cit., p. 121.
... will seek to preserve maximum freedom of action to cope with the enemy while restricting the choices available to him. To achieve this objective, he should devise a strategy that will take maximum advantage of national strengths, minimize the adverse effect of national weaknesses and restrict the enemy's ability to do the same.53 (Italics mine.)

The international system involving "actors" and "nations" is an environment which has accurately been called the "test of wills."

Each side tries to probe and estimate the other side's degree of commitment and fears. . . . Each sign of caution in the opponents is likely to be taken as evidence that the opponent wants to avoid confrontation and fears the consequences; and this, of course, could then increase the morale and resolve of the other side.54

In the realm of world affairs, experience has shown that the surest way to convince the aggressor of U.S. resolve is not by "formal protests, solemn declarations, or threats of using the bomb but by quick countermeasures against harassment and infringements."55 The mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence of the international system dictates that threats and counterthreats by the aggressor must be met with firm resistance and commitment.5

An ironclad commitment to stated policy objectives


54Kahn, On Escalation, op. cit., p. 248.

55David Binder, "Are We Really Standing Firm in Berlin?" Reporter, XXVI (March 15, 1962), 22.
establishes a "trip-line" across which the potential aggressor dares not cross. Threats of punishment and deprivation of object values serve to deter the aggressor from moves inimical to one's self. Threats by the enemy will constitute "probes for weakness or for lack of concern with a particular objective."

The President's behavior, as expressed through his words and demonstrated by his actions must lend credibility to national strategy; if rhetoric is a substitute for action, a credibility gap will result. (The President's resolve and determination in acting decisively in the face of unknown risks and dangers will ultimately determine whether the international system will experience a degree of stability.) For, as Robert Osgood has noted:

'It follows the mutual restraint of the superpowers in avoiding war or coming perilously close to the brink of war depends less on the military balance than on their estimation of each others' comparative resolve to use force in a clash of interests.'

(Resolve on the part of the President is merely his ability to give credibility to national strategy and security objectives.) Resolve can be demonstrated to the

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57 Robert Osgood, op. cit., p. 148. Resolve in foreign policy decision-making is associated with the ability of a leader to make up his mind and to come to a decision. More specifically, it means "a firmness in carrying out a decision or a purpose."
potential aggressor by offering "... the most powerful and indisputable evidence of complete determination to resist any aggression"..." that he may attempt. Resolve is demonstrated by making decisions which affect the behavior of the aggressor and make "a believer out of him." The President has the responsibility for making certain decisions, but whether he actually makes these decisions depends on his decisiveness. The office gives him certain powers, and he must assert them. The President "... cannot expect to ignore initiatives ..." from the aggressor "... with impunity but must respond in kind." Since governments and their leaders "create events which some other nation's decision-makers will interpret in their own way and will react to it in the context of their own internal affairs," it is imperative that national leaders impart positive images of strength, resolution, and willingness to use force. The President's task is to provide leadership based upon understanding the requirements of correct and effective action. Such

59 Triska and Finley, op. cit., p. 307.
60 de Rivera, op. cit., p. 18.
61 "Correct and effective" action is closely associated in the strategy of deterrence with the term "win." Effective action is action which subdues or resolves a conflict in your favor—a win. A win defined in deterrence
action requires the successful implementation of power and physical force. Former President Eisenhower has said that this country's prestige and power should never be committed unless its chief executive was determined to win. "There is no alternative," he declared. "Force is a naked, brutal thing in this world. . . . If you are going to use it, you have got to be prepared to go all the way." The use of physical force serves notice on the aggressor that we value highly certain national interests and objectives. Implementation of force clarifies the basic goals of policy toward major issues and areas. The President cannot afford to be indifferent about the use of force. The threatened use of military force is a dissuading mechanism employed to persuade the aggressor


62 "Force represents the capacity to compel compliance" normally pursued through overt means such as military power. Force is a cause that produces a change or stops action. See Reinhold Niebuhr, "Berlin and Prestige in Europe," The New Republic, CXLV (September 28, 1961), 17; and cf. Robert Osgood, Limited War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 11-20.

from taking military action against your vital interests.

National leaders and particularly the President

... cannot be indifferent to the impact of war and military power upon national self-interests; therefore, they must base national strategy upon a sound conception of the conditions for using military power effectively.64

As Robert Osgood has further noted, "A capricious, compulsive, or irresponsible use of military power cannot be expedient."65 Force is indeed a "naked, brutal thing" and commitments must be honored. The cost involved in not honoring threats of military deprivation results in a weakened and unbelievable credibility posture. If a "test of wills" occurs, the deterrer must fulfill his threat obligations by exhibiting to the aggressor the necessary resolve and force to persuade him to desist from the aggressive action. According to Robert Tucker, there can be no hesitation in fulfilling our commitments to use force:

Any attempt to set limitations upon the manner of employing force must not only prove quite artificial and ineffective in practice, but might serve to encourage potential aggressions.66

What the U.S. does in world affairs testifies much more positively about its claimed attachment to

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64 Robert Osgood, Limited War, op. cit., p. 13.
freedom, or national security objectives, or its concern for core interests than what its leaders say about such principles. The mark of a great nation is determined not alone by its inherent finiteness or extrinsic capability but also by the degree of its steadfastness in accepting the burdens that challenge its very existence.  

Hans Morgenthau, in writing about the role of the chief executive in conducting foreign policy, has elaborated the distinctive qualities of the statesman's decision-making capacity in the following manner:

It is a commitment to action. It is a commitment to a particular action that precludes all other courses of action. It is a decision taken in the face of the unknown and the unknowable.  

Morgenthau goes on further to discuss the relationship between words and deeds:

His rhetoric is verbalized action, an explanation of deeds to come. What still moves us today in the recorded oratory of a Churchill or a Roosevelt is not so much the literary quality per se as the organic connection between the words and the deeds.

The statesman must commit himself to a particular course of action to the exclusion of all others. He must cross the Rubicon or refrain from crossing it, but he cannot have it both ways. If he goes forward he takes certain risks, and if he stands still he takes other risks. There is no riskless middle ground. Nor can he, recoiling before the


risks of one course of action, retrace his steps and try some other tack, promising risks different and fewer. He has crossed the Rubicon and cannot undo that crossing.  

Once a national leader makes a commitment to action through verbalized statements of policy, the implementation of such policy, if it is to be credible, must demonstrate its uniformity and continuity through time. There can be no middle course.

The sources of power which are directly derived from military capabilities are contingent upon the quality and the image which presidential leadership projects in the world. The President protects his power and personal influence by making decisions that build up and strengthen his image and prestige. "To make decisions with insight, the political leader must have learned to know himself and to master his identity." Presidential decision-making requires conviction, will, vision, and commitment. As Charles Marshall states:

Will is the faculty for making choices. The difference between a weak and a determined will is simply a difference in steadfastness in carrying through with the renunciations inescapably involved in making choices.

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69Ibid., p. 52.


Choices made by the President in decision-making guard his influence. They serve his power. The President's reputation is either made or altered by the man himself: what he says; what he does; what he omits; or what he does not do. The President's own conduct will decide what other people and other nations think of him. As Neustadt states, the President's reputation is a crucial factor in determining whether he will be able to influence others:

His general reputation will be shaped by signs of pattern in the things he says and does. These are the words and actions he has chosen day by day. His choices are the means by which he does what he can do to build his reputation as he wants it. Decisions are his building-blocks. He has no others in his hands.

His choices of what he will do and when and how—his choices also of whom he will tell and in what way, and words—are his means to protect this source of influence, just as they are his means to guard those other power sources: bargaining relationships and professional reputation. A President's own prospects for effective influence are regulated by his choices of objectives, and of timing, and of instruments, and by his choice of choices to avoid.

For the President to make the most of power and to guard his own reputation and prestige, he must understand the composition of power. According to Neustadt,

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72 Neustadt, op. cit., pp. 56-57.
73 Ibid., p. 84.
74 Ibid., p. 107.
if the President wants power for the future, he must guard it in the present. He protects his power, as best he can, when he appraises the effects of present action on the sources of his influence. 75

The President must act with resolve, conviction, command, courage, coherence, constancy, conscientiousness, and decisive firmness 76 if he is to solve successfully and effectively the many emergencies he is called upon to meet. His task is not an easy one, but his power to meet and solve problems is only as great as his knowledge of what power is and how to use it. "The presidency is no place for an amateur" 77 politician or statesman.

Effective leadership by the chief executive in foreign policy requires that the following criteria be met:

1. We must emphasize rather than belittle our strengths if we are to keep our enemies convinced of our military superiority.
2. We must make every effort to impress on the enemy that we have an unquestionable war-winning capability and that we have taken adequate measures to preserve that capability. . . .
3. We must continuously demonstrate to our friends and enemies, through both word and action, that we have the determination to apply our military

75 Ibid., p. 181.

76 For definition of terms, see Finer, op. cit., pp. 120-147.

77 Ibid., p. 124.
superiority as may be necessary to protect our interests and those of our allies.78 (Italics mine.)

However difficult the challenge, the test of deterrence strategy will be its ability to meet it. When all is said and done the "... great test of effectiveness for any defense posture lies in its performance as the basic guardian of American interests"79 (italics mine).

78Power, op. cit., p. 137.

CHAPTER II

THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION: A DESIGN

FOR DETERRENCE

In the United States, every great "crisis period" has been marked by the correspondingly powerful and strong executive leadership of one man—the President. The terms of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Jackson, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt were periods of aggressive and strong executive leadership. As Hirschfield has noted, "It is not surprising, therefore, that all of the 'Great Presidents' have held office during periods of great crisis."¹

The Kennedy Administration was not without its challenges and crisis periods. In the first eight months of the Kennedy Administration, the President was to face a national recession, the Congo, Laos, the Bay of Pigs, Berlin, nuclear testing, the United Nations, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Vietnam, and the race in space.

The decade of the 1960's brought major changes to the world on the international scene as well as on the

¹Hirschfield, op. cit., p. 9.
domestic fronts. But one of the most hopeful and re­assuring events of the early 1960's was the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency of the United States. To many, the election of the young, seemingly prophetic senator from Massachusetts meant a rebirth of the assertiveness of the U.S. in all spheres of activity. President Kennedy not only spoke of the many problems that beset this country, but of the country's latent greatness. The urgency of his message was clear. In the State of the Union Message, in January 1961, President Kennedy said:

I speak today in an hour of national peril and national opportunity. Before my term has ended, we shall have to test anew whether a nation organized and governed such as ours can endure. The outcome is by no means certain. The answers are by no means clear. All of us together--this Administration, this Congress, this nation--must forge those answers.2

Life in 1961 will not be easy. . . . There will be further setbacks before the tide is turned. But turn it must. The hopes of all mankind rest with us; . . . .3

So, with the orderly transition of power from one administration to the next, the Kennedy Administration prepared itself for the difficult task of rebuilding and reasserting the political, economic, military, and moral capabilities of the U.S.


3Ibid., p. 33.
All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin. 4

John F. Kennedy in the White House

This chapter will be concerned with identifying and examining the statements made by John Kennedy while he was campaigning for the office of President of the United States and also the statements of policy enunciated in his first legislative year as President. The first year of a President's term is of more than ordinary importance. In his first year the President "sets the force and style of his Administration, and in large part formulates the goals that will concern him throughout his years in the White House." 5 This writer is interested in knowing what John F. Kennedy said, what he did, and how he acted. Foreign policy objectives and interests are what the foreign policy elite say they are; and in the areas of foreign policy the President's statements define and clarify such objectives and interests. The views the President expresses concerning foreign policy are the tangible evidence to the commitment and direction of the nation itself. "The history of this nation," said

4Kennedy, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1961, in To Turn the Tide, op. cit., p. 9.

5Gardner, op. cit., "Editor's Note."
Kennedy, "its brightest and its bleakest pages--has been largely written in terms of the different views our Presidents have had of the Presidency itself."^ 6

It has been said of John F. Kennedy that "No other President in history had been as well prepared for the job."^ 7 His knowledge of the office was excellent. He had spent years reading past histories and biographies of all the "great Presidents." As Theodore Sorensen has said, "... he [the President] enjoyed reading Dick Neustadt's Presidential Power, with its emphasis on personal power and its politics; what it is, how to get it, how to keep it, and how to use it."^ 8 Kennedy brought to the White House unusual firsthand knowledge of the foreign, domestic, legislative, and political arenas, but no experience in executive affairs. His area of expertise was in foreign affairs. While a senator, he spent most of his years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As a young senator, Kennedy had on many occasions referred to the U.S.'s tenuous position in world affairs, armaments, and economic growth as inexcusable. Kennedy talked in terms of

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^6Hirschfield, op. cit., p. 5.


Kennedy believed in rationality and action. "As a grandchild of the Age of Reason," as Sidney Hyman has said, "Kennedy believed . . . that pure reason could make all good things happen as they say."

Kennedy's knowledge of the history of the presidency, of the theory of presidential power, and of the techniques of Congressional infighting was developed to a degree unheard of in the histories of former Presidents. Kennedy's political philosophy is clearly revealed in the following remarks:

Both the Constitution and practical experience demonstrate that initiative in foreign affairs must come from the Executive branch.

It is the intractable and unresolved differences within the Executive branch--and its failure of nerve--that inhibit decisive action.

It is finally a matter of demonstrating our determination to defy any threats of blackmail, such as those which were applied in the Suez crisis and whose success obviously impressed the Soviet leaders.11

I want to be a President known--at the end of four years--as one who not only held back the Communist tide but advanced the cause of freedom and rebuilt American prestige--not by words but by deeds--not by stating great aims merely as a good


debater, but by doing great deeds as a good neighbor--not by tours and conferences abroad, but by vitality and direction at home. . . .12 (Italics mine.)

Kennedy's philosophy was action-oriented; he turned away from verbal solutions. If the goals of peace, freedom, justice, and prosperity were to triumph, they must first become meaningful in concrete American deeds, not in propagandized policy exhortations. The Kennedy image was one of "sober common sense and resolute action. . . ."13 The Kennedy Administration was to be an executive show. Kennedy's overall charge was that the U.S. had been "drifting, slipping, and dawdling in the world."14 In the campaign it became clear that only he could provide the strong presidential leadership the nation needed in the 1960's, or so he began to insist. In a campaign speech delivered before the National Press Club, on January 14, 1960, Kennedy spoke of the need for a strong and determined leader to face and resolve the challenges of the coming decade:


In the coming years, we will need a real fighting mood in the White House. In the decade that lies ahead, the President must place himself in the very thick of the fight. He must be prepared to exercise the fullest powers of his office—all that are specified and some that are not. The President alone must make the major decisions of our foreign policy.

Kennedy had come to believe that what was necessary to build the economic, military, and moral power of the nation was "affirmative government" directed by a strong President. As far as Kennedy was concerned, "there could be no sign of weakness," whether it was in domestic policies, foreign policies, or administrative affairs.

Kennedy's policy statements conveyed a sense of concern, a vast command of information, and a mood of decisive leadership. In his Inaugural Address, President Kennedy spoke of the determination and conviction of this great nation to meet its commitments:

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.

Let all our neighbors know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house. (Italics mine.)

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16 For an explanation of the term, see Lasky, pp. 209-211.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.18

Kennedy's forceful language imparted an image of steadfastness and certainty. The firmness in his address conveyed by such phrases as "pay any price" and "bear any burden" was unmistakingly clear. The conviction expressed in Kennedy's presidential speeches can also be found in his campaign speeches. They shed a particularly illustrative light on his policy goals, ideas, and objectives. Most of Kennedy's campaign speeches were typically a condemnation of weak executive leadership in the nation and a plea for strong, creative leadership. "Platitudes and slogans" were to Kennedy "no substitutes for strength and planning."19 One of Kennedy's caustic criticisms of the Eisenhower Administration was its lack of long-range planning, and the lack of a coherent and purposeful national strategy backed by strength. Kennedy's policy statements, as many historians have written, had "ringing Rooseveltian overtones."20 Kennedy was appealing to the

18Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit., pp. 7-9ff.


20For further explanation, see Lasky, op. cit., pp. 21-23.
American instinct for the recovery of elan.\textsuperscript{21} He had on many occasions during his campaign stated that words and discussion were not substitutes for strength. His message and image were one of firmness and action in dealing with the enemy:

Our task is to rebuild our strength and the strength of a free world—to prove to the Soviets that time and the course of history are not on their side, that the balance of world power is not shifting their way—and that therefore peaceful settlement is essential to mutual survival. . . . As a power we will never strike first. . . . We must regain the ability to intervene effectively and swiftly in any limited war anywhere in the world. . . . We must begin to develop new workable programs for peace and the control of arms. . . . We must halt the spiraling arms race that burdens the entire world with a fantastic financial drain, excessive military establishments. . . . We must work to build the stronger America on which our ultimate ability to defend the free world depends.

Kennedy's speeches were a strange blend of incompatible policy objectives. Build the strength of the nation, but at the same time pursue peace and limitation of weapons. At times Kennedy emphasized that this country must demonstrate that it has the capacity to defend itself in a world of intercontinental-ballistic missiles, while simultaneously expressing the belief that this country

\textsuperscript{21}"Elan is something indefinable that sets in motion all its forces and resources, stretching each to the utmost and giving the ensemble its meaning." See Lerner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 238.

\textsuperscript{22}Kennedy, \textit{The Strategy of Peace, op. cit.}, see "Introduction."
must—on American initiative—exploit every opportunity that the dynamics of the change in Soviet life may offer to move toward peace. In a speech given in Washington, D.C., in January 1960, Kennedy said:

The first duty of an officer in a democratic government is to uphold the integrity of words used in public debate; and to do this by himself using them in ways where they will stand as one with the things they are meant to represent.23

The importance of such a duty can be seen in its role as an influencing and communicational device which demonstrates your intentions to the enemy. The interpretation of behavior in the international system is based on images and statements of policy; and demonstrations of action determine how the enemy evaluates the images. Credibility of words and threats is positively reinforced by decisive action and firmness in dealing with aggression.

Kennedy's approach to the Soviet Union appeared unambiguous in his early campaign speeches. When he had met Khrushchev in 1959, Kennedy said that he was "shrewd, tough, vigorous, well-informed, and confident."24 Kennedy went on to say,

No, Khrushchev has left no doubt of his self-confidence— and I am equally confident that, in conditions of peace, we can see freedom thrive and spread— even someday to Mr. Khrushchev's grandchildren... It may be that an agreement in the

23Ibid., p. 3.
24Ibid., p. 5.
control and limitation of nuclear tests will be the
beginning. . . . Another dramatic step that might
reverse the present problem would be an agreement
on general disarmament and demilitarization for some
particular area of tension.25

We look for deeds not words. And we too must
offer deeds, not words.

We need a new approach to the Russians--one that
is just as hard-headed and just as realistic as
Mr. Khrushchev's but one that might well end the
current phase--the frozen, belligerent, brink-of-war
phase--of the long cold war. . . . All this we can
do, with imagination, patience, determination, and
above all, effort.26 (Italics mine.)

As John Kennedy had made clear, strong words alone do not
make meaningful policy; they must, in foreign affairs in
particular, be backed both by a will and by weapons that
are really strong.27 Kennedy's position made clear
America's goal:

. . . convincing the Soviet leaders that it is dan-
gerous for them to engage in direct or indirect
aggression, futile for them to attempt to impose
their will and their system on other unwilling
people and beneficial to them, as well as to the
world to join in the achievement of a genuine and
enforceable peace.28

Such an undertaking meant a determined search for peace,
a willingness to negotiate, a will to explore problems

25Ibid., p. 29.
26Ibid., pp. 11-12.
27See Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit.,
"Introduction," p. xvi.
28Neal Riemer, "Kennedy's Grand Democratic
mutually, and the need to find areas of cooperation. Kennedy was keenly aware of the dangers of nuclear war, and he sought to prevent violence and distrust from reproducing themselves. He sought to return to the path of "accommodation." William Leuchtenburg has gone as far as to say that once Kennedy was in office,

(He directed his efforts both toward reaching an arms agreement and toward effecting a rapprochement with the Soviet Union. In fact, Kennedy was pursuing as peaceful a course as events would permit. . . . He refused to act except under extreme provocation. . . .)

Kennedy pushed for a detente with the Soviet Union. His policies speak for themselves. To him, the only authentic alternative to mutual annihilation was negotiation. "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate." Kennedy spoke eloquently of achieving peace in a world in which there existed only violence, crisis, and aggression.

29 The Kennedy brand of accommodation cannot be defined as "capitulation" but his willingness to negotiate reflected an image of reserve in using force to his advantage. His paths of accommodation gravely decreased the credibility of the U.S. threat posture. See Sorensen, Kennedy, op. cit., p. 515.


The viability of the Kennedy image was never better demonstrated than on the war-and-peace issue: "... Kennedy was a man of peace..."32 He wanted to answer Soviet threats and probes of American resolve "firmly but not harshly."33

A New Approach to International Affairs and Nuclear Strategy: Cuba, Laos, Berlin, and the Soviet Union

In the 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy had taken firm stands on several issues. One of the most prominent issues was Cuba. In a campaign speech at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on October 15, 1960, Kennedy had said of his Republican rival, Richard Nixon:

"No, Nixon hasn't mentioned Cuba very prominently in this campaign. He talks about standing firm in Berlin, standing firm in the Far East, standing up to Khrushchev. But he never mentions standing firm in Cuba. And if you can't stand firm in Cuba, how can you be expected to stand up to Khrushchev... The transformation of Cuba into a Communist base of operations a few minutes from our coast--by jet plane, missile or submarine--is an incredibly dangerous development to have been permitted by our Republican policy-makers."34

32 Lasky, op. cit., p. 366. Kennedy stressed the value of negotiations, the need for multilateral and non-military responses and the use of limited steps that made clear the nation's intent without forcing the other side to the wall. He wanted any conflict to be confined, not widened or escalated. His aversion to the use of military force was apparent.

33 Sidey, op. cit., p. 58.

The implication was clear: Kennedy was promising more aggressive action against Castro. Kennedy flatly charged that Eisenhower and Nixon had had a do-nothing policy toward Cuba. Warning of the presence of a Communist foothold only 90 miles from our shores, Kennedy promised to do something about it if elected; "... within 90 days" after assuming the presidency he would reassert American leadership at home and abroad. At a California Democratic Council meeting in Fresno on February 12, 1960, Kennedy said: "We cannot afford in the turbulent sixties the persistent indecision of a James Buchanan," which caused Ohio's Senator Sherman to say, 'The Constitution provides for every accidental contingency in the Executive—except a vacancy in the mind of the President.'

Kennedy's commitment and concern over Cuba and the growing menace are revealed in the following campaign utterances:

August 24, 1960
For the first time in the history of the United States an enemy stands poised at the threshold of the United States.

September 2, 1960
I think it is a source of maximum danger. I think the big task for the next administration is going to be to contain this revolution in Cuba itself. . . .

35 Lasky, op. cit., pp. 470-76ff.
36 Ibid., p. 361.
October 15, 1960
We must let Mr. Castro know that we do not intend to be pushed around any longer. . . . We must let Mr. Khrushchev know that we are permitting no expansion of his foothold in our hemisphere. . . .

October 20, 1960
We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista, democratic, anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro.

October 23, 1960
I have never advocated and I do not now advocate intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaty obligations and in fact stated . . . that whatever we did in regard to Cuba should be within the confines of international law.37

As John F. Kennedy became the thirty-fifth President of the United States, he had made up his mind:

"Castro has to go because he is dangerous to American security. . . ."38 The Kennedy attitude was reflected in the following passage in the President's first State of the Union message: "Questions of economic trade policy can always be negotiated. But Communist domination in this hemisphere can never be negotiated."39 As the President himself remarked to one aide, "We can't go on living with this Castro cancer for ten years more."40

39 Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit., p. 23.
position was further clarified in the Cuban "White Paper" of April 3, 1961, in which "the revolution betrayed" was presented as both "a grave and urgent challenge" and "a clear and present danger" to the hemisphere.\(^1\)

In other areas of international crises, such as Laos and Berlin, the Kennedy Administration was just as emphatic in stating its resolve and determination to protect vital national interests. The Kennedy position on Laos involved maintaining the freedom and self-determination of its people:

"We seek in Laos what we seek in all Asia, and indeed, in all the world: freedom for the people and independence for the government. And this nation shall persevere in our pursuit of these objectives.

We strongly and unreservedly support the goal of a neutral and independent Laos, tied to no outside power or group of powers, threatening no one, and free from any domination. . . . If there is to be a peaceful solution, there must be a cessation of the present armed attacks by externally supported Communists. If these attacks do not stop, those who support a genuinely neutral Laos will have to consider their response.

No one should doubt our resolution on this point. We are faced with a clear threat of a change in the internationally agreed position of Laos.

"I want to make it clear to the American people, and to all the world, that all we want in Laos is peace, not war; a truly neutral government, not a Cold War pawn; . . . .\(^2\)


\(^2\)Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit., pp. 23-41.
(In Berlin, a historical and geographical core interest of the U.S., the President's messages unmis­takingly revealed an earnest and firm commitment to pro­tect Berlin "at any risk." After Kennedy had returned from the Vienna talks with Khrushchev, he stated that he had made it clear to Khrushchev that,

... our [U.S.] security of Western Europe, and therefore our own security, are deeply involved in our presence and our access rights to West Berlin, that those rights are based on law and not on suf­ferance, and that we are determined to maintain those rights at any risk, and thus meet our obliga­tion to the people of West Berlin and their right to choose their future.43

In another statement made six days later on a "Report to the Nation on the Berlin Crisis," Kennedy made the following remarks:

In Berlin, as you recall, he [Khrushchev] intends to bring an end, through a stroke of the pen, first, our legal rights to be in West Berlin and, second, our ability to make good on our commitment to the two million free people of that city that we cannot per­mit. ... But if we and our allies act out of strength and unity of purpose, with calm determination and steady nerves, using restraint in our words as well as our weapons, I am hopeful that both peace and free­dom will be sustained.

West Berlin has now become, as never before, the great testing place of Western will in Europe and ... we cannot and will not permit the Communists to drive us out of Berlin, either gradually or by force. ... We must meet our oft-stated pledge to the free peoples of West Berlin, and maintain our rights and their safety. ... We intend to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear action.

43Ibid., pp. 182-183.
In short, while we are ready to defend our interests, we shall also be ready to search for peace, in quiet, exploratory talks, in formal or informal meetings.\footnote{44}

It is with some irony that Kennedy should go on to say that if "we do not meet our commitments to Berlin, where will we later stand?\footnote{45} If we are not true to our word there, all that we have achieved in collective security which relies on these words, will mean nothing. And if there is one path above all others to war, it is the path of weakness and disunity."\footnote{46}

It was clear that Khrushchev had chosen Berlin as a chief battleground for the Cold War, as a major "test of wills"; and Kennedy had vigorously pledged and committed this country. If necessary "we will fight." The security of Berlin cannot be negotiated. "We cannot negotiate with those who say, 'What's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable.'\footnote{47}

Berlin was a crucial testing place for U.S. resolve. If the U.S. exhibited any kind of weakness in fulfilling its obligation, or was driven or squeezed out of

\footnote{44}Ibid., pp. 189-197.
\footnote{45}Implicitly the answer to that question is "in a defensive, reactionary position in the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962," due to the failure of decision-making at a much earlier stage.\footnote{46}Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit., pp. 177-197.
\footnote{47}Ibid., p. 194.
West Berlin, the Soviet Union would interpret this as an indication that the U.S. NATO guarantee to defend Europe was meaningless.48

A cursory review of President Kennedy's policy statements on international affairs also requires a brief examination of security policy.49

During the early 1960's, the strategy of deterrence was a major instrument of U.S. foreign policy, particularly in its relations with the Soviet Union.50 "Our strategy," writes Stagner, "vis-a-vis the Communist block is one of deterrence."51

The security objectives of the U.S. and its deterrence strategy were defined by President Kennedy in his "Special Message to the Congress on the Defense Budget" on March 28, 1961. This document, Robert Ginsburg has written, "... remains today the best brief statement of our security policy."52 President Kennedy began with the following statement:

48Cf., e.g., John W. Spanier, World Revolution in the Age of Revolution (New York: Praeger, 1965), especially pp. 228-30ff, in which the author describes all Soviet challenges to American power in Berlin as only limited challenges of Western rights.

49For definition of "security," see supra, p.

50Milburn, op. cit., p. 174.

51Stagner, op. cit., p. 80.

52Ginsburg, op. cit., p. 62.
The primary purpose of our arms is peace, not war—to make certain that they will never have to be used—to deter all wars, general or limited, nuclear or conventional, large or small—to convince all aggressors that any attack would be futile—to provide backing for diplomatic settlement of disputes—to insure the adequacy of our bargaining power for an end to the arms race... Our military posture must be sufficiently flexible and under control to be consistent with our efforts to explore all possibilities and to take every step to lessen tensions, to obtain peaceful solutions, and to secure arms limitations. \footnote{Kennedy went on to the consideration of the basic defense policies:}

Our arms will never be used to strike the first blow in any attack... We must offset whatever advantage this may appear to hand an aggressor by so increasing the capability of our forces to respond swiftly and effectively to any aggressive move as to convince any would-be aggressor that such a movement would be too futile and costly to undertake...

Our arms must be subject to ultimate civilian control and command at all times, in war as well as peace. The basic decisions on our participation in any conflict and our response to any threat—including all decisions relating to the use of nuclear weapons, or the escalation of a small war into a large one—will be made by the regularly constituted civilian authorities. \footnote{These brief statements do not provide all the answers to American security problems, but they do outline basic strategic goals. On the other hand, these statements raise several questions about American military strategy}
which the President did not answer. Do these policy statements preclude the U.S. initiating hostilities when our core interests are threatened by enemy aggression which does not include outright military action? The implication is not clear. Does the policy of not striking "the first blow in any attack" rule out the possibility of the U.S. never striking first with nuclear weapons as a response to successful enemy non-nuclear aggressions? If the answer to such questions can be considered affirmative, the credibility of deterrence strategy is greatly weakened, if not zero. Credibility of nuclear threats and retaliation is not normally increased by making such statements as, "Our arms will never be used to strike the first blow in any attack...." These statements tend to deflate and make highly incredible—in the eyes of the aggressor—the U.S.'s threats and policy commitments. One doesn't make a potential enemy believe that his defense posture and deterrence strategy is credible by saying that he will not use it to prevent aggression. President Kennedy's security statements left in doubt the U.S.'s intentions to use its most vital asset—its power as perceived by the enemy.

In the matter of strategic war planning, President Kennedy stated two basic principles:
(1) Our strategic arms and defenses must be adequate to deter any deliberate nuclear attack on the United States or our allies.

(2) Our defense posture must be designed to reduce the danger of irrational or unpremeditated general war—the danger of an unnecessary escalation of a small war into a large one, or of miscalculation or misinterpretation of an incident or enemy intention.

For the Administration's policy concerning limited war, President Kennedy's first defense budget message is instructive:

In the event of a major aggression that could not be repulsed by conventional forces, we must be prepared to take whatever action with whatever weapons are appropriate. But our objective now is to increase our ability to confine our response to nonnuclear weapons, and to lessen the incentive for any limited aggression by making clear what our response will accomplish.

Our weapon systems must be usable in a manner permitting deliberation and discrimination as to timing, scope, and targets in response to civilian authority; there must be no uncertainty about our determination and capacity to take whatever steps are necessary to meet our obligations.

President Kennedy's explanation of the new emphasis on conventional and non-nuclear forces was that:

Our strength may be tested at many levels. We intend to have at all times the capacity to resist nonnuclear or limited attacks—as a complement to our nuclear capacity, not a substitute. We have rejected any all-or-nothing posture which would leave no choice but inglorious retreat or unlimited retaliation.

55Ibid., pp. 3-4.
56Ibid.
Secretary of Defense McNamara addressed the problem in the following manner:

Even in limited war situations we should not preclude the use of tactical nuclear weapons. . . . But the decision to employ tactical nuclear weapons in limited conflicts should not be forced upon us simply because we have no other means to cope with them. . . . What is being proposed at this time is not a reversal of our existing national policy but an increase in our nonnuclear capabilities to provide a greater degree of versatility to our limited war forces.58

These remarks did not clarify the U.S.'s position concerning the use of nuclear weapons; doubts still remained. On another occasion McNamara stated: "It would be our policy to use nuclear weapons wherever we felt it necessary to protect our forces and achieve our objectives."59

These policy statements bring into question the U.S.'s determination to use nuclear weapons if necessary, particularly in Europe. This and the Administration's NATO strategy weakened the credibility of the U.S.'s willingness to use nuclear weapons.

The outlines of the new U.S. NATO policy were described by Kennedy in Ottawa on May 17, 1961:


59Ibid., p. 137.
Our NATO alliance is still, as it was when it was founded, the world's greatest bulwark of freedom. Now if we are to meet the defense requirements of the 1960's the NATO countries must push forward simultaneously along two major lines.

First, we must strengthen the conventional capability of our alliance as a matter of the highest priority.

Second, we must make certain that nuclear weapons will continue to be available for the defense of the entire treaty area, and that these weapons are at all times under close and flexible political control that meets the needs of all NATO countries.60

Kennedy's remarks on U.S. defense policy did not explain the strategic thinking and concepts that were the foundation of such a policy. Furthermore, his aversion to a conventional build-up weakened the credibility of the nuclear deterrent; and in light of the Soviet Union's overwhelming military superiority in conventional forces in Europe, U.S. conventional build-up was meaningless.61

This chapter is an attempt to review only a few of President Kennedy's major policy objectives, statements, and beliefs. Kennedy projected himself as a strong, resolute chief executive who would get the country moving again. He pledged himself and his Administration to solve

60President John F. Kennedy, "Address to Members of the Senate and House of Commons, Ottawa, Canada," May 17, 1961.

61Cf., e.g., William W. Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 101-15. Kaufmann presents a detailed analysis of President Kennedy's NATO strategy in Europe. His remarks are rather critical of President Kennedy's defense policy.
problems, to rebuild the strength and prestige of the U.S. in world affairs which had been weakened in the Eisenhower Administration. He stated eloquently: "I am determined upon our system's survival and success, regardless of the cost and regardless of the peril."62 The President had pledged to stop reacting to the enemy's moves and to start acting like the bold, hopeful, inventive people that Americans were thought to be.63 For if we failed to act the U.S. would find itself at the "mercy of events" instead of anticipating the danger and shaping a firm and consistent policy to meet it.64

These were the statements and policies of John F. Kennedy. They conveyed his principles and his convictions. The real test of any administration is not what it says, but what it does—not what it might do, but what it will do. Credibility of deterrence strategy requires that the deterrer demonstrate his willingness to employ force with concrete, positive action. The ultimate test

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64 Ibid., p. 227.
of effectiveness of any defense policy is determined by its performance in the field of battle.\footnote{65}{For explanation of "subjective factors," see supra, pp. 8-9.}

Chapter III will be concerned with examining the performance of deterrence strategy in the Kennedy Administration in world affairs, through the analysis of the deterrence model developed in Chapter I, to determine whether the "subjective factors"\footnote{65}{For explanation of "subjective factors," see supra, pp. 8-9.} of American policy were present.
CHAPTER III

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY FAILURES:
A SIGN OF WEAKNESS

This chapter will be concerned with examining the five international crises (i.e., American-Cuban relations, the Bay of Pigs, Laos, Vienna, and the Berlin Wall) to determine whether the "subjective factors" of American foreign policy were in fact present in each one of these crises. In each case it will be shown that President Kennedy greatly weakened the credibility of deterrence strategy. His actions in dealing with each one of these crises illustrate his inconsistency in pursuing policy objectives, the discrepancies between his stated intentions, and his actual behavior in handling these crises. These discrepancies became more obvious to the Soviet leaders as Kennedy was confronted by each crisis and behaved in a manner which was irresolute, indecisive, and counterproductive. His actions in dealing with these crises made incredible our deterrence strategy and its threat components.
American-Cuban Relations: A Decade of Failure

To say that American foreign policy goals toward Cuba have been confused and undefinable is an understatement. U.S. relations with Cuba have demonstrated the "... failure of American foreign policy."\(^1\) The history of American-Cuban relations has been one of American economic exploitation, military intervention, and general "cultural arrogance."\(^2\) Probably one of the greatest failures in American-Cuban relations was the ineptness of our economic policy and the failure to worry about or understand the Cuban revolution.

The question of why the U.S. has been unable to act as a first-class power in the Caribbean deserves to be answered in an objective manner. Cuba has been recognized as a vital core interest of the U.S. for many years. Cuba, "unlike other areas of conflict in the Cold War, is geographically close"\(^3\) and traditionally the area has

\(^1\)Adolf A. Berle, Jr., "The Cuban Crises," Foreign Affairs, XXXIX (October 1960), 40.


been deemed so vital to the security of the U.S. that it would consider a threat to that area as a threat to its own security. "For over a century the Monroe Doctrine defined the diplomatic behavior of the United States toward the Western Hemisphere."  

President Kennedy, early in 1961, had said:

The Monroe Doctrine means what it has meant since President Monroe and John Quincy Adams enunciated it, and that is that we oppose a foreign power extending its power to the Western Hemisphere.  

The Kennedy Administration was firmly opposed to the extension of any foreign power into the Western Hemisphere; the U.S. would take care of its own backyard. But at the same time the U.S. was committed to the principle of "non-intervention" in the internal affairs of other countries. "Washington was reluctant to take any step that might seem to violate this principle." President Kennedy had

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4Crabb, op. cit., p. 265. Basically, the Monroe Doctrine provided for the self-defense of nations of the Western Hemisphere, which is the inherent right of a sovereign state, and non-intervention in European affairs. See Ramin H. Hulsey, "The Cuban Revolution," Journal of International Affairs, XIV, No. 2 (1960), 158.


established the principle that this country's foreign policy goals toward Cuba meant "... keeping her out of the Communist orbit. ..." If this was the policy of the U.S. government, it certainly had a strange way of showing it.)

Kennedy stated while he was campaigning for the presidency that the failure of the U.S. foreign policy in Cuba could be attributed to lack of understanding and perspective. He went on to say:

The story of the transformation of Cuba from a friendly ally to a Communist base is—in large measure—the story of a government in Washington which lacked the imagination and compassion to understand the needs of the Cuban people—which lacked the leadership and vigor to move forward to meet those needs—and which lacked the foresight and vision to see the inevitable result of its own failure.8

Kennedy had even gone as far as to say in his Strategy of Peace that:

Fidel Castro is part of the legacy of [Simón] Bolivar [the great Latin American liberator] who led his men over the Andes Mountains, vowing "war to the death..." Castro is also part of the frustration of that earlier revolution which won its war against Spain...9

According to Kennedy, it was the U.S.'s failure to give

7Hulsey, op. cit., p. 172. (See supra, pp. – .)
Cuba sufficient economic aid that turned the people against us, paving the way for conversion of Cuba to "Communism's first Caribbean base." Kennedy said that:

(1) We refused to help Cuba meet its desperate need for economic progress, and
(2) We used the influence of our government to advance the interests and increase the profits of the private American companies which dominate the island's economy.\(^{10}\)

The contradiction between these statements and Kennedy's strong interventionist policy ("We must attempt to strengthen the non-Batista, democratic anti-Castro forces in exile, and in Cuba itself, who offer eventual hope of overthrowing Castro. Thus far these fighters for freedom have had virtually no support from our Government")\(^{11}\) is further compounded by a later statement in which he said:

\[ \text{I have never advocated and I do not advocate intervention in Cuba in violation of our treaty obligations. ... What I have advocated is that we use all available communications -- radio, television and the press -- and the moral power of the American Government, to let the forces of freedom in Cuba know that we are on their side.}\] \(^{12}\)

These statements are so totally contradictory and confusing that viable policy goals and objectives concerning Cuba are indeed undefinable. At one point Kennedy

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{10}John F. Kennedy, as quoted in Lasky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 447.}\]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 450. See also Kennedy, \textit{The Burden and the Glory, op. cit.}, p. 70.}\]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{12}John F. Kennedy, as quoted in Lasky, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 454.}\]
criticizes the Eisenhower Administration for not understanding the Cuban people and their leader, while later he advocates intervention while simultaneously pledging himself to adhere to the principle of "non-intervention." As President he pledged to "oppose a foreign power extending its power to the Western Hemisphere," while simultaneously acting with complacency and ambivalence toward the Soviet military buildup in Cuba. Although President Kennedy had once stated that Fidel Castro is part of the legacy of Simón Bolívar, as Castro's revolution continued its radical bent through agrarian reforms and U.S. capital expropriations the future coordinator of Latin-American affairs for the Kennedy Administration, Adolf A. Berle, Jr., took the position that the Castro regime had "betrayed the revolution," and that the Communization of Cuba had followed the classic tactical pattern of the Soviet model.13

In 1959, when the Castro regime came into power, there was a rapid disintegration of Cuban-American relations. The U.S. government accused the Cuban government of executing civilians, expropriating capital without compensation, destroying the press autonomy, recognizing Communist China, accepting aid from the Soviet Union, and...

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allowing Communists to infiltrate the government, promoting revolution throughout Latin America, and depriving U.S. officials of their lawful, personal freedoms.  

By January 1961, the U.S. had broken diplomatic relations with Cuba and had branded the Castro revolution as Communist. That Cuba had identified with the Soviet Union was more a fault of the U.S. government than any particular propensity Castro had for Communism.  

"I believe history," Charles Osgood has written, "will ultimately record that we literally drove the Cuban revolution into the arms of the Soviet Union and Communism." U.S. policy toward Cuba was ambivalent, inasmuch as it did not understand the nature of the revolution. While professing

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14 Richard Fagen, a very well-known and respected Latin American scholar, presents in his work The Transformation of the Political Culture (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1962) a thorough analysis of the interplay of U.S. foreign policy in Cuban affairs. His position is far from neutral.

15 It is indeed difficult to pinpoint the exact moment when the Castro movement began its fateful turn to the left towards the Communists. Perhaps this is so because at the beginning the turnings were subtle, mysterious, and impenetrable. For a discussion of these facts, see U.S., Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Events in United States-Cuban Relations (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 29, 1963); also U.S., Department of State, Cuba, Publication No. 7171 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, April 1961).

commitment to the idea of national self-determination, the U.S. had tended to support the status quo and resist change. "The United States must share the blame for the situation which erupted into the Cuban trek toward Moscow." Our relations have not only been characterized by errors and shortsighted policies, but we failed to recognize in the underdeveloped areas the significance of the wave of "rising expectations" among the disadvantaged. U.S. leaders failed to assist the Cuban revolution when it most urgently needed assistance. "What is important is that a void in policy did exist."

And as Daniel Tretiak has so realistically summarized: "The severance of Cuban-U.S. relations in 1961 left it to the U.S.S.R. to meet Cuba's excessively ambitious economic and political demands." This severance was the culmination of a policy towards Cuba which reflected the history of U.S. relations with all of Latin America--neglect, economic exploitation and, by and large, inept diplomacy. (In the years preceding the Cuban revolution, U.S. attention was fixed on the Soviet challenge in other parts of the world to the neglect of Latin America, which was assumed to be

17Smith, op. cit., p. 27.


safe. 20 "If statesmanship requires a sense of history," as Arthur Whitaker has noted, "it also requires accurate knowledge, sound interpretation, and skill in projecting the results of the interplay between the ever active historical forces of continuity and change."21 President Kennedy had expressed his understanding of the Cuban problem many times. His policy was strikingly similar to the Castro line.22 But when it came time to make decisions about the fate of Cuban-American relations, American policy was "... characterized by ambiguity. ..."23 American policy in the Kennedy Administration not only alienated Cubans from U.S. capitalism but also from the Western tradition itself.24 When the Kennedy Administration announced it had severed diplomatic relations with Cuba, it had in effect, according to Earl E. T. Smith, 


22 Here I am referring to Castro’s accusations concerning American economic exploitation and military intervention.

23 Whitaker, op. cit., p. 15.

caused a type of "negative intervention." Smith goes on to state that many people may have been sincerely misled by Castro, but the Department of State and the United States cannot afford to be misled or "to excuse such mistakes by saying that the revolution was betrayed by Castro." Maurice Zeitlin has aptly depicted U.S. ineptness in dealing with the social revolution in Cuba:

During the period the U.S. had an opportunity to extend economic aid to a professed anti-Communist nationalistic revolution, and thus return, if not its friendship, at least its cordiality. However, it did not do so.

The U.S. did not act and the Kennedy Administration exacerbated the situation by severing relations with Cuba, which had been a core interest of the U.S. for over 50 years.


26 Ibid., pp. 233-34. For a splendid discussion of U.S. policy failure in Cuba, see Herbert Dinerstein, Intervention Against Communism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967). Dinerstein qualifies many of his remarks concerning U.S. policy failures by saying: "Great powers rarely act with perfect wisdom and foresight, especially in their dealings with small powers" (p. 42).

27 Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 86. That the Soviet Union filled the vacancy left by the U.S. was an unexpected victory for the Communists, according to Herbert Dinerstein, who is a highly recognized Kremlinologist. See Herbert Dinerstein, "Soviet Policy in Latin America," American Political Science Review, LXI (March 1967), 80-88.
years. The purpose behind such actions was not clear. At one point President Kennedy spoke of coming to a better understanding with our Latin American neighbors, while at the same time he pursued a contradictory policy.

The great confusion in our relations with the Cubans arises from the uncertainty as to what our policy really is. Charles Osgood described President Kennedy's foreign policy toward Cuba as "the ambivalence of the mighty American elephant in dealing with the little Cuban mouse." The frustrations and contradictions of U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba made it "the most vulnerable area for Soviet penetration of the hemisphere in the Cold War." Ambassador to Mexico, Robert Hill, at times a critic of President Kennedy's policies in Latin America, was "shocked by intelligence reports that the Soviets were amazed at the ease with which they were being permitted to penetrate Cuba." The Kennedy Administration was certainly not taking care of its own backyard. "American policy and American diplomacy avoided giving any pretext for hostility, and acted with remarkable moderation in

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28 Smith, The Fourth Floor, op. cit., p. 228.


the face of growing provocation.\textsuperscript{32} Instead of aiding
the Cuban revolutionaries, the U.S. forfeited this role
to the Communist bloc, a fact to which the Kennedy
Administration did not respond.

The Bay of Pigs: The Stigma
of Indecision

The Kennedy Administration had pledged action
against Cuba. The contingency plans had been put to use
and the freedom fighters were trained. The American
leaders and President Kennedy were aware, of course, that
the long-term existence of a pro-Soviet regime in Cuba
was intolerable.\textsuperscript{33} The Soviet military build-up in Cuba
was a clear "challenge to United States' hegemony in the
Western Hemisphere."\textsuperscript{34} On April 17, 1961, the invasion
party began its assault on Cuba in a small inlet which
became known as the Bay of Pigs (Girón). Three days later
the invasion was over; it had been totally defeated.

Theodore Draper, author of Castro's Revolution,
has characterized it splendidly when he wrote: "The

\textsuperscript{32}Berle, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.

\textsuperscript{33}This is well documented in both Haynes Johnson,
The Bay of Pigs, \textit{op. cit.}, and Tad Szule and Karl E.
Meyer, \textit{The Cuban Invasion: The Chronicle of a Disaster}

\textsuperscript{34}Suarez, \textit{op. cit.}, see "foreword."
ill-fated invasion of Cuba was one of those rare politico-
military events—a perfect failure."\textsuperscript{35} This particular 
event was not only a disaster for the image of the U.S., 
but it was a personal failure for John F. Kennedy—a 
failure of such magnitude that Pierre Salinger was 
prompted to say: "The Bay of Pigs was J.F.K.'s first 
major defeat as President and the greatest disaster of 
his entire Administration."\textsuperscript{36} With all the available 
military power and influence to destroy the world, 
John F. Kennedy did nothing as ... Fidel Castro glee-
fully spouting communistic shibboleths, rounded up pri-
soners from the beach."\textsuperscript{37} In commenting on Kennedy's 
handling of the Cuban affair, Arthur Krock wrote:

\textit{And, after the debacle of the Bay of Pigs expedi-
tion that his half-in, half-out support had fore-
ordained, he blamed it on incompetent counsel of 
the military Chiefs of Staff. ... Kennedy's 
transfer of blame from himself to the Chiefs of 
Staff for the Bay of Pigs disaster was leaked to 
the press to preserve for him the reputation for 
resolute leadership he had definitely failed to 
demonstrate in this instance.}\textsuperscript{38} (Italics mine.)

\textsuperscript{35}Theodore Draper, Castro's Revolution: Myths 

\textsuperscript{36}Pierre Salinger, With Kennedy (1st ed.; Garden 
City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 149. See also Arthur M. 
Schlesinger, A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the 

\textsuperscript{37}Sidey, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 124.

\textsuperscript{38}Arthur Krock, \textit{In the Nation: 1932-1966} 

"We cannot tell anyone to keep out of our hemisphere unless our armaments and the people behind those armaments are prepared to back up the command, even to the ultimate point of going to war. . . . If we debate, if we question, if we hesitate, it will be too late." 39

When the debating, questioning, and hesitating ended in the Giron disaster, Herbert L. Matthews made a comment entirely in character: "Thank the Lord," he wrote, "for the United States and Cuba that the invasion of April 17, 1961, failed!" 40

The reactions in the White House were from extreme emotionalism to somber reflection. Kennedy said to Salinger: "We really blew this one." 41 His brother, the Attorney General, is reported to have told the President emotionally, "They can't do this to you--those black-bearded Commies can't do this to you!" 42

But they did, and nothing can alter the grim fact that instead of overthrowing Castro the invasion further

40Herbert L. Matthews, as quoted in Lazo, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
secured his hold on the country; that instead of protecting the image of the country as President Kennedy had stressed in keeping the operation covert and adhering to a policy of "non-intervention," it had subjected the country to worldwide scorn. No one believed the persistent Peking claims that the U.S. was a "paper tiger," but everyone believed that it behaved like one.

President Kennedy had made a decision to support the invasion. Whether it was covert or overt does not matter. He had made a commitment to action. The invasion party is an example of that tacit commitment. The President had to choose between two courses of action suggested by his advisors: (1) to stage an invasion of Cuba with military support if necessary, or (2) not to intervene. In order to avoid the risks which either course of action would have involved, President Kennedy attempted to take the middle course, intervening just a little, but not enough to assure success. "Yet in foreign policy," as Raymond Aron puts it, "the half-measure, the compromise

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44 For reference to term "decision," see supra, p. 31, n. 26.

45 See Morgenthau, The Trouble with Kennedy, op. cit., p. 51.
ordinarily combines the disadvantages of the two possible policies.\textsuperscript{46} \textasciitilde{\textit{In foreign policy, there can be no middle ground.}} Whether Kennedy should or should not have approved the invasion attempt is not at issue here. That was for him to decide. He was President of the United States. Only he could have made the decision—\textit{one way or the other.} \textsuperscript{(Having made an affirmative decision, Kennedy had to assure victory and this he failed to do.} He chose the gray; he chose the compromise between "black and white" and this ultimately was a "decision for disaster."\textsuperscript{47} The President had made a commitment and then failed to stand firm. His choices were clear: (1) to disband the invasion, (2) postpone it, (3) intervene militarily with overwhelming force, or (4) support it just a little. His fourth choice was a disaster.\textsuperscript{48} He "... jeopardized the national interests of the United States by aiming at a short-run, short-lived, and ill-fated maneuver ..."\textsuperscript{48} to restore the balance of power\textsuperscript{49} in the Caribbean, instead of pursuing


\textsuperscript{47}Lazo, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 379.


\textsuperscript{49}The term "balance of power" is here used in its classical sense of restoring the equilibrium in the Caribbean which had been materially changed by the influx of
a more realistic and viable policy through innovative executive leadership. The immediate calling off of the invasion might have made some sense; its abandonment to destruction made none. The Kennedy Administration had been overly concerned with the effect which open involvement of American troops would have upon "world opinion." The fact is that the U.S. abandonment of the invasion force probably affected world opinion more adversely than a successful invasion would have. As Kennedy himself said: "There is an old saying that victory has one hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan." 50

Kennedy's behavior towards the invasion force was inconsistent and vacillatory. It was Kennedy himself who called off the strategic air strikes that would have demobilized Castro's infant air force; it was Kennedy's refusal to permit a second Cuban air strike which "put the enterprise in irretrievable peril..." 51 A tacit commitment had been made by supporting the invasion plan and training its members. But when the time came

Soviet armaments and military hardware to the area. For an excellent classical discussion of the term, see Inis L. Claude, Power and International Relations (New York: Random House, 1962).

50 John F. Kennedy, as cited in Johnson, op. cit., p. 176.

51 Blackstock, op. cit., p. 252.
for action, the Kennedy Administration failed to respond. President Kennedy's decision to avoid further involvement by not allowing the two remaining air strikes was a decision for disaster. The whole fiasco greatly diminished both the prestige and the material power of the U.S. Kennedy's unwillingness to use force proved costly, as Henry Wriston has recorded:

"Total failure seriously damaged American prestige and impaired its influence in other sensitive areas. . . . The disaster enhanced the prestige of Castro. The man who had bested the "Colossus of the North" became a hero to many and was made to appear a good deal larger than real life. . . . Moreover, failure impaired the standing of the United States not only in this hemisphere, but also with its major allies." .52

(In the Bay of Pigs episode, the U.S. had failed to live up to its reputation for greatness). "The United States is a power among powers," writes Morgenthau, "fatefully involved in the affairs of the globe where prestige is an indispensable ingredient of power."53 The risks involved in not fulfilling a commitment or honoring one's words is that the enemy may be tempted to put that reputation to the test. President Kennedy's dilemma was that a full-scale invasion might be held

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52 Henry Wriston, "A Historical Perspective," in Plank, Cuba and The United States, op. cit., p. 34.
53 Morgenthau, The Impasse of American Foreign Policy, op. cit., p. 48.
comparable to Russia's conduct in Hungary and would shock the world's leaders beyond redress. President Kennedy had failed to heed the historic axiom concerning the use of military power and force: "In starting or making a war, not the right is what matters, but victory." Kennedy chose, instead of victory, a middle course—intervention without adequate air cover—which was carried out with "amateurish ineptness." That Kennedy decided in favor of a compromise was "... due in part to a want of resolution." President Kennedy may have very well read Neustadt's book on Presidential Power, with its emphasis on personal power and its politics, but his behavior in the Bay of Pigs affair certainly did not show it. (His decisions markedly dissipated his personal power and reputation.) Shortly after the crisis the President asked himself aloud: "How could I have been so far off base. All my life I've known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead?" His anguish was surely deepened by the fact

54 Adolf Hitler, as quoted in Blackstock, op. cit., p. 253.

55 Lerner, op. cit., p. 93.


57 Sorensen, Kennedy, op. cit., p. 309. President Kennedy was quite emotionally upset over this disaster, as Sorensen relates.
that the rest of the world, and particularly the Soviet
Union, was asking the same question. (After the Bay of
Pigs fiasco, Kennedy decided that the deadliest sin was
to be irresolute.)

In the American support for the Bay of Pigs inva-
sion, the Kennedy Administration would have liked to
have had a new regime which was both non-Communist and
not aligned with the Soviet Union. It would undoubtedly
be useful if the foreign policy-makers would put a pri-
ority on these goals, but there is no evidence that such
a priority existed in the Kennedy Administration. In-
stead, it attempted to accomplish with covert or clandes-
tine means that which it was unwilling to attempt with
diplomacy or direct military action. As Max Beloff
describes it, President Kennedy was pursuing a policy of
"limited liability" in the Cuban invasion. The image

58 This particular change in President Kennedy's attitudes toward foreign policy is particularly well
analyzed by Ian McMahan, "The Kennedy Myth," New

59 See Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, Jr., The Real C.I.A.

60 Limited liability is a policy in which there is little reason to intervene in a situation where the like-
lihood of success is marginal and the penalties for failure fall on one's self. The Bay of Pigs fiasco is the
best example of this. See Max Beloff, "Reflections on
Intervention," Journal of International Affairs, XXII
(1968), 202-12; also Adam Yarmolinsky, "American Foreign
Policy and the Decision to Intervene," Journal of Inter-
national Affairs, XXII (1968), 23.
of sober common sense and resolute action that President Kennedy had projected to the world during his vigorous campaign and early presidential statements was failing to materialize. President Kennedy's irresolution caused "... one of the most grievous diplomatic blunders in American history." To a man who had promised to get the country moving again, the Cuban affair was a humiliating, personal failure. The repercussion revived campaign allegations that Kennedy was immature and ill-prepared to guide the nation in international affairs, but the real significance of the disaster, as Thomas Freeman has written, was not so much that Cuba was lost, but that the U.S. was unwilling to use its power to defend and control a vital national interest:

At the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, United States diplomatic and military policy failed. But the real significance of the failure was not in American relations with Cuba. Cuba was already lost, and the Bay of Pigs only recorded the fact. The real significance of the Bay of Pigs, which the United States Government was slow to realize, was that to the Russian regime and all Latin America it showed a disastrous paralysis of will—in short weakness.

After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the United States Government was cautious ... it seemed less sure of itself and, worst of all, impotent to handle the gnat sting of Cuba.62 (Italics mine.)

61 Lasky, op. cit., p. 476.

The failure of the U.S. to act decisively at this juncture created a vacuum which the Soviets were more than willing to fill.

And to make things worse, in the orgy of national self-recrimination that followed the Bay of Pigs invasion, President Kennedy took the full blame. Thus, like President Eisenhower in the U-2 operation, our chief of state acknowledged complicity in an activity about which he should have remained silent. In espionage and other covert operations, there are certain standards of conduct and operative principles which have developed out of long experience. One of the most elementary of these is that when a covert operation has been seriously exposed, it is disavowed and dropped.\(^6^3\) This is done not so much for the appearance of being tough, but as a matter of realistic politics.

It permits the normal conduct of international relations to continue without the constant disruptions that would occur if every apprehended agent were acknowledged.\(^6^4\)

The damage done, Kennedy accepted sole responsibility for the events. A great power had in fact admitted that it had \(\ldots\) violated the spirit and probably the letter of international agreements into which it had

\(^6^3\)See Blackstock, op. cit., pp. 241-60 for a thorough discussion of diplomatic behavior in such events.

\(^6^4\)Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 201.
freely entered; it had winked at the violation of its own neutrality laws.\textsuperscript{65} "There is one absolute requirement," writes Arthur Plank, "for intervention by a great power in a small nation: it must be done skillfully enough and on a large enough scale to guarantee its success.\textsuperscript{66}"

This requirement was violated by the Kennedy Administration.

When one looks back upon the invasion and the politics that surrounded the decision, the dilemma of American policy toward Latin America becomes increasingly clear: \textit{"The Bay of Pigs was a public confession by the United States that it had failed to understand or deal with the most significant political change in the hemisphere in fifty years."}\textsuperscript{67}

Our ignorance of the Cuban situation was merely a particular instance of our long-standing national disinterest in and lack of knowledge of Latin America as a whole. Our policies have been "ethically and culturally arrogant."\textsuperscript{68} Cuba, in particular, is an American tragedy\textsuperscript{69} because Cuba has always been the area of

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{65}Plank, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{66}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{67}LaFeber, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 223.
\textsuperscript{69}Zeitlin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 207.
\end{quote}
primary interest to the U.S. in Latin America (i.e., a traditional and geographical core interest of the U.S.).

Kennedy had learned many things about the use of military power -- or rather, he learned what happens in the absence of it. He learned about the resiliency of the Communist enemy and about inaction and irresolution. But the occasion was still bitter defeat.

The prestige of the United States, already dangerously eroded around the globe, suffered more, and more important than any of these was the danger that Nikita Khrushchev might look at the wreckage on the beach and decide that the President of the United States could be pushed to virtually any limit. A war of miscalculation could easily arise from such conclusions.

Several days after the disaster, Kennedy addressed the problem of Cuba, giving a stern and authoritarian statement concerning our core interests:

Any unilateral American intervention in the absence of an external attack upon ourselves or an ally would have been contrary to our international obligations. But let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible.

Should it ever appear that the inter-American doctrine of noninterference merely conceals or excuses a policy of non-action; if the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration, then I want it clearly understood this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations, which are the security of our nation. We intend to profit from this lesson. We intend to re-examine

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70 Sidey, op. cit., p. 123. For an analysis of Soviet foreign policy toward Cuba during these events, see Herbert Dinerstein, "Soviet Foreign Policy in L.A.," op. cit., pp. 80-84.
and reorient our forces of all kinds . . . disappointments will often accompany us . . . .

Let me then make clear as the President of the United States that I am determined upon our system's survival and success, regardless of the cost and regardless of the peril. 71 (Italics mine.)

These were typical Kennedy words. Would there be action? This was the question: would there be the determination that would win the next one?

(From this statement two things emerge. As of April 20, 1961, Cuba was definitely a geographical core interest. Also, as of that date there was still an ideological U.S. interest in Cuba expressed in Kennedy's reference to opposing Communist penetration in this hemisphere. But unless the leaders of the U.S. were willing to take positive measures (e.g., invasion) to assert that ideological interest, it can no longer be properly considered as a core interest in its own right or an element of a geographical core interest. Throughout the following year, policy statements made by the Administration suggest that the national leaders would not invade Cuba to oust Communism. The Kennedy Administration did, however, take a number of aggressive actions--constituting an economic boycott--which were designed to bring the downfall of the Castro regime. Thus, the U.S. position during this period was ambiguous. The Administration did not admit final

loss of Cuba, although it did take several measures to redress the setback. But it stopped short of taking the kind of action (military) which would have been necessary at that point to bring about the desired result.

Laos: The Travesty of Neutralization

The international political situation in Laos reached serious or crisis proportions during the close of the Eisenhower and the beginning of the Kennedy Administrations. There had been strong pressures for American military intervention in Laos and Eisenhower told Kennedy the day before the Inauguration, "You might have to go in there and fight it out." By the end of May, these pressures had reached their peak. But President Kennedy in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs fiasco had become more skeptical of military advice and military solutions. He had requested position papers of the prospects for American military intervention in Laos from each of the Joint Chiefs. The Chiefs' basic premise was simply for the U.S. to go all out for a military victory or get out of Laos. President Kennedy found both proposals unacceptable. He once again chose the middle ground—neutralization.

Throughout April 1961, attempts to arrange a

cease fire with the guerrilla fighters and the Pathet Lao had failed. On April 24, the U.S. and the Soviet Union joined Great Britain in an appeal for a cease fire and a fourteen-nation conference to begin in Geneva on May 12. The appeal was effective, and after months of wrangling, agreement was reached on December 18 on a declaration reaffirming the sovereignty and neutrality of Laos and on the supervised withdrawal of all foreign troops.

The position of the U.S. government, and particularly President Kennedy, is quite baffling.73

Going back to President Kennedy's press conference speech on Laos on March 23, 1961, he stated that the U.S. strongly and unreservedly supported the goal of a neutral and independent Laos, tied to no outside power or group of powers, threatening no one, and free from any domination. Kennedy went on to state that if present Communist hostilities and attacks did not stop those who supported a genuinely neutral Laos would have to consider their response.74 "No one should doubt our own resolution on this point," Kennedy said. "We are faced with a clear threat of a change in the internationally agreed position of Laos."75 In essence, Kennedy threatened to take

73Blackstock, op. cit., p. 199.
74See Kennedy, To Turn the Tide, op. cit., pp. 38-41.
75Ibid., pp. 39-40.
action if hostilities did not cease and

appealed to the Soviet Union to respect
the neutralism of Laos and warned that the
Western Powers cannot permit Laos, which is geo-
graphically a perfect buffer state between the
two great coalitions, to be taken over by Com-
munists or pro-Communists.\(^{76}\)

Kennedy had called for a neutral Laos in hopes that the
Communists would call off their offensive and would agree
to let the country have peace. "His answer was the whine,
of Communist bullets."\(^{77}\) As Henry Kissinger has remarked,
"Kennedy's professed willingness to defend Laos was in-
consistent with his policy of neutralization."\(^{78}\) Kennedy
had demanded a cease fire in Laos, but he failed to back
up his strong words uttered at the press conference on
March 23, 1961. He cheapened what he said, and it cast
doubt on his credibility. It was a well-known fact at
that time that the Communists were increasing their guer-
rilla efforts in Laos. "In 1961 and 1962, the Soviet
Union (and possibly China) threw large amounts of arms and
equipment into Laos, while North Vietnam supplied the
Pathet Lao with troops, instructors, and advisors."\(^{79}\)

\(^{76}\)Frederick L. Schuman, The Cold War: Retrospect
and Prospect (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University

\(^{77}\)Sidey, op. cit., p. 75.

\(^{78}\)Henry A. Kissinger, American Foreign Policy

\(^{79}\)J. Librach, The Rise of the Soviet Empire: A
Study of Soviet Foreign Policy (New York: Praeger, 1964),
p. 268.
In his speech, Kennedy had warned that a Communist takeover would "quite obviously affect the security of the United States." He had warned Khrushchev to be prepared for a fight. Several days later, Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, visited the White House. Kennedy warned Gromyko against pushing the U.S. too far in a situation where its prestige was at stake. President Kennedy informed Gromyko that the U.S. did not intend to stand idly by while the Communists took over Laos. Gromyko made it clear that the Soviet Union shared the U.S.'s desire for an independent and neutral Laos and expressed hope that an agreement could be reached.

In the process of these meetings, Kennedy had downgraded his position from will fight, to may fight, to will not fight for Laos. His policy went from firm commitment to open accommodation. "Kennedy's tough words, spoken as Laos was being swallowed by the Communists, proved to have no impression on Khrushchev." Kennedy argued finally that Laos was not worth a fight, and he sought to alleviate the situation by neutralizing a country in which the U.S. had spent more than three million

80 John F. Kennedy, as quoted in Lasky, op. cit., p. 568.
dollars in "anti-Communism" programs. Thus, in less than four months—between January 1961 and May 1961—President Kennedy's policies in Laos had run the gamut from the Dullesian concept of Laos as a "bastion of the free world" to the hope that Laos would remain an effective neutralized zone. Bernard Fall goes on to say that the U.S. accepted one by one every aspect of neutralization in Laos which it had fought against so tenaciously since 1957. The U.S. position was also seriously weakened by the inability of SEATO to deal with the political problem in Laos. The U.S. was unable to present a unified strategy to deal with the problem.

That Kennedy was pursuing a policy of accommodation

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83 Bernard Fall, "Reappraisal in Laos," Current History, XLII (January 1962), 11. Gerald Hickey and Adrienne Suddard, in "Laos: Pawn in Power Politics," Current History, XLI (December 1961), especially pp. 353-35, present a similar argument as does Fall. They see neutralization as just another word for Communist takeover, followed by the retreat of the West.

84 This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the British and French would not support American strategy in Laos. Diplomats freely admitted that joint Western strategy for the neutralization of Laos was confused and uncertain of its objectives. See Edmund Clubb, "The Lesson of Laos," Progressive, XXV (May 1961), 5-6; also "Geneva--One More Setback for the United States," U.S. News, L (May 29, 1961), 41-42.
and appeasement in Laos is undeniable. The U.S. had failed in an expensive attempt to mold the situation in Laos to its purpose; consequently, Kennedy "... decided not only to neutralize Laos but also to win Russian backing for this plan." Kennedy had assumed that the Communists could be persuaded that further military actions in Laos were unnecessary and provocative. Kennedy's mistake in such thinking was that "... areas that are in contention, like Laos, cannot be effectively 'neutralized' without fairly active American intervention and a credible military presence in the background to maintain the local balance of power." Kennedy had made a choice—neutralization rather than confrontation—and he accepted the logical imperative: "The Communists would have to be granted substantive concessions." Kennedy wanted a political rather than a military solution. The U.S. position was ambiguous because while disengaging from Laos, the Kennedy Administration was busy trying to strengthen the Saigon government.

The neutralization of Laos was a major victory for the Communists. Premier Khrushchev's willingness to

87Hill, op. cit., p. 354.
neutralize Laos did not mean that he opposed the extension of Communism in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{88} The neutrality and coalition government agreement were not inconsistent with his philosophy of "wars of national liberation."

That Kennedy should believe that Khrushchev could be persuaded to use his influence on the Pathet Lao to make them desist the aggressive acts is nothing but sheer political naivété and diplomatic ineptness. President Kennedy's actions conveyed to the Communists that he was deferring rather than excluding a military response. He wanted a way out of the situation and the Communists were more than willing to go along with him. "The Communists could legitimately claim that the 1961 Geneva agreement was a major victory for them and a major defeat for the United States."\textsuperscript{89} Kennedy had repeatedly warned the Communists through threats of military action against using military force in Laos. However, Kennedy's own actions made his own warnings and threats incredible. These warnings were ignored by the Communists; military force was employed, and they won a political victory.

President Kennedy's policy in Laos brings to mind an old

\textsuperscript{88} Cf., Philip E. Mosely, "The Kremlin and the Third World," \textit{Foreign Affairs}, XLVI (October 1967). Here the author discusses the Kremlin's foreign policy toward the Western Hemisphere, particularly Latin America. The differences in policies are evident.

\textsuperscript{89} Hill, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 364.
saying: "The road of appeasement is not the road to peace, but is surrender on the installment plan."

The effect that Kennedy's neutralization policy had on our credibility posture is that it weakened it substantially. As Thomas Schelling indicates, President Kennedy's policies toward Laos were "casuistically" oriented:

If one reaches the point where concession is advisable, he has to recognize two effects: it puts him closer to his opponent's position, and it affects his opponent's estimate of his firmness. Concession not only may be construed as capitulation, it may mark a prior commitment as a fraud and make the adversary skeptical of any new pretense at commitment.90

The fact is that Laos is not now neutral, nor was it in 1961. In the words of Tran Van Dinh, Charge d'Affaires and Acting Ambassador of Vietnam to the United States in 1964, "Laos neutrality is a façade."91

While Laos was being neutralized at the bargaining table, the Pathet Lao marched on. And the Kennedy Administration did nothing. U.S. resolve had faltered once again.

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90 For an explanatory discussion of casuistry in foreign policy, see Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, op. cit., p. 34.

Vienna: A Soviet Probe of American Resolve

John F. Kennedy and Nikita S. Khrushchev met in Vienna June 3 and 4, 1961—the only face-to-face confrontation they were to have as heads of state. It was to be a sober two days as President Kennedy mentioned some time later. The Bay of Pigs disaster only six weeks earlier and the U.S. disengagement from Laos had brought American prestige to its lowest point since the Francis Gary Powers U-2 incident in May 1960. Khrushchev, sensing the time was right to force important American concessions on the German question, came to Vienna not to negotiate but to dictate to the young American President. And that he did.

President Kennedy was anxious to meet Premier Khrushchev. He was going to Vienna to size up Khrushchev and to establish a personal relationship that might be useful later. As Theodore Sorensen relates the facts, Kennedy wanted to look at Khrushchev, hear him talk, listen to his words, and watch him as he sat across the table. One meeting was worth more than all the diplomatic messages. "If the Soviet Premier had the idea that Kennedy's actions in Laos and Cuba indicated weakness, he

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92Salinger, op. cit., pp. 175-188.

93Ibid., p. 175.
thought that a face-to-face meeting would dispel that impression. Kennedy hoped that a meeting would disabuse any misapprehensions Khrushchev may have had concerning Kennedy's recklessness or weakness of will.

Khrushchev was a formidable opponent. Kennedy was up against a leader who placed only a propaganda value on words. When dealing with Khrushchev, the opponent had to realize that "action is the one and only language respected by the Soviet dictator of the Communist empire." So far, Kennedy's "action record" was sorrowfully lacking. Cuba, Laos, and the failure of the nuclear test ban treaty had been humiliating setbacks for the U.S. The images Khrushchev had perceived of these events were extremely important. For images in the interplay of international politics are the real world. Kennedy was aware of the fact that he must convince Khrushchev that the U.S. would go to the "brink" if necessary to defend its commitments. (And as Llewellyn Thompson had told Kennedy, much of Soviet policy was based on Khrushchev's personal estimate of government heads.)

Kennedy had made a misjudgment at the Bay of Pigs. Khrushchev had to make many judgments about the West. The whole purpose of the meeting was to bring precision

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94 Sidey, op. cit., p. 163.
95 Stevens, op. cit., p. 40.
into those judgments. It is doubtful whether precision was ever obtained. Subsequent events indicate that it was not (i.e., Berlin Wall and the Cuban missile crisis).

The discussions at Vienna revolved around three main topics: (1) Berlin, (2) Cuba, and (3) Laos. Of great interest are Kennedy's responses to Khrushchev's belligerent and provocative statements. If it was Kennedy's purpose to show Khrushchev that the U.S. was determined and not lacking in will or resolution, his behavior did not impart that image. Kennedy had tried, as always, to be "... rational and calm with Khrushchev to get him to define what the Soviet Union could and would do." Khrushchev bullied Kennedy and threatened him with war over Berlin. While Kennedy talked of securing peace for all the world, Khrushchev was threatening to cut off Western access rights in Berlin.

Khrushchev's early discussions included a reaffirmation of the inevitability of the Communist revolution and "wars of national liberation." In effect, he candidly told Kennedy that Communist frontal attacks on "capitalist" positions were ineffective and that he was banking on the indirect approach, the coexistence policy which had

already brought results in Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam.\textsuperscript{97} Kennedy retorted by expressing the view that Communism was undemocratic and this country wanted the nations of the third world to determine their own destiny, free of outside intervention. Khrushchev then brought up the matter of Cuba. Khrushchev stated that the U.S. was largely responsible for the proliferation of Communism. Fidel Castro, he said, was being forced into the Marxist camp because U.S. economic sanctions had left him nowhere else to go.

\textsuperscript{\textit{Kennedy passively disagreed, stating that the U.S. had taken action against Castro because he was subverting the island into a Communist base that was a direct threat to democratic governments in Latin America. Cuba alone was not regarded as a threat.\textsuperscript{98} "Would Khrushchev stand idly by if a pro-American government were to come to power in Poland and begin subverting its Communist bloc neighbors to capitalism?"\textsuperscript{99} Of course not.\textit{}}

That Kennedy had not destroyed Castro when he had the chance was somewhat baffling and confusing to Khrushchev. The fact is that the Russians would have

\textsuperscript{97}For documentation of these talks, see J. Librach, chapter entitled "Summit Diplomacy," \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 230-50.

\textsuperscript{98}See Sorensen, \textit{Kennedy}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 547.

\textsuperscript{99}Salinger, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 179.
wiped out a similar threat in a matter of hours," and Khrushchev found it hard to understand why Kennedy had not done so. Kennedy's infirmity of purpose was evident to Khrushchev. Kennedy's action in handling the Cuban case revealed to Khrushchev little evidence of willingness to recognize the developing danger and to move resolutely to cope with it.

The important thing, Kennedy stated, was that the two super powers avoid miscalculations that might lead to nuclear war. He stressed peaceful competition, disarmament, and continued efforts to open up channels of accommodation. Khrushchev was unsympathetic and unbending. Kennedy's pleas were met with more threats and belligerence. Kennedy's central thesis of the entire meeting was to convince Khrushchev that the two great nuclear powers must avoid situations which commit their vital interests in a direct confrontation from which neither could back

100 A very perceptive analysis of Soviet-Cuban foreign policy is presented in Lazo, Dagger in the Heart, op. cit. Lazo is of the opinion that President Kennedy's Cuban policies encouraged Soviet penetration of the Caribbean. I can hardly disagree.

down. When Kennedy talked with Khrushchev of the tragedy of killing millions of people in both countries in a matter of minutes should either nation misjudge the other, Kennedy said that therefore, perhaps, both men should soften a little in their positions. Khrushchev was unmoved. He admitted the disaster of nuclear war, but he did not admit that concessions were a way to avoid it. They talked about the possibilities of general disarmament and negotiation, but no viable solution was found. Kennedy stated that his one ambition was to secure peace, and he hoped that the meeting was a step in that direction.

The most heated discussions concerned Berlin. Khrushchev threatened that the Berlin situation could no longer be postponed and he would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany in December 1961. The treaty would recognize no continuing American rights in West Berlin. Khrushchev was militant about the necessity of eliminating Western power in West Berlin. Kennedy answered that the West was in Berlin legally and would use force to maintain its rights there "at any risk." Kennedy reiterated his warnings to Khrushchev not to miscalculate American intentions. (His stand was clear:

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102 For a detailed account of conversations between the two leaders, see Sorensen, Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 543-646; Sidey, op. cit., pp. 192-201; Lasky, op. cit., pp. 568-574; and Salinger, op. cit., pp. 133-198.
The threat to the brave city of Berlin remains. In these last six months the Allies have made it unmistakably clear that our presence in Berlin, our free access thereto and the freedom of the two million West Berliners would not be surrendered either to force or through appeasements, that to maintain those rights and obligations, we are prepared to talk, when appropriate, and to fight if necessary.103

Worried about the effects of the Bay of Pigs and the Laos settlement upon American credibility, and disturbed at public reports that Khrushchev had browbeaten him at Vienna, Kennedy prepared himself for the showdown in Berlin which he once described as the "touchstone of American honor and resolve." The "test of nerve and will"104 that Kennedy had once spoken of was not long in coming.

For Kennedy, the Vienna meeting with Khrushchev had been a traumatic experience. Khrushchev's belligerent attitude and unyielding behavior was confirmed. It was indeed going to be a "long, cold winter."

Had Kennedy been firm and forceful in dealing with Khrushchev? Did Kennedy convince Khrushchev of his determination and resolve? Would the U.S. use the force Kennedy had pledged if Berlin access rights were violated? The Berlin Wall speaks for itself.

"Influenced by his reading of President Kennedy's susceptibilities, and by the weakening of the American position as a result of the Bay of Pigs disaster, Khrushchev reopened the Berlin crisis in the summer of 1961. At Vienna, Kennedy had made it clear that the U.S. would stand firm in Berlin. It would meet its commitments. In his Berlin statements of June 6, July 19, and July 25, 1961, Kennedy had reaffirmed American resolve and determination to honor its commitments "at any risk." Nevertheless, Khrushchev was anxious to test the seriousness of Kennedy's statements with regard to Berlin. Khrushchev's peace treaty ultimatum of June 4, 1961, in Vienna was designed to test the mettle of Kennedy. The new Berlin crisis that Khrushchev had manufactured posed for the U.S. "the viability of collective security and of NATO and the balance of power in Western Europe." Khrushchev's peace treaty declaration shrewdly


placed on the U.S. the burden of initiating the use of force. "The Soviets merely had made the demands." It was the U.S. that had to decide whether to stand firm in enforcing its legal and putative rights in Berlin or to allow them to be violated. Standing firm in Berlin required at all times the possibility of using force to back up Western rights.

Throughout the summer of 1961, several harsh statements were made by Kennedy and Khrushchev regarding their respective positions. The attention of Kennedy and the Western allies at this time was concentrated largely on negotiating an agreed position. There was no official reaction to Khrushchev's June 4 aide memoire note until July 17, 1961. Some observers concluded that "Premier Khrushchev, looking at Western effectives [military and political] had good reason to doubt the West's resolution to stand firm in Berlin or elsewhere." The U.S. and the Western allies could not come to a generally agreed position.

The U.S. commitment in the face of the Soviet challenge was further weakened by the fact that the Kennedy Administration "... wished to concentrate

decisions on access and administration of Berlin in the White House, and thus deprive the commanders on the spot of the initiative to act immediately in a time of emergency."  

When Moscow heard of President Kennedy's strategy in limiting the commanders in the field to act on initiative, Ambassador Menshikov is quoted as saying at a diplomatic reception on July 14 in Washington: "In the final analysis, when the chips are down, the American people won't fight for Berlin." Kennedy's reply to the Soviet note of June 4, when it was finally delivered, had a firm tone and yielded nothing. President Kennedy went on to say that "with regard to Berlin the United States . . . is insisting on and will defend its legal rights against any unilateral abrogation. . . ."  

The Kennedy Administration had made its commitment. It would not yield; it would protect its rights in Berlin.  

Upon examining Kennedy's July 25 statement on

109Eleanor Lansing Dulles and Robert Dickson Crane, Détente: Cold War Strategies in Transition, op. cit., p. 131, article entitled "Berlin--Barometer of Tension."


112"Report to the Nation on Berlin Crisis," broadcast from the White House, July 25, 1961. (See supra, pp. 67-68.)
the Berlin crisis, several contradictory and ambiguous statements are apparent that brought doubt to the Administration's willingness to defend its interests. As Professor Jean Edward Smith notes, Kennedy's July 25 speech states that though calling for money for defense, his pledge of a "diplomatic offensive to reduce the crisis" sounded like an appeal for disengagement and he adds that Kennedy once more "began to waiver before the threat of nuclear war." There were even reports that Secretary Rusk was willing to offer certain concessions in return for proper guarantees of Western rights.

On August 7, 1961, Khrushchev delivered his most belligerent speech. In effect, he gave a warning to the U.S. not to interfere with a possible closing of the border.

Nineteen days after Kennedy's Berlin speech, the Communists gave their reply. They began to erect the wall that slashed Berlin--"the great testing place of our courage and will," according to Kennedy--in half. Once again Kennedy was caught off balance. He acted surprised, and complained bitterly, "No one had even warned him


114See Dulles and Crane, op. cit., p. 132.
that such a dreadful thing could happen.\textsuperscript{115} But it did happen and the U.S. did nothing. In fact, it took two days before the Western powers could agree on a statement of protest. The Berlin Wall had left the U.S. without a policy.

The response from the West was silence. In the first hours no one had any advice. John Kennedy and his government had no plan of action for such an event, despite the sheaves of emergency measures dreamed up for every other crisis.\textsuperscript{116} Kennedy stated that the wall was illegal, immoral, and inhumane. Where was the decisive firmness and determination to protect Western rights in Berlin of which Kennedy had so eloquently spoken? The construction of the wall shocked the free world. According to Robert Strausz-Hupe, the violation of American access rights was evident:

East Berlin has been sealed off, and thus inter-Allied agreement on Berlin has been breached unilaterally by the Communists. . . . Not the position of the Communists in East Berlin but the access rights to West Berlin of the Western Allies became the subject of East-West negotiations.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115}Lasky, op. cit., p. 573.
\textsuperscript{116}Sidey, op. cit., p. 234.
Western rights and interests. U.S. credibility was greatly weakened by its unwillingness to respond to a blatant test of American resolve:

Allied deeds have not measured up to allied words and Berliners know it as well as the Russians. President Kennedy said the U.S. would fight to protect access routes. But since the erection of the wall the Communists have repeatedly held up trains and trucks and they have reduced the number of existing rail points on the West Berlin periphery from five to one.¹¹⁸

The trepidation of President Kennedy and the State Department over Berlin and their refusal to maintain Western rights greatly damaged the credibility of deterrence strategy. Again, as in the Bay of Pigs and Laos, there was irresolution, conflicting opinion among the President's advisors, embarrassing publicity, and humiliation.¹¹⁹ The U.S. response to Soviet blackmail tactics was non-existent. The Berlin Wall not only eroded the U.S. position in Berlin, but also defined Western rights on a descending scale.¹²⁰

In Berlin it was quite obvious that the U.S. had


¹¹⁹ See, for example, the discussion by Carl G. Anthon, "The Berlin Crisis and Atlantic Unity," Current History, XLII (January 1962), 22-24.

failed to impress the Kremlin with its determination to honor its commitments. Although the Kennedy Administration had stated it would react sharply to affirm its position in the defense of Western legal and putative rights, such commitments were meaningless. Such commitments become incredible if there is no response to specific challenges. "Tests of will" such as Berlin cannot be met with formal diplomatic protests or solemn assurances of U.S. determination. Soviet probes must be met with speedy, effective, and continuous countermeasures. "Upholding one's rights does not raise international tensions," writes Spanier, "it lowers them because the test of wills has been successfully met." Spanier goes on to state that the real danger in nuclear blackmail situations is not a war stemming from a determination to stand firm, but a war of miscalculation resulting from weakness.

American Policy: Indications of Irresolution, Inaction, and Unwillingness to Use Force

In summarizing the performance of the Kennedy Administration in foreign affairs, I think E. M. "Ted" Dealey, publisher of the Dallas Morning News, has best described Kennedy's leadership qualities when after the

121 Spanier, op. cit., p. 235.
first year of the Administration he told Kennedy to his face at a meeting in Washington that "the general opinion of the grassroots thinking in this country is that you and your Administration are weak sisters."

Upon having examined the five international crises, it remains to answer whether the "subjective factors" (i.e., irresolution, inaction, unwillingness to use force, and vacillation) of American foreign policy were present in these crises. The answer is that they were. Kennedy's policies in handling these crises not only brought doubt as to the credibility of our intentions by the constant reiteration that force would never be used, but his actions brought doubt to his own capabilities as a national leader. One of his greatest deficiencies was his "failure to evolve and adhere to a reasonably consistent philosophy of foreign relations."

In the case of the Cuban invasion, his handling of the crisis clearly revealed, as Kirkpatrick has said, that the right hand of government did not know what the left was doing. Kennedy never really did make up his mind until it was too late. He had his chance to act decisively but he allowed circumstance to control his choices. His decisions reveal that he did not

122 Ted Dealey, as quoted in Lasky, op. cit., p. 533.
123 Grabb, op. cit., p. 449.
extract power from his choices. He failed to make his choices serve his influence. He failed because he left out of account the stakes and risks involved in such a choice. He saw the issues through the eyes of his advisors. As a candidate Kennedy had criticized President Eisenhower for indecisiveness, for lack of candor, for failure to use the full powers of the office. But as Arthur Krock states: "He repeated every one of the errors of weakness he attributed to Eisenhower. Take Cuba, he was indecisive there. You can't blame advisors: the ultimate responsibility was his." After the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion, Kennedy stated that he had learned many lessons from the venture and he intended to profit from his mistakes. That he hadn't yet learned was hardly the strongest recommendation for the leadership of the free world. Kennedy had not only shied away from his campaign commitments, but he had failed to exert the strong executive leadership he had so vigorously pledged. Kennedy did not carry out a firm and consistent policy in regards to the Soviet Union and Khrushchev. This mistake manifested itself in October 1962. The ironical thing about Kennedy's errors was that even though he was fully aware

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of them, he seemed incapable of doing anything about them.

When a reporter remarked in the autumn of 1961 that he wanted to write a book about the President's first year in office, Kennedy inquired, "Who would want to read a book about disasters?" Kennedy was particularly lax in learning that a favorable American image in the world cannot be created by speeches not followed by political action. In the international arena, a great power should not resort to threats unless its leaders are fully prepared, without any inner reservations, to back them up with acts of strength. Credibility can only be strengthened by positive action. The Bay of Pigs disaster was "the worst example of the uses of American power and diplomacy in this generation."

In several of the five crises, Kennedy had violated one of the sanctified axioms of foreign policy: "... Foreign policy cannot be conducted without an awareness of power relationships." Power implies force, and force is the means through which deterrence becomes

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126 Reston, op. cit., p. 126. See also Jullian Towster, "The U.S.S.R. and the U.S.: Challenge and Response," *Current History*, XLII (January 1962). The author is of the opinion that American foreign policy has not been effective in the last decade.

credible. Ironically, deterrence strategy was not strengthened in credibility in the Kennedy Administration—it was weakened. The Kennedy Administration based its deterrence strategy on the pause theory. This convinced the Russians that the U.S. lacked faith in its own nuclear deterrent, i.e., that it did not have the will to use it.\footnote{See David M. Abshire, "Grand Strategy Reconstucted," in Dulles and Crane, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 250-65.}

Instead of emphasizing strengths as deterrence requires, Kennedy chose to belittle them. The countermeasures he adopted to respond to Soviet probes of American resolve lacked firm resistance and commitment—two essential components of deterrence strategy. The most crucial element of deterrence strategy—credibility—was continually weakened by President Kennedy's acquiescence and complacency in carrying out threats or promises to take action. Kennedy did not make fulfillment of threats a matter of national honor and prestige in responding to the Berlin Wall; consequently, American deterrence strategy was weakened. In Berlin, there was no response, no action, and no discernible punishment for encroachment on Western rights. The U.S. had the power to resist the change in the status quo in Berlin, but it did not have the will to use it.
Cuba, Laos, Vienna, and the Berlin Wall were Kennedy disasters. In international affairs the chief executive must act purposefully and he must take maximum advantage of national strength. Kennedy's actions in these crises did not impart positive images of strength, resolution, or willingness to use force.
PART II

SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY: A CHALLENGE TO
AMERICAN POWER 1960-1962
The purpose of this chapter is to examine briefly the politics of Premier Khrushchev. Such an examination may be helpful in explaining what led Khrushchev to believe he could successfully place missiles in Cuba.

The Politics of Premier Khrushchev

Khrushchev was a very able statesman and a skillful politician. His personal and political record demonstrates that he had determination, stubbornness of character, and considerable political prowess. He was a sincere Communist. Khrushchev was also a shrewd tactician as Dinerstein concludes: "The Kremlin will continue to probe political weak spots throughout the world, and whenever an apparent vacuum appears, will try to fill it." Khrushchev's politics were a blend of Marxism, Leninism, pragmatism, opportunism, and, most of all, the


2 Herbert S. Dinerstein, "Future Soviet Foreign Policy," in Abshire and Allen, op. cit., p. 70.
personal idiosyncrasies of the man himself). Merle Fainsod, a Soviet scholar, has described Khrushchev as "shrewd, earthy, endowed with boundless energy, a bouncing confidence, and a quick if coarse wit, he was the very epitome of the self-made man in society." Khrushchev was a master politician besides being a skillful statesman. He knew well the art of persuasion, and he used it to his advantage in his long rise to power as Premier of the Soviet Union. His authority, from the very beginning of his leadership of the Communist Party, appeared to rest on an underpinning of collective leadership of the Party. Khrushchev maintained a tight rein on the Party Secretariat and on the apparatus of the Central Committee. He was able to do so both through persuasion and adroit political maneuvering. From 1960 to the end of 1962, "Khrushchev took upon himself the principal role in the implementation as well as the formation of policy."

Khrushchev's brand of leadership, as Myron Rush describes it, was uniquely "Khrushchevism." He was bold, tough, astute, resourceful, and an agile negotiator for a system

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which he felt was far superior to any other. Khrushchev possessed a boundless confidence in the virtue, viability, and world destiny of the Soviet way of life.\footnote{6}{See Tucker, op. cit., pp. 165-70ff.}

Although Khrushchev's politics may have at times seemed reckless and risky, "he genuinely believed that nuclear war had to be avoided."\footnote{7}{Mark Frankland, Khrushchev (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1967), p. 208.}

But at the same time he firmly believed that the American position would be slowly weakened by wars of national liberation. His words were strong and suggested boldness, but his moves included a careful calculation of their effect on his own political position. Khrushchev was also a pragmatic doctrinaire. His pragmatism operated within the framework of basic Communist interests in the world. His pragmatism was "... bound to Communism, delineated by Communist ideology and aimed at Communism's advance."\footnote{8}{Konrad Kellen, Khrushchev: A Political Portrait (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 248.}

Khrushchev was not particularly a revolutionary zealot; he was a "... supreme politician, a first-class manager of men and a human dynamo."\footnote{9}{Edward Crankshaw, Khrushchev's Russia (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 62.} Crankshaw goes on to state that Khrushchev was a man of action, not a thinker; even as a...
man of action he was a politician first, a balancer, an intriguer, a fixer, an opportunist in the grand manner. Khrushchev sought power and he enjoyed it.

Although Khrushchev justified his policies in terms of Marxist legitimacy, he felt free to use any means possible to him to execute the will of history and the inevitability of Communism. Since peaceful coexistence was a matter of expediency for Khrushchev, he did not want nuclear war; but he was always ready to take advantage of Western mistakes or complacency. By making excessive and threatening demands and by manufacturing crises, Khrushchev hoped to extract concessions profitable to himself. This was to be done in a piecemeal fashion if possible.

Khrushchev was a firm believer in a strong military posture for the Soviet Union. Khrushchev supported the policy of strategic missile deterrence, and his tenure as Premier "... marked a transformation in military thought and the military establishment." In the Soviet Union, party control over the military is supreme. As Dinerstein remarks: "In the Soviet outlook, military doctrine and strategy have no independent life of their own. Both are

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11 Garthoff, op. cit., p. 60.
understood to be permeated by and subordinate to politics. . . ."  

Soviet policy decisions tend to be political decisions, and Khrushchev concentrated on weapons with maximum political effect. The historical trend in Russia has been to consider military and political policies before domestic or economic programs, even if the policies adopted spell economic burdens and sacrifices. This particular policy-making trend was accelerated during Khrushchev's tenure in office. The Soviet Union's reliance on what Robert Conquest calls "crash programs" was typical of Khrushchev's policies to find quick solutions to economic problems.

In foreign affairs, Khrushchev's behavior displayed political aggressiveness and an itch for probing with extreme military caution. Khrushchev was always most respectful of American strength. Soviet policy has been quick to take advantage of American weaknesses. Khrushchev's probing policy was based partially on a correct appreciation that the United States

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13See Robert Conquest, op. cit., pp. 110-111. An example of one of Khrushchev's crash programs was the Virgin Lands project in agriculture.

14This belief is also expressed by Bernard Brodie, op. cit., pp. 44-48.
government only wields national power when it is at war and that it can be persuaded to prefer cold war to hot."  

This strategy has proven to be very successful. "The West has still to come up with a coherent and comprehensive answer to the Communist 'nibbling process.'"  

Khrushchev monopolized the role of chief architect and spokesman for Soviet foreign policy. His rule was characterized by personal diplomacy. He sought power and he knew how to extract it. His policies of intimidation in 1961 and 1962 increased the West's caution; consequently, Khrushchev was able to gain valuable political leverage and concessions from the West (e.g., Berlin and Laos). His control of the Soviet Union during the early sixties was unchallengeable. His power was indeed sovereign. He alone was the only member of all the chief organs of dictatorship: (1) the Presidium, (2) Secretariat, (3) Bureau of the Central Committee, and (4) the Council of Ministers. Khrushchev also had the leading posts in the Party, the government, and the army, being

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17 For one of the most scholarly and authoritative discussions of Soviet foreign policy, see Triska and Finley, op. cit., pp. 50-150ff.
First Secretary of the Central Committee, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He projected upon the world a Russia that was dynamic, self-confident, and forward-looking. He earnestly believed that Communism would triumph over capitalism and his policies reflected this belief. "The Khrushchev era then may be regarded as a transitional phase of Soviet society moving from an insular, semi-industrial stage into that of a modern, advanced industrial society with global pretensions to power."  


CHAPTER V

SOVIET PRE-CRISIS CALCULATIONS

This chapter will attempt to provide an explanation of and an answer to the following question: What led Khrushchev to believe he could successfully deploy missiles in Cuba? In this chapter the hypothesis statement will be examined to determine whether it can provide an answer to the preceding question. The first part of this chapter is a description of Soviet risk-taking and decision-making. In the second part, Soviet Leaders' expectations regarding U.S. response will be evaluated.

The Risk of Thermonuclear War

During the Khrushchev era, Soviet-American relations became an active, indeed, crucial area of Soviet decision-making. These were turbulent years in which both major powers confronted each other in several major crises. Soviet conduct in foreign affairs in these years was characterized by challenges to American power below those that might trigger a general nuclear war and, for that matter, below thresholds of limited war that might
escalate into general war. The basic characteristic of this strategy has been supplied by General David Sarnoff, who called it the "nibbling process." This nibbling process has taken shape in several Communist-launched forays into the Western Hemisphere (e.g., Cuba and Latin America). These penetrations have, to a great extent, been based on Soviet calculations of American intentions and behavior. Although such moves have been shrouded in the ideological rhetoric of "peaceful coexistence," they have been undertaken with caution. When perceived gains from such forays have indicated potential advancement of Communism, Soviet leaders have normally been "... always ready to take advantage of Western mistakes or complacency." The Soviet view of American intentions has always been a basic determinant of Soviet policy. When Soviet leaders have perceived gaps in American defense policy, they systematically probed them. It must be remembered that decision-makers act upon their images of the situation rather than upon objective

2 Ibid., p. 10.
3 Rostow, op. cit., p. 262.
4 Ibid., p. 4.
Whether these gaps or weaknesses were actually real in the minds of American leaders is not of importance here. What is important is whether the Soviet leaders perceived an apparent weakness. "Once a statesman has formed an image of an issue, this image acts as an organizing device for further information and as a filter through which this information must pass." When the Soviets have perceived weaknesses and discontinuities in American policy, their perception has stimulated responses. Khrushchev's foreign policy toward the U.S. was conditioned by the foreign policy and military strategy of the U.S. Because the international system is composed of actors and nations performing and interacting with one another, Soviet shifts in attitude may be explained as responses to American positions or behavior. These responses were based on certain perceptions held by Khrushchev, and as Stagner has stated, "... perception precedes the policy decision and shapes it."

Historical analysis has proven that the Russians,

5For a detailed discussion of image formation in foreign policy, see Holsti, op. cit., pp. 244-45ff.

6Stagner, op. cit., p. 15.

7Triska and Finley document this point very well in their book Soviet Foreign Policy, op. cit., pp. 144-350.

8Stagner, op. cit., p. 11.
being doctrinaire activists, are relentless in securing all possible changes favorable to them so long as no undue risks are involved. Khrushchev's behavior in Cuba in 1962 has been incorrectly described as reckless, irrational, emotional, adventuristic, scheming, and perfidious. While he did accept some unusually high military and political risks in embarking on the Cuban venture, the risk of an immediate U.S. thermonuclear response against the Soviet Union was almost certainly not one of them. Khrushchev established a very crucial upper limit on the risks he was willing to accept. There were risks, of course. The Soviet marshals most certainly pointed them out to him. "But he knew Kennedy: they did not." The Soviet Union was no more anxious to precipitate a nuclear war than was the United States. Moreover, the Soviets have always subordinated military operations to political objectives. Clearly, Khrushchev's goals did not warrant the resort to nuclear war which would have placed in jeopardy the future of Communism not only in Cuba but perhaps also in the Soviet Union. "There can be no doubt that Khrushchev personally had no intention of letting the crisis deteriorate to a point where a nuclear

9See Brodie, op. cit., pp. 75-85.
10Abel, op. cit., p. 40.
war became even likely; let alone inevitable.\(^1\)

Throughout the last fifteen years, the Soviet Union has displayed a preference for low-risk ventures in foreign policy.\(^2\) The successes the Soviets have had have been in part the result of Western errors (e.g., Cuba). The successes were also well balanced by Soviet retreats forced by effective resistance abroad to Soviet pressures (e.g., Iran, Greece, Berlin, Yugoslavia). The Berlin crisis in 1961 is a good example of what Klaus Knorr would refer to as caution in Soviet foreign policy: "The Soviet government, which initiated this crisis, increased the pressure step by step, taking discriminating care that no new move was apt to provoke a violent response."\(^3\) In Cuba, Khrushchev believed the U.S. would not strike without cause, and he believed he could control the risks and would not press a challenge that would

\(^1\)Frankland, op. cit., p. 194.

\(^2\)See Triska and Finley, op. cit., p. 312. "Risk is a liability to error; it is a function of possible change. Risk involves a level of uncertainty. Where no prediction of the outcome is possible, pure change is involved; this, however, is not the usual situation in international relations. Here, one can at least broadly define the limits of possible gain or loss. When uncertainty is involved, it is a function of experience; if many cases are involved, a statistical probability may be calculated. Risk then becomes objectified uncertainty" (p. 318).

\(^3\)Klaus Knorr, On the Uses of Military Power in the Nuclear Age, op. cit., p. 91.
provoke the U.S. into taking aggressive action. The costs involved in Khrushchev's risk calculus were minimal compared to the possible gains that might have been achieved had the deployment been successful. Soviet risk-taking and risk-calculation was a product of rational behavior. Relying on William Riker's definition of rationality—"in politics rational men are men who would rather win than lose, regardless of the particular stakes"—it can be seen that Khrushchev's risk-taking in Cuba did anticipate a win but this initial risk action was coupled with an automatic risk-reducing mechanism. Putting missiles in Cuba was a high-risk action. But it was combined with what Triska calls a "risk-reducing emergency strategy": "If the United States gets tough, we pull out. The U.S. got tough, and the Russians did pull out." (Nobody consciously enters into a risk situation without calculating what to do if the situation should escalate. Khrushchev was a determined but controlled, forward-moving but cautious leader.) Risk-reducing

14Cf., for example, Roger Hilsman, Foreign Policy in the Sixties (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 5-7.


16Triska and Finley, op. cit., p. 322. See also Even Luard, "Conciliation and Deterrence," World Politics, XIX (January 1967).
strategy in the Soviet Union is synonymous with retreating. Retreating is a normal behavior under certain conditions. Retreating is not necessarily seen as the result of prior mistakes, but as an act of preservation, as a condition of future advance. Soviet policy is probing and exploratory but essentially conservative and ready to withdraw in the face of hostile determination.\textsuperscript{17} The Cuban gambit is the best example of Khrushchev's initial challenge to U.S. resolve; and the subsequent retreat was a useful political tool involving little risk. Khrushchev's behavior during the crisis was cautious, conservative, and circumspect. When the U.S. got tough, Khrushchev hastily and even ignominiously removed the missiles.\textsuperscript{18} Surely, the circumstances of that removal qualify one's estimate of his boldness in putting the missiles in.\textsuperscript{18} The placing of missiles in Cuba was not an imprudent, reckless, or irrational gamble. On the contrary, as Herbert Dinerstein remarks:


\textsuperscript{18}Bernard Brodie presents somewhat similar remarks, while contending that the Russian action in Cuba was indeed a manageable risk-taking situation (pp. 40-55).
I would not characterize the Cuban attempt by the Soviet Union as a reckless gamble. I would, if I were writing about it, I think, five years from now, give them very high marks for good sense. After all, the problem for the Soviet Union is how to advance Communism.

The gains they would have acquired from such a success would have been enormous politically and not negligible militarily. What have they lost? Well, they've lost a lot of prestige; they didn't get what they wanted, but they haven't had to retreat from anything they had before.19

As past events and crises have revealed, Soviet calculation of risk relates to their calculation of U.S. resolve. "If they calculate that [U.S.] resolve is low, and if it is in fact low in a given crisis, they face low actual risk, although the risk may appear high."20

Given the considerable margin of American strategic superiority prior to the Cuban crisis, which the emplacement of Soviet missiles in Cuba was intended to reduce, on what grounds could the Soviet leaders be confident that the U.S. would not launch a first strike against the Soviet Union in order to prevent an unfavorable change in the strategic balance?

The primary grounds for this confidence were political. Even when the U.S. enjoyed decisive strategic


superiority, as during the Kennedy Administration, its leaders showed themselves to be strongly disinclined to initiate general war so long as the Soviet Union avoided extreme measures of provocation that could not be dealt with by other means. Increasingly, it appeared to the Soviet Union and Premier Khrushchev that nothing short of actual application of violence against the U.S. or an important U.S. ally would risk a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. If one excludes from Soviet pre-crisis calculations any serious concern that the U.S. would launch a thermonuclear attack against the Soviet Union, the Cuban gambit no longer appears to be a reckless, irrational scheme, but a calculated and limited risk undertaken for substantially attractive gains. The Soviets' attempt to deploy missiles in Cuba was a very "sensible risk." And furthermore, "to ship such missiles to Cuba," writes Knorr, "required months of complicated

\[^{21}\text{Thomas Schelling might equate this risk calculation to the game of chicken. As long as calculations involve a series of discrete steps taken deliberately, without uncertainty as to the immediate consequences, this process of military maneuver does not lead to war. If the threatening side knows how far the other side can be pushed, he does not push that far. See Schelling, "Uncertainty, Brinkmanship, and the Game of Chicken," in K. Archibald, Strategic Interaction and Conflict (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1966), pp. 75-86.}\]

\[^{22}\text{Dinerstein, "Discussion, Part I," in Abshire and Allen, op. cit., p. 200.}\]
preparation—a requirement that is not conducive to a
strong component of emotional or irrational decision
making." To Khrushchev the possibility of escalation
of the crisis was not negligible. But as the crisis
revealed, his calculations included a risk-reducing
strategy. In fact, the quick withdrawal of the missiles
may be interpreted as a decision to end the crisis
quickly before it became necessary to accept even greater
losses which could be avoided—only at the cost of facing
serious risk of nuclear war.

Expectations Regarding United States Response

Confidence that their action would not directly
provoke nuclear war was a prerequisite for embarking on
the Cuban missile venture, but it could not be a suffi-
cient condition for success. What, then, aside from
their belief that the U.S. would not respond by striking
the Soviet Union, were the calculations that led
Khrushchev and the Soviet leaders to believe their venture
could succeed?

Undoubtedly, the subjective factors of American

23Klaus Knorr, "Failures in National Intelligence Estimates: The Case of Cuban Missiles," World
Politics, XVI (April 1963), 463; and see also Roberta
Wohlstetter, "Cuba and Pearl Harbor," Foreign Affairs,
XLIII (July 1965), 694-705.
foreign policy toward the Soviet bloc convinced Khrushchev and the Soviet leaders that the U.S. would not respond with military force to the creation of an offensive missile base in Cuba. Khrushchev's action in deploying missiles in Cuba can be explained as a product of a rational anticipation of American acquiescence to a fait accompli, based on a reasonable interpretation of a succession of American actions (e.g., Bay of Pigs, Laos, Vienna, and the Berlin Wall) and American responses to these actions. Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba was based on a careful analysis of American responses to Soviet pressure. And furthermore, the placing of missiles in Cuba was conceived of as a limited probe of American deterrence strategy to prove that the U.S. threshold of response, both tactical and strategic, was high even in an area where the U.S. had overwhelming military superiority and where the Soviet Union had no vital interests to make defeat unacceptable.

(As this study has developed, the Soviets have based their policies for many years on cold calculation rather than on fear and recklessness) and have taken advantage of whatever weakness, vacillation, or tendencies toward accommodation under pressure they detected in...

24 For further explanation, see Crane, op. cit., p. 531.
U.S. foreign policy. Khrushchev's assessment of President Kennedy's expected behavior in Cuba was "... based largely on expeditious calculations and the rational working out of plans."\(^25\)

In foreign affairs, the Kennedy Administration had demonstrated incredible na" advertisement. Kennedy had come into office, hoping that the Soviet Union and Khrushchev would be more tractable in dealing with the Administration. In fact, the President had even sent Khrushchev a personal message, asking him to give his new Administration a six-months' reprieve from crises in which to formulate new policies designed to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union. This turned out to be a terrible "diplomatic blunder."\(^26\)

This action convinced Khrushchev that the new President and his Administration were unsure of themselves and the time was ripe for some heavy-handed probing tactics.

Khrushchev and Soviet leaders, according to Lowe, "... follow American strategic pronouncements very closely and understand clearly the crucial semantic nuances. ..."\(^27\)


\(^{26}\)See Lasky, op. cit., p. 568.

the West constantly feels constrained to emphasize that a nuclear conflict is unthinkable may raise serious questions about its resolve to resort to the chief strategy at its disposal. 28

Premier Khrushchev's understanding of U.S. Cuban policy was a major factor in his decision to send missiles to Cuba. The ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion attempt of April 1961, while demonstrating the depths of U.S. hostility toward Castro, also suggested to Khrushchev that President Kennedy's reluctance to engage its own forces directly in military action against Cuba was so great that even the deployment of Soviet strategic weapons on the island would be tolerated, or at least resisted by means short of direct use of U.S. armed forces. 29 Unquestionably, Khrushchev was astonished at our failure to carry through the invasion. 30 Khrushchev had studied the events at the Bay of Pigs; he would have understood if Kennedy had left Castro alone or destroyed him; but


29 This particular expectation was based on the U.S. proven inability to use its power--i.e., its lack of will and skill to employ various techniques of coercion available to it. Such examples are Laos, Berlin Wall, and American-Cuban relations. See Horelick, op. cit., pp. 35-38; also Lowenthal, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

when Kennedy was rash enough to strike at Cuba but not bold enough to finish the job, Khrushchev decided he was dealing with an "inexperienced young man who could be intimidated and blackmailed." As Robert Strausz-Hupé stated: "Premier Khrushchev expanded gleefully on the West's failure of nerve." Kennedy's action in Cuba demonstrated to Khrushchev that the President "... lacked resolve and would not take determined action..." against a challenge to its hegemony in a vital area. The great cost of non-involvement when U.S. core interests are threatened is projected onto the world as an indication of U.S. impotence and indecisiveness in her own backyard. Khrushchev was more than willing to take advantage of such irresolution. His own nerve had not failed when it became necessary to send tanks into Budapest on November 4, 1956, to throttle the revolution. Kennedy had not lifted a finger to crush Castro. To Khrushchev, the dilemma was clear: "The Americans certainly possess overwhelming power--but they have forgotten how a great power must behave." The Soviet Union's

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33 Stoessinger, op. cit., p. 165; and Plank, op. cit., p. 34.
34 Abel, op. cit., p. 36.
penetration of Cuba was rather unexpected. "It was
greatly stimulating, it was even a little intoxicating,
to see a Communist regime amazingly established within
a stone's throw of the American mainland."  

The Kennedy Administration's acceptance of in-
creasingly open Soviet involvement in Cuban affairs after
the Bay of Pigs incident, including particularly the
Soviet military involvement, strengthened the belief of
Khrushchev and the Soviet leaders that the U.S. would
engage in armed intervention only in response to the
actual use of Cuba-based weapons against some Western
Hemisphere country.  

A few weeks after the abortive Cuba invasion,
Soviet leaders were further enlightened regarding
American foreign policy when President Kennedy met with
Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961 and prepared the way
for the neutralization of Laos (i.e., virtual abandonment
of Laos to Communism).  

The Kremlin's belief that the
Kennedy Administration was merely a "paper tiger" was re-
affirmed by the President's loud threats to intervene in

35 Frankland, op. cit., p. 281; see also Diner-
stein, "Soviet Policy in L.A.," op. cit., p. 84; and


37 See the discussion in Relman Morin, "Days That
Shocked the World," The Washington Star, November 6,
1962.
Laos and its later inaction.

At Vienna, Khrushchev had bullied Kennedy over the Bay of Pigs defeat. Kennedy called it a mistake. Khrushchev saw it as evidence of "weakness and indecision." From Khrushchev's point of view, this meeting was in no way a climacteric; it was no more than a useful exploration. Khrushchev went to Vienna "...to see this young man [Kennedy] with the toothpaste-advertisement smile and youthful head of hair. He needed to decide whether he really was a president or only a personable figure manipulated by unseen hands—and, if so, whose hands." In Vienna, Khrushchev did not deliberately set out to be unpleasant or belligerent. That the President was a young man in a hurry he could see. Upon the end of the meetings, Khrushchev was unable to determine what Kennedy believed; if indeed he believed anything at all. Khrushchev left the encounter convinced he could get away


39 Crankshaw, Khrushchev, op. cit., p. 278.

40 Khrushchev was simply being himself in the encounter. His successes in the last few years had given him tremendous confidence that his mental and physical powers were adequate to almost any crisis that he might face. These successes had made him extremely bold. Khrushchev's strategy was simple: he sought to confront and encounter his antagonist.
with some daring move. President Kennedy had failed to exert himself; he had confused Western policy at a time when firmness and resolute diplomacy were necessary.

A joint communique issued at the end of the Vienna meetings described them as frank, courteous, and useful. But useful to whom? From the President's viewpoint, the meeting had failed. "Khrushchev had sized up Kennedy as a 'pushover.'" The meeting had totally negative results. "Khrushchev concluded we are people who first shake our fists, then shake our fingers, and then shake our heads."

Khrushchev had walked away quite confident from the Vienna meeting. Later, it was reported on the diplomatic circuit that Khrushchev had boasted to the East Germans, "I think that I have taught that young man what fear is."

(The American acquiescence over the Berlin Wall was interpreted by Khrushchev as confirming his estimate of Kennedy's unwillingness to use force to protect vital American interests and rights. Kennedy had "... ignored the provocation of the construction of the Berlin Wall."

41 Lasky, op. cit., p. 571.


43 Premier Khrushchev, as quoted in Lasky, op. cit., p. 571.

44 Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 20.
Khrushchev had taken measure of President Kennedy's determination and resolution and found them incredible. The lesson Khrushchev had drawn was that the U.S. talked loudly but carried a small stick. On September 9th, a few weeks before the Cuban crisis, Khrushchev told Robert Frost that the "modern liberals" in the U.S. were "too liberal to fight." In the Cuban crisis, as past American behavior had demonstrated, "Khrushchev did indeed have ground for believing that the U.S. would not act." On October 16th, just a few days before the beginning of the open phase of the Cuban crisis, Khrushchev told Kekkonen of Finland that he was "absolutely convinced" that the U.S. would never fight over Berlin, Cuba, or anything else. Premier Khrushchev had calculated that the U.S. would consult its allies, who would urge caution to bring the case before the United Nations, and the United Nations would decide in favor of Cuba and the Soviet Union.

46 Crane, op. cit., pp. 531-32; also James Burham, op. cit., p. 505.
48 See Crane, op. cit., p. 536; also interview with Alexander Dallin in Newsweek, November 12, 1962.
The subjective factors of American foreign policy had indeed convinced Khrushchev that the U.S. would not respond with force to the creation of an offensive missile base in Cuba. Khrushchev had long since come to the conclusion that President Kennedy's lack of experience and his tendency to temperorize could be safely exploited.

Khrushchev had become convinced that the Kennedy Administration would not run risks to protect its interests, either because it did not understand its interests or because it did not have the will to use its power. Kennedy's behavior in handling the five international crises and the damaging effects these defeats had on American deterrence strategy "... led the Soviet leaders to the conviction that given a face-saving formula, the United States would choose retreat rather than a head on confrontation." The Kennedy Administration had precipitated the crisis by its own actions—according to Thomas Schelling when he referred to the President's conduct in foreign affairs: "No service is done to the other side by behaving in a way that undermines his belief in one's ultimate firmness." Sometime after the crisis, Henry A. Kissinger, "Reflections on Cuba," Reporter, XXVII (November 22, 1962), 22.

Dean Acheson was asked why the Russians had put the missiles in Cuba. His answer was anything but flattering to his own government. He said that the Russians had been led to believe that they could get away with it.\(^{52}\)

\(^{52}\)See Abel, op. cit., p. 113, for full text of conversation Acheson was having with Charles DeGaulle.
CONCLUSION

The discussion of the deterrence model as developed in Chapter I and analyzed in Chapter III has proven to be a useful theoretical tool. Not only has it served as an explanatory model but it has also helped provide some of the answers to the questions this thesis has attempted to resolve.

Similar to any theoretical model, the deterrence model has flaws. It cannot truly represent a valid interpretation of reality. It is only an approximation. Does this fact negate its usefulness? It does not. If a theoretical model helps us understand the internal logic between cause and effect and the interrelated variables in any event, crisis, or social phenomena, it has served its purpose.

The analysis of the deterrence model in Chapter III has, it is hoped, brought added understanding to the cause and effect relationships involved in the Cuban missile crisis. Deterrence, like all political phenomena, is not likely to operate as a strict law or principle. However, it does have a consistent and logical core. And, as Kissinger has stated, deterrence is either effective or
it is not. In the case of the Kennedy Administration, deterrence was not effective; in fact, it failed. It failed not so much because of any weakness in the deterrence model. Its failure can be attributed more to the frailties and insufficiencies of men and their use of national power than to the deterrence model.

The evaluation of the deterrence model has not only demonstrated the disastrous outcomes when deterrence strategy is not implemented effectively, but it has also indicated several inherent weaknesses in the use of nuclear power. These weaknesses, as Morgenthau expressed them, are the four paradoxes of nuclear power: the commitment to the use of force, nuclear or otherwise, paralyzed by the fear of having to use it; the search for a nuclear strategy which would avoid the predictable consequences of nuclear war; the pursuit of a nuclear armaments race joined with attempts to stop it; and the pursuit of an alliance policy which the availability of nuclear weapons has rendered obsolete.

This does not mean that we should abandon deterrence strategy; only that we should consider realistically the use of force and power when such correct and effective action serves our policy goals. The United States cannot afford to find itself at the mercy of events. It must anticipate the danger and shape a firm and consistent
policy to meet it. Fulfillment of threats and obligations is a matter of national honor and prestige. Power and influence are the means of facilitating deterrence, and "... they share the role of being the means par excellence of foreign policy."¹

Deterrence requires a combination of power, the will to use it, and the assessment of these by the potential aggressor. If force is necessary to avert a serious crisis to demonstrate our determination to apply our military superiority as may be necessary to protect our interests, and those of our allies, its use should be considered. Since deterrence is a form of power relation—the power to dissuade—the use of force may be necessary to affirm compliance with one's own actions.

(A basic presumption of this thesis has been that the origins and possible avoidance of conflicts are not in final acts, but in decisions taken or not taken day by day over long periods of time. ("A crisis occurs as the result of failure of decision-making at much earlier stages.")

This thesis has attempted to verify the above presumption by examining the origins of the Cuban missile crisis. The successful mediation of the crisis during October 1962 does not free us from the need to understand

¹See supra, p. 37, n. 42.
how the U.S. arrived at the point where such dramatic and risky action was necessary. This writer has found the explanations of the events leading up to the crisis partially unclear and unanswered; and it is hoped that this research has at least brought some clarity and understanding to the problems involved.

(The Cuban missile crisis was not an episodic event. The crisis was unique in the history of the Cold War. Ole Holsti best depicted its momentous character when he said: "The Cuban crisis surpassed all previous cold war confrontations and, for that matter, any previous in history."

We cannot dispute the fact that Khrushchev miscalculated American behavior and response during the actual crisis of October 1962. But the important question is: Why did he miscalculate? He miscalculated because the credibility of American deterrence strategy had been so thoroughly weakened by Kennedy's words and actions that the deployment of missiles not only seemed to involve few risks but also Khrushchev believed no response would be forthcoming. Khrushchev's action was due in no small part from Kennedy's failure to demonstrate effective executive leadership.

If there is one distinguishing feature that

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2 Holsti, Brody, and North, as cited in Rosenau, op. cit., p. 683.
characterized the Kennedy Administration, it was the disso-
ociation of military power and national policy. In the
Kennedy Administration, foreign policy was in a state of
constant confusion. There was a discrepancy between what
the Administration preached and what it practiced. Up
until the Cuban crisis of October 1962, President Kennedy
failed to utilize military power as a rational and effec-
tive instrument of national policy. The Kennedy Adminis-
tration not only hesitated and vacillated in the face of
Soviet blandishments, but also before Soviet intransigence.

The Soviet probes of American resolve that have
been discussed in this study found the Kennedy Adminis-
tration debating their implications when quick counter-
measures were required. President Kennedy's behavior and
strategy in foreign affairs doomed the U.S. to an essen-
tially reactive policy that produced improvised counter
moves. The result of these conditions is that American
foreign policy tends to be defensive in nature. Such a
policy leads to the depreciation of national power.

In order for the U.S. to employ power as a
rational and effective instrument of national policy, it
must first have a foreign policy that is defined in terms
appropriate to power. The Kennedy Administration demon-
strated its reluctance to think in terms of power; the
consequences were indeed costly (e.g., weakened deterrence
strategy, inefficacious threats, Cuban missile crisis).

The Kennedy Administration was preoccupied with two extreme levels of objectives: (1) the level of technical performance of deterrence strategy, and (2) the level of philosophical generalities concerning the highest levels of mankind. President Kennedy used power almost shamefacedly, as if it were inherently wicked. Not only was deterrence strategy weakened by such behavior, but also the credibility factor and national power were greatly depreciated.

As earlier discussed, deterrence strategy has a logical core. If we ask whom will deterrence strategy deter, the answer must be only those who play the game. Deterrence deters only so long as both aggressor and deterrer know the game thoroughly and act out their roles accordingly. It is questionable whether President Kennedy knew the game thoroughly or that he acted out his role in foreign policy leadership in the most effective fashion.

If a President is going to administer foreign policy to protect and guard his personal power, he must understand that power. He must thoroughly understand power relationships and how they affect his personal influence and power. He must always be aware of the risks involved in using power and how decisions and choices will affect his power. It is doubtful whether Kennedy
in the Bay of Pigs disaster ever seriously weighed and considered the damaging effect the fiasco would have on his personal power and influence. He realized this after the incident. The President must always weigh the risks, both costs and gains, in pursuing a certain policy. The President protects his power, as best he can, when he appraises the effects of the present action on the sources of his power. To make decisions with insight, the President must have learned to know himself and to master his identity. Perhaps one of the greatest failures of the Kennedy Administration was its inability to decide what it was doing and where it was going in the realm of foreign affairs. Such statements beget the next logical question: Was President Kennedy able to master his own identity and principles of government in the White House? This study has revealed that he did not.

Many writers have written that the Kennedy Administration, and particularly the President, finally exhibited determination and direction by facing-down the Communist challenge in Cuba in October 1962. The successful removal of the offensive missiles has been hailed as a Western victory and a defeat for the Soviet Union. I can hardly agree with such statements. Not only were the Communists handed a privileged sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere, but they also were given a "no invasion" pledge
by the Kennedy Administration. I do not consider this a victory but a grave, tragic consequence of the total ineptness and bungling of U.S. foreign policy in the Caribbean. If the Soviet leaders were surprised at U.S. firmness in handling the Cuban missile crisis, they were further confused by the failure of the U.S. to take advantage of its superior strategic position. The Kennedy Administration wanted only the return of the status quo; it did not even get that.

The modern liberalism of the Kennedy Administration favored discussion, negotiation, and compromise as the only rational and acceptable method of settling disputes. It rejected the use of coercion and force.

Cuba is indeed an American tragedy. Furthermore, it is a Kennedy tragedy.
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