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Policy Implications

Triangular Mutual Security: Why the Cuban Missile Crisis Matters in a World Beyond the Cold War

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We argue that as the superpowers move closer together, they need to ensure that security concerns of Third World states are taken into account. Otherwise, Moscow and Washington may face risks to their own security. This imperative applies especially to times of crisis, when deals struck at the superpower level may exacerbate fears of states who see their security being bargained away, thus leading to dangerous reactions. We illustrate our argument by retelling the classic tale of the Cuban missile crisis. Our account, however, is triangular, because in addition to American and Soviet perceptions, the Cuban perspective is a focus of our analysis. Finally, we derive triangular lessons of the missile crisis using the theory of mutual security.

KEY WORDS: Fidel Castro; Cuban missile crisis; positive sum; theory of mutual security.

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such . . . [and] the universalization of Western liberal Democracy as the final form of human government. (Fukuyama, 1989:4)
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> This isn't the *end* of history, it's the *return* of history. (Mearsheimer, 1990)
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> The Third World will be the scene of the most serious problems in coming years, because of the tremendous instability in those countries . . . Dreaming that there will be an end to revolutions, no matter what happens, is just dreaming. (Castro, 1990a)

THE POST-COLD WAR IMPERATIVE: *TRIANGULAR* MUTUAL SECURITY

In the wake of the first scene of the miraculous events in Eastern Europe in 1989, including the "velvet revolution" and the end of the European Cold War,

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we have witnessed a heretofore unthinkable revolution in East–West relations, with the United States and U.S.S.R. suddenly, if fitfully, constituting the greatest joint venture in the history of international politics. We do indeed appear to have entered the early phase of what Charles Krauthammer has called "the unipolar moment" (Krauthammer, 1991). Examples of East–West collaboration include choreographed maneuvering over the emotional and complex issues of German reunification; Soviet restraint after the American invasion of Panama; American restraint after the Soviet blockade of Lithuania; and Secretary of State James Baker's October, 1989, call for a mutual framework to replace worn out notions of containment and East–West competition: "We can move beyond containment to make the change toward better superpower relations more secure and less reversible. Our task is to find enduring points of mutual advantage that serve the interests of both the United States and the Soviet Union" (Baker, 1989). Moreover, Baker and his Soviet counterpart, Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, now speak by telephone as often as a half-dozen times per week, often to work out common strategies on tough issues, and to arrange their travel schedules to permit as many face-to-face meetings as possible (Anonymous State Department official. Private conversation with authors). The name of the game is "positive sum," at least as far as the United States and Soviet Union are concerned.

Yet it was only with the advent of the first worldwide crisis of the post-Cold War order, following Iraq's August 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait, that the new collaborative possibilities became fully apparent. Secretary Baker and then-Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, fishing together in the U.S.S.R., immediately condemned the invasion in a tough joint statement. There followed in the United Nations Security Council a degree of cooperation between the United States and U.S.S.R. previously not possible. Beginning with the first vote to condemn the invasion and to impose sanctions, through to the later votes authorizing use of force, the United States and U.S.S.R. voted together. In an ironical turn of events, Iraq, whose military machine had been built with U.S., Soviet, and French hardware, soon found itself at war with a U.N. coalition supported by all three (although the Soviets did not participate militarily in the coalition). And despite the recent rise of some reactionary elements in the U.S.S.R.—many criticizing Soviet policy in the Persian Gulf war—few believe the Soviets will revert to the Cold War unilateralism of the past.

Underlying the argument here is our conviction that the U.S.–Soviet conversion to bilateral mutual security does not necessarily herald the onset of what President Bush has chosen to call a new world order. In fact, there is much to fear from new world disorder: the unlocking of ancient hatreds and disputes; and the new uncertainties facing leaders of small Third World states who suddenly find themselves unable to play the United States and U.S.S.R. off against one another to obtain aid, and newly suspicious of their own neighbors who may try to take

advantage of them (Hoffmann, 1991). In fact, such considerations as these may have contributed to the Iraqi decision to grab Kuwait, something they had clearly sought for a long time, before their arms pipeline to Moscow fell victim to U.S.-Soviet collaboration (Karsh & Rautsi, 1991; Public Broadcasting Services, 1991). Other Third World states, especially those like Iraq with close ties to the Soviet Union, already find themselves on the wrong side of history and thus candidates for the kind of desperation that can lead to acts—like Iraq's invasion of Kuwait—that seem foolhardy, even irrational, to outsiders, especially those who, like the United States and U.S.S.R., have agreed to play by the rules of *mutual* security.

At the very least, the coincidence of the end of the East–West Cold War and the Persian Gulf war illustrate that East–West collaboration, empathy, coordination, and all the other aspects of participation in a bipolar positive-sum game do not ensure peace, prosperity, or harmony in the post-Cold War world. Who would have thought that positive sum, superpower symbiosis would reverberate in Baghdad as a zero sum situation, one in which U.S.–Soviet collaboration created a total loss for Iraq, potentially threatening the integrity and survivability of its harshly totalitarian regime? As mutual security theorist Richard Smoke puts it, the security interests of the United States, U.S.S.R., *and* small third parties may be "wired together," so that a perceived decrease in security in the small country can actually have consequences that adversely affect the security of both larger powers (Smoke, 1991). This brings us, finally, to our fundamental theoretical proposition: in the post-cold war world, a bilateral mutual security approach is not enough. It is imperative that the mutual security be made triangular, incorporating the security concerns of third countries whose leaders may feel their security is threatened by the great-power collaboration.

PSYCHOLOGY AND "SECURITY" IN THE POST-COLD-WAR WORLD

It may seem odd, even naive, to suggest as we do that: (a) the onset of the present "unipolar moment," embodied most importantly in U.S.–Soviet collaboration, might actually seem threatening to leaders in some smaller states; and (b) feeling threatened, such leaders might engage in activities that ultimately compromise even the security of great powers such as the United States and U.S.S.R. How is it that U.S.–Soviet collaboration, long sought and finally occurring, might like a boomerang return via one or more Third World countries to threaten Great Collaborators? Or: Why, in the post-Cold War environment, might a *bilateral* quest for mutual security, for a positive sum game, result in *triangular* entanglement in which all parties lose?

The answers lay in the revolutionary requirements for psychology and se-

curity produced by the end of the Cold War. These are vast subjects and we can only allude to them here. First, *psychologically,* it is clear that while some small countries have benefited from the end of the Cold War, dozens fear two possible consequences of the end of superpower competition in their regions. They fear being ignored, left alone to rot in regional cesspools—deemed by the great powers henceforth unworthy of concern because they are regarded as having nothing the larger countries want or need. Leaders of virtually all sub-Saharan African countries, for example, fear this. Or they may fear being singled out, manipulated, even attacked by one of the other former Cold War competitors. In the Caribbean Basin this is once more a rising concern. In a regional crisis, this nascent anxiety and feeling of increasing helplessness could become transformed into desperation, with concomitant decisions and actions that appear irrational to those without the empathic ability to understand the desperation that lies behind them. In this way, new world disorder may lead to Third World desperation, resulting in regional tension, chaos, or war.

Even so, why, apart from moral and humanitarian concerns, should collaborating great powers be concerned about anxiety, desperation, chaos, and war in areas of the world remote from their borders and thus, so they might conclude, remote from their *security* requirements? The answer, we believe, is evident as the members of the anti-Iraq coalition, led by the United States and U.S.S.R., try to manage the unintended consequences of the Persian Gulf war: hundreds of oil-well fires; a catastrophically affected local environment; millions of refugees; a hated dictatorship still in power; the prospect of a costly, long-term conventional presence of allied forces in the Gulf; and the resurgence, after a few brief months of Arab cooperation, of old rivalries, hatreds, and disputes in the region. This was the 100-hr war that will likely have more than 100 years of consequences, and for more than a 100 countries. The security of all parties to the dispute was compromised—security in the deeper, broader sense required by the post-Cold-War environment, security in the longer term, and security calculated as a function of the total well-being, or its lack, of the tightly integrated world system to which we all belong.

RESEARCH STRATEGY: A CASE STUDY OF A PREVIOUS "UNIPOLAR MOMENT," OCTOBER 1962

Thomas S. Kuhn argued convincingly a generation ago that research becomes difficult, verging on the impossible, during periods of revolutionary change (Kuhn, 1962). During these anxiety-provoking epochs, the old order appears to have been invalidated, while the outlines of the new "paradigm" have yet to come clearly into focus. Something like this state of affairs now confronts researchers seeking policy-relevant, political–psychological insight into the se-

curity requirements of the post-Cold-War world. The bipolar Cold War, having dominated world affairs for almost half a century, has come to a surprising, abrupt, almost total termination. Furthermore, it had scarcely been declared over when the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait occurred. In our view, the heart of the new "order" is a new *triangular* dimension to mutual security requirements, a dimension in part unseen by the superpowers and therefore not fully appreciated by them, but nonetheless decisive. The question thus arises: where do we turn for data on a phenomenon—triangular mutual security—that appears to be uniquely a function of the revolutionary "unipolar moment" through which we are now proceeding?

Many methodological responses are possible, most of them unsatisfactory because they fail to provide access to data that bear wholly on the most important aspects of this "unipolar moment": on these two newly collaborative superpowers; on a third point in a real triangular entanglement with them, in which one may find evidence of superpower obliviousness to third-country security concerns that boomeranged back onto the superpowers; and on more or less direct policy consequences that persist even now. The answer—the episode on which it is logical to focus—is at first counterintuitive: the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. That was the moment, we believe, that most closely meets the methodological requirements we have just set out: U.S.–Soviet involvement; anxiety, and eventually desperation in a third party (Cuba) that had adverse security consequences for both the United States and U.S.S.R.; and contemporary policy relevance. Our approach is counterintuitive because, of course, the missile crisis is generally regarded as the purist superpower confrontation of all time, the nadir of the Cold War, a 13-day super-drama with a clean-cut conclusion, and thus irrelevant to a world moved beyond its unfortunate and constraining bipolarities.

But such a view is itself a product of Cold War, bipolar myopia, according to which scholars have focused on the *missiles*—the deployment, the crisis, and their withdrawal—and ignored the piece of geography on which the missiles were emplaced and removed, *Cuba*. We are learning much more than we knew before about Cuban origins, decision-making, consequences, and interpretations of the crisis of October 1962. To those of us engaged in recovering the Cuban reality in the Cuban missile crisis, it has become clear that for one brief dark moment in 1962, a "moment" stretching from late October to late November, the Cuban leadership felt abandoned by the Soviets, threatened by the United States, and more desperate than we ever knew.

In short, the recovery of the Cuban perspective on those events has also allowed us, quite fortuitously, to recover a previously unappreciated "tangled triangle" of just the sort that is most to be feared now. Suddenly, the event some have said has been over-studied because of its relative antiquity and bipolarism, now becomes, with the data-based insertion of Cuba into the story, an extraordinarily rich resource for those seeking hard data relevant to our revolutionary

new world situation (Cohen, 1986; Falcoff, 1989). It turns out that we have been there before, though briefly, during (what looked to Cuba like) that "unipolar moment" that took our health away in 1962. Thus, in the following two section we provide the equivalent of a brief tour of the new information that has recently come to light on Cuba and *its* missile crisis.

CUBA AND THE MISSILE CRISIS(A): FROM U.S. AND SOVIET SOURCES

The story of the origins of the Soviet missile deployment in Cuba is familiar to students of postwar U.S.-Soviet relations. It appears that Khrushchev's fear of the nuclear imbalance, as well as his wish to protect the Cuban revolution from American attack, were primary motives for the deployment. In turn, the American response has been subjected to numerous analyses (Allison, 1971; Blight & Welch, 1990, part one; Kennedy, 1969).

Following the Kennedy administration's October 16, 1962, discovery of the deployment of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missile sites under construction in Cuba, senior officials of the EXCOM, or Executive Committee of the National Security Council, deliberated in secret for an entire week. During this time, debate focused on military and diplomatic options which might produce the desired result: the removal of the missiles. On October 22, President Kennedy announced his decision to quarantine Cuba with a naval blockade, preventing the delivery of additional missiles on ships which had already set sail from the Soviet Union. During the next few days, the leaders in both the United States and U.S.S.R. began to feel they were losing control of events. American surface ships, for example, may have tried to force Soviet nuclear submarines to surface without permission from the president. On October 26, Khrushchev offered to remove the missiles in exchange for an American commitment not to invade Cuba.

However, before Kennedy could respond, the administration received a more demanding proposal in which Khrushchev also insisted on the removal of Turkish-based Jupiter missiles. As EXCOM debated its response, word reached the White House that an American U-2 reconnaissance plane had been shot down near the Cuban port of Banes. The president dispatched his brother Robert to negotiate privately with Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin. Contrary to the previous received wisdom, it now appears that Kennedy may have pursued a direct trade involving removal of the Turkish-based missiles in exchange for removal of the Cuban-based missiles because he sensed the United States and U.S.S.R. were on the brink of war, and because he felt such a trade was preferable to war (Blight & Welch, 1989/90, 163–165). By the following morn-

ing, Khrushchev had decided to end the crisis. The United States would agree publicly not to invade Cuba and privately to remove Jupiter missiles in Turkey within several months. The Soviets would agree to remove all nuclear ground-to-ground "offensive" missiles from Cuba. However, for 3 weeks, until the Soviets removed their missiles and Il-28 bombers from Cuba, U.S. reconnaissance jets continued daily low-level passes over Cuban territory and the naval quarantine remained in place, as Soviet envoy Anastas Mikoyan and Fidel Castro negotiated in Cuba. By November 19, Castro had agreed to the U.S.–Soviet resolution.

The resolution of the missile crisis foreshadowed the pattern of the tangled triangular relationship between Washington, Moscow, and Havana over the next 28 years. On the one hand, the United States and Soviet Union entered a period of decreased tensions. Kennedy and Khrushchev had each been to the nuclear brink and experienced a momentary shattering of their faith in human survival (Blight, 1990). When they mutually came to believe that they were uncomfortably close to annihilating each other, they reconciled their differences. To a greater degree than at any time since the two governments cooperated during World War II, the American president took the Soviet general secretary's interests into account, as Kennedy was sensitive to Khrushchev's need for a face-saving way to back down. In spirit, if not in name, Kennedy was thinking in positive sum terms. Instead of a zero sum approach, Kennedy was looking for options that would let both sides "win." The improved state of relations persisted after the crisis as the two sides installed the Washington–Moscow hotline—a teletype machine for direct communications between the president and the general secretary—and signed the 1963 Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which prohibits above-ground and underwater nuclear explosions. In addition they initiated negotiations which led to the signing of the Outer Space Treaty (1967), the Seabed Treaty (1971), and the Treaty of Tlatelolco (1967) (Smoke, 1987).

The Cubans, on the other hand, were infuriated by the terms of the resolution. They learned of the Kennedy–Khrushchev deal over the radio, apparently believing that their security interests had been bargained away, and seemed certain that the Americans would take advantage of Khrushchev's sell-out by invading the island despite the administration's pledge to respect Cuban sovereignty (Brenner, 1990). Although American intentions at the time remain unclear, the administration did, in fact, appear to be laying the groundwork for an attack even before the discovery of the missiles, and the Cubans were aware of the preparations. In a retrospective report on the crisis, Admiral Robert L. Dennison, commander-in-chief of the Atlantic Fleet said that ". . . more than 2 weeks before the missiles were discovered, orders were given to prepare the air strike option, 312 OPLAN, for 'maximum readiness' by October 20" (Allyn et al., 1989/90, 145). The Cuban countryside was gripped by war frenzy as Castro declared his country to be "on a war footing." The Cubans mobilized their troops

and prepared for the expected American invasion by every means possible, including sending machete-wielding cane cutters onto the beaches to attempt to stop U.S. marines (Halperin, 1972).

In the recently published (and long suppressed) "Glasnost Tapes" dictated some years after the crisis by Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet leader claims to have received on the final weekend of the crisis a communication from Castro warning of an American attack and proposing that the Soviets launch their missiles preemptively. In that portion of his memoirs deleted by the KGB as part of the price of their conveyance to the West, Khrushchev remembered:

> Then we received a telegram from our ambassador in Cuba. He said Castro claimed to have reliable information that the Americans were preparing within a certain number of hours to strike Cuba. Our own intelligence also informed us that an invasion would probably be unavoidable unless we came to an agreement with the president quickly. Castro suggested that to prevent our nuclear missiles from being destroyed, we should launch a pre-emptive strike against the U.S.
>
> My comrades in the leadership and I realized that our friend Fidel totally failed to understand our purpose. We had installed the missiles not for the purpose of attacking the U.S. but to keep the U.S. from attacking Cuba.
>
> Castro was hotheaded. He thought we were retreating or worse, capitulating. He did not understand that our action was necessary to prevent a military confrontation. (Khrushchev, 1990, 76–77)

Thus, according to Khrushchev's recollection, Castro and the Cubans did not understand that nuclear weapons are for deterrence, not for use in war. If used, and followed by nuclear retaliation and escalation, as Khrushchev told Kennedy in his letter of October 26, "thermonuclear extinction" would follow (Khrushchev, 1962).

Shortly after the publication of Khrushchev's "Glasnost Tapes," Castro denied publicly that he ever made such a request, claiming that "Perhaps Khrushchev . . . interpreted it this way, or he might have interpreted some of my messages to him in that way, but in reality it did not happen like that" (Castro, 1990b). Yet many students of Castro's Cuba continue to believe that if Cuba had had control of nuclear weapons in October 1962, there would have been a nuclear war.

CUBA AND THE MISSILE CRISIS(B): FROM CUBAN SOURCES[2]

Recently, Fidel Castro and other Cuban officials have begun to speak in detail about their experience of the missile crisis, particularly the threat they felt from the United States, and their fear of abandonment by the Soviets. New Cuban willingness to discuss their perceptions of the United States and Soviets first surfaced at a January 1989, conference in Moscow, attended by senior

[2]This section is adapted from Blight et al. (1992).

Americans, Soviets, and Cubans from the period. The Cuban delegation was stimulated by the opening remarks of former-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who said that ". . . if I had been a Cuban leader [in 1962], I think I might have expected a U.S. invasion" (Allyn et al., 1991, 14). McNamara, supported by all his former colleagues from the Kennedy administration, said that however compelling the evidence may have appeared to the Cubans (and Soviets), an invasion of Cuba was out of the question. Believing otherwise, he said, while understandable, was nevertheless to fall victim to a serious misperception, since in his view contingency plans for a U.S. invasion of the island would never have been enacted.

At a subsequent triangular conference held in Antigua in January 1991, Cuban Interior Ministry official General Fabian Escalante rejected McNamara's "misperception" theory. Citing information drawn from Cuban intelligence sources, Escalante set out to document "not that planning for an attack was merely a contingency, a result of military routine," but rather that "it was based on objective facts that constituted irrefutable proof that such a plan was in the works" (Lewis & Welch, 1992, 1). Escalante concluded:

> . . . war is not only combat with tanks, aircraft, machine guns, cannon and missiles; war is the placing of bombs, war is generalized terrorism, war is indiscriminate murder—war is all of this. War is armed groups, war is people being trained in the U.S. How many Cubans did the CIA have at its base in Miami: Documents say that over 3,000 Cubans were agents, collaborators at the CIA operations base in Miami. Well, if this is not a war, ladies and gentlemen, may God judge us. (Lewis & Welch, 1992, 22)

This much seems clear: Cubans believed uniformly in the inevitability of a frontal assault by U.S. forces on the island. After they defeated the U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961, Cuban leaders turned desperately to the Soviets for assistance. Of course, they never thought to ask for nuclear missiles. The Soviets had never deployed such weapons anywhere outside Soviet territory. Nevertheless, when offered, they were gratefully received by Cuba, as the feeling grew on the island that the ultimate deterrent to the U.S. invasion was about to arrive and become operational.

Yet the secret, deceptive deployment had hardly begun, when the Cubans began to suspect that the Soviet gambit was not well-thought-out. Che Guevara and Emilio Aragones, two members of the ruling six-man secretariat, were sent to Moscow in late August to urge the Soviets to go public with the deployment, lest the United States discover the missiles in mid-course, and use their presence on the island as an excuse to attack and invade Cuba. At the Moscow conference on the crisis, Aragones said that "we maintained that we had to sign a pact and announce that both countries, by sovereign decision, had put the missiles in Cuba and that this was absolutely moral and legal . . . Khrushchev said no. He wanted to buy time; he said . . . that it would not be discovered . . . [and] that in case that happened, he would send the Baltic fleet to Cuba and that he would still

defend us" (Allyn et al., 1991, 40–41). From the moment of receiving Khrushchev's dubious assurance regarding the Baltic Fleet, the Cubans appear to have felt increasingly uneasy about having placed their fate (as they believed) in the hands of the Soviets.

We are only now coming to appreciate the fear and anger in Castro's Cuba that accompanied Khrushchev's agreement to remove the missiles, in return for a public pledge from Kennedy not to invade the island, and a private assurance that "analogous" Turkish missiles belonging to NATO on the Soviet southern border would be removed within a few months. The deal seemed to Castro to have placed Cuba in imminent danger, and he was furious in any case at the Soviets for having struck such a deal without consulting Cuba. As has recently been revealed by the declassification of his crisis correspondence with Khrushchev, Castro became sufficiently desperate to make a contingent request to the Soviets that they launch their nuclear missiles at the United States should an invasion take place. Castro cabled Khrushchev on October 26, 1962: "If they manage to carry out an invasion of Cuba . . . then that would be the moment to eliminate this danger forever, in an act of the most legitimate self-defense. However harsh and terrible the solution, there would be no other" (Castro, 1962a). Khrushchev, horrified by what he took to be a request for nuclear pre-emption, together with other information indicating that the United States was indeed preparing to invade the island, immediately agreed to Kennedy's terms and thereby ended the intense phase of the superpower crisis.

Soviet abandonment of Cuba during the missile crisis, and the Soviet refusal to consult with Cuba over the terms of the resolution, still rankle Cuban officials nearly 30 years later. Cuban Political Bureau member Jorge Risquet recalls the Cuban position this way:

> If Nikita's message to Kennedy said, 'We are willing to withdraw the missiles from Cuba, provided that Cuba's security is guaranteed, *in Cuba's view*' . . . and there would be no negotiations about Cuba without Cuba . . . that problem . . . would have been resolved. (Allyn et al., 1992, 60)
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> . . . we always told our Soviet friends that we disagreed with Cuba's exclusion from the negotiations. They said that this was a matter of time, or lack thereof; but . . . Khrushchev's response to Kennedy . . . had to be resolved in a conference where Cuba was present. Had he added five more words to his message . . . the problems between Cuba and the U.S. that led to the crisis in the first place would also have been discussed. (Lewis & Welch, 1991, 167)

One of the most interesting documents declassified so far by the Cubans and Soviets regarding the missile crisis contains the notes of Ambassador Aleksandr Alekseev, from conversations between Castro and Anastas Mikoyan held on November 3, 1962, just after Mikoyan arrived in Cuba as Khrushchev's special envoy. Mikoyan's task was to convince Castro that giving up the missiles was necessary. Castro's reaction, as recorded by Alekseev, shows the depth and the object of Cuban concern. According to Castro:

> . . . our people were not psychologically prepared. They felt deep disappointment, bitterness, pain. As though we were being deprived not of missiles, but of the very symbol of solidarity. Our people thought the news about the withdrawal of the missiles was a lie . . . For some forty-eight hours this feeling of bitterness spread among the whole people . . . We were very worried by the sharp fall in the people's moral spirit. It affected their fighting spirit as well . . . All this was badly demoralizing. These feelings could have been used by the counter-revolution to incite anti-Soviet moods . . . I myself am to blame for the situation that has been created . . . Cuba cannot be conquered, it can only be destroyed. (Castro, 1962c)

Castro told Lee Lockwood several years later that he never dreamed the Soviets would ever remove the missiles (Lockwood, 1967, 223). It never occurred to him, that is, that superpowers—especially superpowers ostensibly in the grip of a Cold War—might act to preserve their own security interests rather than sustain a small ally.

It is useful to recall why the Cubans were excluded from the resolution of the crisis. Consider the minimum objectives of the superpowers: for the United States removal of Soviet missiles; for the U.S.S.R., a pledge by the United States not to invade Cuba. In the presence of nascent nuclear danger, Kennedy and Khrushchev found themselves able to meet one another's needs. However, the Cuban minimum goal was not a pledge from the Americans, but the removal of the *objective sources* of the threat of a U.S. invasion: transfer of the Guantanamo Naval Base to Cuba; drawing down the U.S. invasion force in South Florida; cessation of covert activities in Cuba; and cessation of U.S. reconnaissance overflights of the island (Castro, 1962b). Thus, there was incompatibility, not only between *U.S.* and Cuban interests, but also between *Soviet* and Cuban interests, at precisely the moment of U.S.–Soviet rapprochement. Worse: the *achievement* of the Soviet pledge to remove the missiles meant, from the Cuban perspective, likely annihilation since they were sure the attack would follow the missiles' departure. The prospect of a positive sum outcome at the superpower level was accompanied by the fear of a zero sum catastrophe for Cuba. Castro's contingent request of Khrushchev for a launch need not therefore be viewed as being crazy in the least, because from the Cuban point of view the situation was becoming so perverse as to seem almost unavoidably catastrophic. Faced with an array of choices essentially reduced to meaningless catastrophe or martyrdom, the latter is a perfectly rational option. We now know that in late October 1962, a leader actually came very close to reaching this conclusion because of the unexpected rapprochement between the superpowers.

"PIPSQUEAK" LESSONS OF THE OCTOBER TRIANGLE

What lessons are to be learned from the triangular accounting of the missile crisis? First, when Washington and Moscow push around third parties, there may be consequences. In the missile crisis, although East and West were able to avoid

war by accommodating each other's interests in a positive sum solution, they did so at the expense of the Cubans, who believed, not irrationally, that their very survival was bargained away. In response, the Cubans tried with every means at their disposal to prevent an American invasion, and a U.S.–Soviet deal they thought would insure it. Their status as a pariah thus was reinforced. And as a result, there are unhappy consequences in U.S.–Soviet–Cuban relations even today deriving from the failure to integrate Cuba into the solution. The key result, "the Cuban style of deterrence," consists of the demonstrated ability to fight wars and to win them, as well as occasional acts of an almost suicidal nature, such as the defense of Grenada by vastly outnumbered Cuban forces in October 1983 (Dominguez, 1989, 1992).

Cuban security analyst Rafael Hernandez recently summed up the connection between Cuba's experience of the missile crisis and Cuban deterrence: "As a result of the crisis, one lesson for Cuba was that, in the future, Cuba would have to be able to defend itself by its own means, on its own territory. Therefore, the consolidation of its own defensive capacity would thenceforth be the principal means of deterring the external threat" (Lewis & Welch, 1992, 181). This strategy is characterized chiefly by the capacity to inflict unacceptable damage on any would-be aggressor; by cultivating a reputation for high-risk irrationality; and by the establishment of close relationships between Cuba and other Third-World countries on whom it feels it can depend in the court of world opinion, especially in the U.N. (Dominguez, 1992). With this self-asserting military force, Cuba has pursued what the United States has, since the missile crisis, called an adventurist foreign policy, for example in Angola and in the Horn of Africa. In direct reaction to its abandonment in the missile crisis, Cuba has built itself up to be the other Caribbean superpower, along with the U.S., and could in another deep crisis pose a military threat to U.S. security (Blight et al., 1990). Dominguez calls this "pipsqueak power," and the term fits (Dominguez, 1992).

A second lesson is that the superpowers should not always assume that desperate third parties can be mollified by security guarantees. The missile crisis illustrates the discrepancy between the American pledge to respect Cuban sovereignty and Cuban perceptions of that settlement, what we might call "pipsqueak skepticism." Although the administration did promise not to invade Cuba in return for removal of the missiles and bombers, the pledge clearly was not enough to allay Cuban fears of an imminent attack. Because the pledge coincided with removal of the missiles, many Cubans recall feeling most at risk of American attack *after* Kennedy's promise. To the extent that policy-makers of the 1990s seek mutually secure, *triangular* relationships that address the needs and perceptions of all sides, it is important to examine the rationale behind the Cuban disbelief in the American pledge. In response to what seemed like overwhelming evidence that an American invasion was virtually, perhaps literally, under way, the Cubans assumed that there was nothing left to deter an attack once the Soviets

removed the missiles. For Cuba, which felt itself to be isolated and abandoned, the specter of annihilation was so vivid as to prevent its leaders from noticing changes in their situation caused by a bargain struck at the great-power level. Castro was able to think only in worst-case terms, completely discounting verbal security guarantees issued in good faith.

The third lesson is that leaders in tangled triangles may find it difficult to grasp their adversaries' priorities, particularly "pipsqueak priorities." With the exception of Kennedy's appreciation of Khrushchev's need to back down with honor, the three leaders seem to have been largely out of touch with one another's perceived reality. For example: (1) Castro wrongly assumed that the Soviet-Cuban relationship was more valued in Moscow than were U.S.-Soviet relations. He believed he would retain some leverage over the deployment because of his ability to play the superpowers off against each other. The sudden, traumatic discovery of this miscalculation no doubt contributed to his desperation. (2) The Kennedy administration did not understand Castro's fear, a fear that developed in response to a pattern of harassment and interference as well as considerable evidence of an American assassination conspiracy. Nor was Kennedy sensitive to Khrushchev's fear of the global consequences of the nuclear imbalance. As a result, presidential advisers were shocked at their discovery of the missile deployment, even though the possibility had been discussed for months in Congress and in the media. (3) Khrushchev did not appreciate Kennedy's fear of appearing weak in the face of communism, especially Cuban communism, and thus failed to anticipate stiff American resistance to the deployment. He also failed to take into account Castro's dependence on the Soviets for deterring an American invasion. And neither he nor Kennedy anticipated Castro's sense of powerlessness and fury which followed their agreement. What is of interest is that, in this case, the priorities of the superpowers shifted and converged when Kennedy and Khrushchev came to realize they would have to sacrifice secondary objectives in order to avoid war. The "pipsqueak's" priorities, however, remained constant.

TRIANGULAR MUTUAL SECURITY: THEORETICAL OBSERVATIONS

While our purpose is not primarily theoretical, it may be useful to state as clearly as possible what we take to be the most important generalization that follows from our case study of the Cuban missile crisis. This generalization, which we derive from *Cuban* perspectives of the Cuban missile crisis, is consistent with a fundamental tenet of the theory of mutual security: in relationships involving two countries that can destroy or significantly damage each other, neither state can improve its own security at the expense of the other side

(Smoke, 1991, 71). In other words, the security of both sides in such a relationship is connected, or wired together, in one single system. Both sides are in the same boat, and if the boat sinks, both sides sink. While the theory of mutual security has been applied primarily to bilateral systems, Cuban experiences during the missile crisis suggest that it may be possible to apply positive sum thinking to three-sided situations. More formally, we offer the following observation:

The Possibility of Triangular Wiring, and the Danger of Triangular Incompleteness

In the missile crisis, the U.S., Soviet Union, and Cuba belonged to a single (triangular) security system, in which the security of all three sides was wired together. In other words, each country's security was connected to the fate of the entire system, and the system itself was a function of the security of each side. As a result, no two sides were able to advance their security at the expense of a third party. And this was true despite the fact that one of the countries did not possess weapons of mass destruction.

American and Soviet policy-makers failed to appreciate Cuba's perverse fear as well as its sense that there was nothing to lose in the face of imminent attack. Transcripts of EXCOM's deliberations contain no indication that the administration felt threatened by Cuba itself and saw no reason to worry about Castro's predicament (Bundy & Blight, 1987/88). Yet it takes little imagination added to what we now know about the Soviet–Cuban side of the story to see how superpower security was linked to Cuba's sense of imminent annihilation. War was avoided, but the Cubans could have implicated both superpowers in disaster (by shooting down American reconnaissance planes at the height of tensions, or by attacking a missile site, for example). Moreover, as argued above, the Cuban style of deterrence, in large part a product of Cuban exclusion from the resolution of the missile crisis, has had significant, negative long-term consequences for both superpowers (Dominguez, 1992). These examples show that the three nations belonged to a single security system, and that their security was wired together *even though this was not obvious to policy-makers during peacetime or during the crisis.*

In the post-Cold-War world, Washington and Moscow may again participate inadvertently or even unconsciously in an East-West condominium that foments desperation for a third party. Leaders of third parties experiencing a sense of abandonment and/or loss of control may turn to desperate measures that might seem irrational, even suicidal, to those who are ignorant of the profound perversity which seems to the third parties to characterize the situation. And East and West may again fail to recognize cases in which superpower security is wired

together in triangular systems with Third-World nations. However, in the same way that a positive sum solution could have been found for all three sides in the missile crisis (Blight et al., 1992), post-Cold-War policies that promote positive sum outcomes for all three sides may lead to results that satisfy all sides' concerns.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: TOWARD "REALISTIC EMPATHY" IN TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

When Kennedy decided to give Khrushchev a face-saving way out of the crisis, he was thinking in positive sum terms despite a political context which stressed unilateral gain. He was able to do so because nuclear danger was great. When large states develop policies toward small ones, however, the sense of threat may be quite low. In other words, policy-makers in large countries may find it difficult to believe or even to imagine that their security is wired together with the security of smaller countries. One lesson from the missile crisis, however, is that in certain cases the security of the superpowers may be wired together with the security of Third-World nations, even though this may not be apparent despite or until the outbreak of crisis. In 1962, the United States and Soviet Union did not realize that they were in a triangular security system—that their own fates were connected with the fate of Cuba. But the crisis increased Castro's anxiety, anger, and, because of heavy U.S.–Soviet involvement, his ability to provoke superpower war. As a result, the security of all three nations became intertwined during the height of the crisis to an extent we are just now beginning to appreciate.

Although Moscow and Washington may act deliberately in some cases to back desperate leaders into corners in order to force a showdown, a triangular perspective on mutual security suggests great powers may unintentionally decrease their own security by decreasing the security of smaller Third-World states. Therefore, the superpowers should try to develop sophisticated triangular sensibilities before crises unfold. And when troubles do develop, East and West need to be aware that joint resolutions which exclude third parties may increase the danger for all. Several countries in the Middle East would destroy significant sources of oil in minutes; the Cubans could, if pressed sufficiently, wreak havoc on the United States from Texas to Florida; even the Lithuanians or Ukrainians could assassinate leaders and withhold goods. These and many other possibilities suggest that, while history has indeed "returned" and, with it, a good deal of instability, there is risk involved when great powers throw their weight around.

Psychologically speaking, the risk is related to insufficient *empathy,* in Ralph White's useful phrase (White, 1984, 160). Concretely, this is the capacity accurately to imagine what it is *like* to be in the situation of another whose

experience is different from one's own. In the Cuban missile crisis, for example, President Kennedy could draw on the empathic analyses of Llewellyn Thompson, a member of EXCOM, a nearly lifelong student of Russian culture and language, and personal friend of Khrushchev. Unfortunately, no one in that decision-making body knew Cuba and Cubans in ways analogous to Thompson's knowledge of the U.S.S.R. and Khrushchev. Not one had ever met Fidel Castro, nor had any back-channel communications been established. The Soviets were in the same bilateral boat as they tried to navigate that triangular storm in 1962. U.S. specialists abounded, and Khrushchev himself had met Kennedy and some of the others at the Vienna summit in June 1961. No one, however, in his inner circle even spoke Spanish, much less knew anything about Cuba, which Khrushchev liked to refer to as "that sausage-shaped island."

This time around, in what we hope is an extended "moment" at the end of the Cold War, we must do better at providing vehicles for the development of realistic empathy for Third World countries. We should, for example, take seriously the suggestion of Robert Pastor, responsible for Latin American affairs in the National Security Council during the Carter Administration, to enhance the diplomatic history office in the State Department, and to provide the staff of the National Security Council with professional historical assistance (Pastor, 1991). We should also encourage governmental and nongovernmental interactions between representatives of the U.S. and U.S.S.R., on the one hand and, on the other, representatives of potentially explosive Third World areas. In these and other ways, we should seek to act on what we have called "a new [security] principle for the post-cold war era: *for every positive Great Power collaboration, there may be an equal and opposite small power reverberation.*"

TRIANGULAR PHENOMENOLOGY: A POST-COLD WAR CHALLENGE

Nuclear strategists have long articulated rational and irrational scenarios leading to the outbreak of catastrophic war (Blight, 1990, 39–52). In the canonical rational scenario, a leader calculates that the cost/benefit payoff of nuclear pre-emption outweighs the payoff ratio of other courses of action. Or, put simply, It is better to launch than not to launch. But it generally has been assumed that this cognitive condition could never materialize—that a leader could never rationally arrive at a decision to begin, say, an all-out a nuclear war. Strategists have therefore focused on avoiding what is now generally referred to as an "inadvertent" nuclear war (Allison et al., 1985). The missile crisis is often taken as proof that leaders will never choose nuclear war. Kennedy and Khrushchev chose instead to exit the crisis. Viewed from a triangular perspective, however, the missile crisis shows that the distinction between rational and irrational may be unhelpful for understanding the event; Castro's rage, fury, and his contingent

request to Khrushchev to initiate a superpower war appeared rational from the Cuban perspective, but "crazy" from the perspective of either superpower. We know that the request was not irrational because Castro thought he soon would have nothing to lose. We contend that, in the worse case of a nuclear war in 1962 arriving out of the unacknowledged triangularity, the cause would have been neither rationality nor irrationality, but *ignorance;* ignorance by both suddenly secure superpowers of Cuba's sense of imminent annihilation *and* resulting desperation.

We need to move beyond the rational/irrational psychology in order to understand the Cuban frame of mind and to take steps to prevent other leaders from arriving at desperation caused by great power entrapment. Such a psychology would be both *phenomenological*—its goal would be putting oneself vicariously in the other's shoes (Blight, 1987, 1990)—and *triangular*—its practitioners would be on the lookout for situations in which leaders of small, militarily threatened nations feel backed into a corner, optionless, abandoned by allies, and threatened by adversaries. What looks outwardly like suicide may feel like a last chance at honor or survival. This mindset may include a sense of martyrdom, standing for the "have-nots," and "gong down fighting" because there is no other choice. Under which conditions will this mindset allow a leader to agree to a diplomatic solution? And under which conditions will this frame of mind cause the leader to initiate catastrophic war? The answers remain elusive because, in our bilateral East–West elation over the demise of the Cold War, we have yet to address them seriously.

And this, finally, is why we believe the missile crisis matters urgently in a world beyond the Cold War: first, at its moment of supreme danger and resolution, there was no Cold War; for that brief moment, history returned benignly, wonderfully, to those two former allies, the United States and U.S.S.R.; second, because that moment also bore witness to precisely the kind of third country feelings of helplessness, anxiety, abandonment, and anger that seems increasingly to characterize one result of the Cold War's end; and third, the first largely was the *cause* of the second. The missile crisis matters because in 1962, tiny Cuba, the repository of Soviet weapons of mass destruction, had acquired the capacity to raise the odds of their use. In 1962, Cuba was unique. Now, there are dozens of countries with this capacity. The great powers are thus well advised to avoid the triangular ignorance of yesteryear if, sorting though the ruins of some present or future triangular crisis, they are not to find themselves pining away pitifully for the good old days of the Cold War.

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