

The Cuban Missile Crisis

A critical reappraisal

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

2015

1 The Cuban missile crisis

What can we know, why did it start,
and how did it end?¹

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As is true for many events, the more we know about the Cuban missile crisis the more puzzling some aspects of it become. So much has been written about it that rather than trying to provide complete coverage, I will cover topics that have either been under-explored or remain in dispute: the extent and role of uncertainty and surprise in the crisis; the particularly political nature of the disputes over the major issues; Khrushchev's motives; how the blockade brought pressure to bear on both sides; and the place of threats and promises in resolving the crisis, especially the role of the removal of the Jupiter missiles from Turkey, which was more complicated and subtle than is normally portrayed. I will close by pointing out five ways in which the crisis was typical of Cold War interactions.

Knowledge and uncertainty

Before and during the crisis, the leading actors had different degrees of knowledge, ignorance, and misinformation about what was happening, but all were surprised by how it unfolded. Most obviously, the US was taken by surprise, which was Khrushchev's intention (although in retrospect, seeking surprise may have been a mistake). But when a U-2 flight revealed the secret and the US reacted, it was Khrushchev and Castro who were surprised. These surprises were not only reciprocal, but in a sense the second caused the first. 'We missed the Soviet decision to put missiles into Cuba because we could not believe that Khrushchev could make such a mistake,' declared the leading American intelligence analyst who had been responsible for earlier estimates that had confidently predicted that the USSR would not deploy missiles.² Although self-serving, the statement is essentially correct. If Khrushchev had known how strongly – or dangerously – the US would react, he would not have proceeded. Even if the crisis did bring some gains, the risk was not worth it. For the Americans as well, the risks were perhaps not worth the gains, or even the losses avoided. On the day that he learned what Khrushchev had done, Kennedy told his colleagues: 'Last month I said we weren't going to [allow it]. Last month I should have said we don't care.'³ No doubt he was joking, but like

every good joke this reveals an element of truth. At the very least, had Kennedy understood that Khrushchev was so reckless and so highly motivated (leaving aside for the moment the content of the motivation), he surely would have behaved differently, although exactly what he would have done is unclear.

Not only the start of the crisis but its course took everyone by surprise. At no point could anyone be confident of what would unfold within the next 24 hours, and that uncertainty drove the felt need to end the crisis as soon as possible. Indeed, events moved much more quickly than Kennedy, and probably Khrushchev, had expected, and the former's initial speech talked about the need for 'self-sacrifice and self-discipline' over a period of several months.

Of course not all was unexpected, and each side had some inkling of what the other would do. If the US had been completely confident that the Soviets would not put missiles in Cuba, it would not have collected intelligence reports or staged U-2 flights.⁴ If Khrushchev had been confident that the US would accept the emplacement of missiles, he would not have acted in secret. Most importantly, throughout the crisis, both Kennedy and Khrushchev were confident that the other did not intend to start a nuclear war (which brings up the question of what they did fear, which I will discuss later).

Although Kennedy and Khrushchev often acted boldly – and even in retrospect it is not clear what would have been cautious – they acknowledged the uncertainties. It is striking how much the record is filled with statements to the effect that how the other will react is crucial, but is also unknown. While the participants had hunches, the very fact that they had already been taken by surprise gave them unusual humility. This must have induced great psychological tension because only rarely did someone on either side claim to have what game theorists call a dominant strategy – i.e. one that would be best no matter how the other played the game. Thus the Americans had to debate whether the Soviets would react more strongly to bombing the missile sites or to boarding their ships, and whether Khrushchev would be willing to stand by his first conciliatory letter of Friday night and settle for a no-invasion pledge or whether it was necessary to promise to remove the Jupiter missiles from Turkey. Such debates are typical, but what is less so is that the participants were rarely dogmatic in their assertions, frequently changed their minds, and did not hesitate to acknowledge uncertainty. The phrase 'I don't know' appears with great frequency. As Kennedy told the ExComm when the blockade was about to take effect, 'what we are doing is throwing down a card on the table in a game which we don't know the ending of'.⁵ When he told Congressional leaders that his initial decision for a blockade was based on his belief that attacking the missiles would be much more dangerous, he admitted, 'Now, who knows that? ... We just tried to make good judgments about a matter about which everyone is uncertain.'⁶

As they took their steps, or even more, contemplating using greater violence, they admitted they were looking into a void. Even the self-confident McGeorge Bundy said that 'after we've done a violent thing we, none of us, know where it will go'.⁷ The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, Marshall Carter, spoke for many when he said that an attack on the missiles sites 'just frightens the hell out of me as to what goes beyond.... This isn't the end; this is the beginning, I think'.⁸ Whether escalation would occur or not could not be foreseen, and its perceived likelihood was a crucial factor separating those who were more inclined to favour using force (whether it be an airstrike or an invasion) because they thought that Khrushchev was at such a military disadvantage that he would have to acquiesce, from those who believed that he would feel great pressures to respond militarily in some way and would probably do so.⁹

The uncertainty loomed largest and most frightening when the increase in pressure or use of force was being contemplated, but it inhibited diplomatic initiatives as well because once launched, no one could be sure of their result. Would concessions lead to further demands? Would allies become demoralized –or, conversely, would they see an America that was standing firm as unduly reckless? Kennedy famously said that an American attack on Cuba would be 'one hell of a gamble' and Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin referred to the president as 'a hot-tempered gambler', but the pejorative connotations were tied to an understanding that anything they did was a gamble.¹⁰

Uncertainty is normal in international politics. But here the decision-makers, at least in the American side, were openly at sea, and although available Soviet and Cuban records are much less complete, their great thirst for every scrap of information indicates that their leaders also knew how little they knew. The situation was unprecedented, and the fact that each side was taken by surprise destabilized everyone's expectations and made it hard for anyone to feel that he understood the other side or could predict what it would do.¹¹ If major beliefs about the other side had just been shown to be wildly incorrect, what other ideas needed to be modified or discarded? On what basis could either side now estimate how the adversary would respond? For the US the problem was especially acute because the two established interlocutors (Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and Georgi Bolshakov, the intelligence agent who provided a back-channel) had been exposed as uninformed or duplicitous.

Kennedy's openness and willingness to acknowledge uncertainty undoubtedly brought out these characteristics in his colleagues, but more than they Kennedy realized that while they could not predict the future, it was important to understand the past in order to resolve the crisis. Throughout, and especially during the meeting the first evening of the crisis, he pressed for answers as to why Khrushchev had deployed the missiles. He never got much of an answer, and perhaps he gave up too soon.¹² But he realized that because the established assumptions about

Khrushchev's perceived self-interest, calculations, and view of the world had just been disconfirmed, it was important to put them on a more secure footing as a prelude to taking action. In fact, the ExComm's refusal to delve into Khrushchev's motives (understandable, perhaps, in light of the need to rapidly establish a policy) reduced members' sensitivity to some of the diplomatic tools the US could deploy, most obviously a pledge not to invade Cuba.

The uncertainty discussed so far refers to the behaviour of others. While this was central, two other forms were important as well. One was uncertainty of a more factual sort. Most obviously, while Kennedy and his colleagues knew quite a bit about what the Soviets had done, they did not know everything – as they well understood. They realized that they could not be certain about the extent of the Soviet deployment or whether nuclear warheads had arrived (and, if so, whether they had been mated to the missiles). Even more hidden were the activities of Soviet submarines, which posed a menace to the warships that might stop and search Soviet vessels. But the Americans were not uncertain enough: they never thought that the submarines might be armed with nuclear torpedoes or worried that they had vastly underestimated Soviet ground forces in Cuba (and, until late in the crisis, that these forces included tactical nuclear weapons) and that the resistance to an invasion would be much greater than they calculated.¹³ More uncertainty surrounded the American estimates of how many airstrikes it would take to wipe out the Soviet missiles, and indeed whether all of them could be destroyed before they could be launched. What was crucial to the decision to opt for a blockade and to the sense that if that failed airstrikes would have to be combined with an invasion was the estimate that even a large strike might leave some missiles untouched. This knowledge of the inability to confidently predict the physical, let alone the political, effects of bombing played a large role in turning the tide against an airstrike, and at least some subsequent analysis indicates that the American leaders may have overestimated the difficulties of an attack on the Soviet missiles and exaggerated the ease and speed with which they could be moved.¹⁴

Ever since the publication of James Fearon's path-breaking 'Rationalist Explanations for War', political scientists have returned to the bargaining problems – and opportunities – caused by the well-known fact that incentives to misrepresent mean that adversaries cannot be certain of each other's intentions and resolve.¹⁵ Fearon's basic point is that states have 'private information' about their resolve, but often lack credible means to convey it, and the actors in 1962 were aware of how hard it was to judge what others would do. But it is a mistake to believe that states always know their own resolve.¹⁶ In fact neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev appears to have known much more about the risks he was willing to run than he knew about the other's tolerance for danger. One advisor hinted at this when he said that the blockade gave the Soviets 'a couple of days while they

make up their own minds what their intentions are'.¹⁷ Indeed, resolve came and went, and moved sideways. Khrushchev first was ready to remove the missiles in return for a no-invasion pledge and then a few hours later decided to try for more; Kennedy and his colleagues had decided to retaliate if a reconnaissance aircraft was shot down, but then thought better of it in the event. And while we can speculate about what either Kennedy or Khrushchev would have done had the crisis not ended when it did, neither leader had a clear course of action charted out – and even if he had, he might not have followed it.

The fact that resolve is not known to the person ahead of time is only the tip of an iceberg that is a major and largely unrecognized hazard to scholars. We rely heavily on documents as well as behaviour for our analysis. One reason why we think we understand American decision-making during the Cuban missile crisis better than we do other episodes is the treasure trove of tape recordings. Although they are sometimes indistinct and often hard to interpret, not all meetings were recorded, and there are no records of the numerous private conversations that occurred, historians and political scientists are used to such gaps, and know they cannot have everything. What they are less aware of is that even when people are honestly trying to describe their own motives and reasons for reaching their conclusions, they are often unable to do so. A great deal of our mental processing is unavailable to us because it occurs below the level of consciousness, and we often go about understanding why we are behaving as we do or holding our preferences in exactly the same manner that we use when analysing others – and these accounts are likely to be no more accurate. Shortly before he was assassinated, Kennedy noted that 'the essence of ultimate decision remained impenetrable to the observer – often, indeed, to the decider himself'.¹⁸ We try to make sense of what we have done, but this is a reconstruction. One does not have to be Freudian to recognize that, in a deep sense, we are 'strangers to ourselves'.¹⁹ Statements by Kennedy, Khrushchev, and their colleagues about why they held their views and why they thought others would act in specified ways may be simultaneously completely honest and untrue. Self-knowledge is inevitably limited.

The political nature of the debates

Much of the scholarly disagreement about the missile crisis centers on the beginning and the end: Khrushchev's motives for putting the missiles into Cuba and the conditions under which he withdrew them. I will discuss these issues shortly, but first want to note that these debates, like many in our field, are highly political. Very few scholars are agnostic about the fundamental issues of the Cold War, and it is almost inevitable that their views of the crisis tend to mirror their analyses of the general conflict. Those in the 'traditional' camp who see Stalin's paranoia and/or

aggressiveness as responsible for the start of the Cold War and the US as largely reactive and defensive believe that Khrushchev's main motive was to nullify the American nuclear advantage and prepare the ground for renewed pressure on Berlin and that he withdrew largely because he was met by a President who made his resolve clear and who had many more usable military options than he did. Most revisionists who argue that Stalin's control over Eastern Europe was largely a response to the American unwillingness to respect Soviet security interests and treat it as a legitimate great power see Khrushchev as acting mainly to protect its small ally against the American threat to overthrow it.

The revisionist narrative about the end of the crisis, however, has changed in accord with both new documents and the preferred interpretation of the end of the Cold War. Initially the argument was that Kennedy had been irresponsible in starting with threats rather than diplomacy and in pushing Khrushchev to the wall and making only minor concessions throughout. But subsequent evidence from the Soviet side indicates that a purely diplomatic approach would have failed (at least if it did not include attractive offers), and, more importantly, American records show that Kennedy in fact made more concessions than were public. I will discuss the substance of the controversies about the removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey later, but here just want to note that while the more traditional accounts downplay both what Kennedy promised and its impact on Khrushchev, revisionists now see the removal as essentially accepting Khrushchev's offer in his 'second letter' of 27 October and as crucial to ending the crisis. This version makes Kennedy more of a negotiator and less of a hardliner, and fits with a revisionist account of the end of the Cold War in arguing that episodes like the missile crisis cannot be explained by a 'triumphalist' narrative of American might and virtue prevailing but rather were negotiations (albeit not necessarily among equals) in which the US did not enjoy unalloyed victories.

One could imagine a consistent revisionist narrative in which the US was unyielding in seeking to contain, rollback, and ultimately destroy Soviet power. In fact, I think there is much to this, but for most scholars it is psychologically, morally, and politically unacceptable to view the US as both aggressive and successful. Logic would also lead to the expectation that those who believe that Khrushchev's main motive was to protect Cuba would also believe that the American pledge not to invade would have satisfied him. But in fact people with this diagnosis of the situation usually argue for the importance of Kennedy's promise to take the Jupiters out of Turkey, thus producing a view of the crisis as caused by American aggressiveness in the Caribbean and ending, not in a Soviet retreat, but in a fairly equal bargain that Kennedy insisted on keeping secret, a narrative that denies both halves of the story that puts the US in a favourable light, which I believe explains its popularity among revisionist historians.

Khrushchev's motives

We sometimes use the name of the leader as shorthand for the country, but when we talk about the Soviet decision to deploy missiles to Cuba it really *was* Khrushchev's decision. This complicates the search for motives because while we have his and his son's recollections, the deliberative records that could be useful are unavailable not because they remain sealed but because there were no deliberations. Although the fact that it took two meetings before the Presidium agreed may show some resistance (the records are too sparse to reveal this), there is no doubt that Khrushchev was in charge.²⁰ Furthermore, sorting out motives may be particularly difficult in Khrushchev's case. Because he was notoriously impulsive and an improviser and failed to think through the implications of much that he did, pointing out that the likely consequences of his acts were at variance with some posited motives does not mean that the latter were not driving.²¹

Related to motivation is the question of 'who started it', to put it crudely but I think accurately. The traditional explanation fits with the version propounded by American officials in seeing the crisis as beginning with the Soviet deployment of missiles to Cuba – thus the name the Cuban missile crisis. In his letter of 23 October replying to Khrushchev's claims that the missiles were meant to deter an American attack on Cuba and so the deployment was reactive, Kennedy declared that 'I think you will recognize that the step which started the current chain of events was the action of your government secretly furnishing offensive weapons to Cuba'.²² The implication was that Khrushchev had drastically and without provocation altered the status quo. To the contrary, by stressing Khrushchev's desire to protect Cuba revisionists implicitly endorse the Soviet name for the episode, 'the Caribbean Crisis', which started with the American attempt to overthrow the Cuban revolution. (Interestingly, the Cubans call it 'the October Crisis' which gestures toward the American blockade but does not imply that the missiles were emplaced to ward off an American attack, which is consistent with the Cuban view that they were not needed for that purpose.) But starting points are not only crucial, they are highly subjective and usually involve judgments, often implicit, about counterfactuals. Would Khrushchev have refrained from asking Castro to accept missiles if the US had been less threatening? Or would a Berlin settlement have precluded this move? Claims about the actor or events that started a conflict also draw on unstated assumptions about what the status quo is, its political if not moral legitimacy, and the naturalness of the resistance to changing it. Kennedy's statement just quoted assumes not only that the deployment of the missiles was not a response to a previous American move, but also that the blockade, which after all in at least some sense did mark the start of the crisis, was not a real choice on the part of the US but was something it had to do to counter the Soviet move.

The most obvious complication in assessing motives is that people can be and usually are moved by multiple ones. Doctors have a saying that 'the patient can have as many diseases as he damn well pleases' to remind them of one of the troubling obstacles to moving from symptoms to diagnosis and treatment. Of course scholars (historians more than political scientists) are fully aware of this, at least in the abstract, and often decry 'single-factor' explanations. Nevertheless, we want to move beyond saying multiple impulses were at work to trying to establish their relative weights and how they combined.

Seeing multiple motives as operating raises the question of whether behaviour is over-determined. That is, arguing that several strong motives were at work, while reasonable, implies that the behaviour would have followed even if one of them had been absent. In any single case this is logically possible, just as a person may be stabbed, poisoned, and shot simultaneously with any one of these insults by itself being sufficient to have caused death. But there is something odd about a world in which most behaviour is over-determined, since this implies that behaviour follows only from a plethora of relevant impulses, which means that it would not have occurred without each of them, which in turn means that the behaviour was not over-determined. Nevertheless, hindsight, which is both valuable and dangerous, often allows us to find multiple motives once we know that the behaviour occurred. It is striking that although almost no one expected Khrushchev to take this action, after he did we have no trouble in finding lots of motives. The problem for historical explanation, then, is often not in finding the appropriate motive, but in dealing with the excess of them.²³ Furthermore, psychology comes in because it is quite common for people to bolster decisions they have made by later adding additional considerations to their judgments without understanding what they are doing. Decision-makers will then honestly believe that multiple impulses were driving even if this is not the case, and this is especially likely when the decision in fact lacks sufficient justification. William Taubman's characterization of the Cuban case is quite accurate and not unusual: Khrushchev prescribed 'a cure-all, a cure-all that cured nothing'.²⁴

So it is perhaps not surprising that we are faced with an embarrassment of riches in terms of possible motives. Although the defense of Cuba and the desire to develop a stronger military posture that would force the West to change the status of West Berlin to a 'free city' are the most obvious ones, also important could be the general desire to rectify the military balance, especially urgent after the speech by Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric in October 1961 making it clear that the US knew that Khrushchev had been vastly exaggerating his nuclear strength. Indeed Khrushchev's memoirs say that 'in addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call "the balance of power"', his son says that while defending Cuba was the 'principal aim of

the operation', 'of course [he] did think that [it] had a certain strategic importance', and this is what Khrushchev's confidant Anastas Mikoyan told the Warsaw Pact ambassadors in Washington in November 1962.²⁵ The nuclear balance was particularly pressing for Khrushchev because, like Eisenhower with the 'New Look', he counted on these forces to allow him to cut the military budget, which he needed to do to bolster the Soviet civilian economy and raise the standard of living.

Parity in status as well as in military power was sought. The Soviet Union had long strived to be treated as a fully fledged superpower, and the double standards of the US had always rankled.²⁶ If the US could encircle the USSR and place missiles in neighboring countries, then it was surely appropriate and fitting to the Soviet position in the world that it could do the same. If the USSR could not do what the US did, then how could it be a fully fledged superpower? Aleksandr Alekseev, the Soviet ambassador to Cuba whom Khrushchev closely consulted, later reported the Chairman as telling him: 'The Americans are going to have to swallow this the same way we have had to swallow the pill of the missiles in Turkey... We can do the same thing the Americans do.'²⁷ Furthermore, being a superpower brought with it the responsibility to protect allies. If the US could shield Western Europe from a purported Soviet threat, then if the USSR was to play a similar role in the world, it had the right and the duty to stand up for Cuba.²⁸

At the time, American leaders believed that Khrushchev's main if not sole motive was to put pressure on Berlin. The question is whether this reflected their preoccupation or Khrushchev's.²⁹ Although there was no special reason for them to have been fearful, such misperceptions are not unusual, but in this case the perceptions seemed not only reasonable at the time but remains so in retrospect. While Khrushchev had solved the most pressing aspect of his Berlin problem by erecting the Wall, both the contemporary diplomatic records and declassified Soviet documents indicate that Khrushchev was not satisfied and that he hoped for more. The Western presence in Berlin was troublesome as a mark of Soviet (and East German) inferiority, as a base for espionage, albeit at a much reduced level thanks to the Wall, and as a destabilizing contrast between life on each side of the dividing line.³⁰ The stubborn refusal of the Americans to recognize the permanence and legitimacy of East Germany was a continuing problem.

Khrushchev's son Sergei argues that the multiple Soviet statements in the summer and fall of 1962 that the USSR would reopen the Berlin issue after the American elections were a ploy to distract the US from realizing that the fear for Cuba was leading it to take drastic action.³¹ This is ingenious but unconvincing. Some of the officials dropping these hints were ignorant of the planned deployment and knew more about Berlin than they did about Cuba; this maneuver might have led the Americans to ask themselves what Khrushchev could be doing in the interim to gain

bargaining leverage, and the expectation of renewed pressure on Berlin would only stiffen the US resistance to allowing the missile to stay in Cuba. More importantly, Soviet records point to the continued importance of Berlin, showing that Khrushchev did not regard the erecting of the Wall as ending the problem, that he was committed to trying to push the US out of West Berlin, and that he felt he could do so by ratcheting up the tension (what he called his 'meniscus' approach). When he explained this policy to his associates in January 1962 he believed that the Soviet ICBM program was proceeding well, but the next month he learned that the Soviet missiles were crude and vulnerable compared to the American ones. This generation of missiles, even if produced in large numbers, could not lead to strategic parity. It is likely that this realization spurred Khrushchev's search for shortcuts, which in turn inspired the idea of placing missiles into Cuba.³² Furthermore, as the build-up proceeded Khrushchev inflated his foreign policy goals, especially in West Berlin, and in May the intriguing but unfortunately terse Presidium notes say that the deployment 'would be an offensive policy'.³³

This fits with Khrushchev's pattern of not being satisfied with gains he had made and to keep pushing to see if he could get more. This explains why he sent his 'second letter' to Kennedy demanding the withdrawal of missiles from Turkey after he had originally been willing to settle for a no-invasion pledge: he thought he could get more and felt he should try ('one last haggle', as Bundy termed it).³⁴ Those who argue that Khrushchev was not concerned with making further gains in Berlin seem to regard such a motive as in some way disreputable or as showing Soviet aggressiveness. I do not think these associations are necessary, however. In competitive international politics states always seek more and the Soviet desire to rectify the military imbalance in order to squeeze the West out of Berlin and put the East German regime on a firm footing would hardly be unusual or reflect badly on the Soviet Union. Had Khrushchev really abandoned this goal after erecting the Wall, he could have either traded an acknowledgment of the status quo for American concessions elsewhere, perhaps in the economic arena, or have used his new stance to relax international tensions. But at this point he had not given up, nor was there any good reason for him to do so.

The argument that Khrushchev's main motive was to defend Cuba gains most of its support from the retrospective accounts by Khrushchev, his son, and other officials. One reason this was given no credence in the West at the time was the widespread belief that after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion the US posed no serious challenge to the Cuban regime, a view that not only ignores the fact that states may see threats where they do not exist but is brought to the ground by declassified records showing how committed to overthrowing Castro the US was. A second objection is that Khrushchev would not have taken such a risk to protect a less than vital interest. But it is clear that Khrushchev did not understand the

magnitude of the risks he was running, and in any event this objection would apply with equal force to the argument that the motive was to seek gains in Berlin. Furthermore, Prospect Theory from psychology indicates that actors are more willing to run risks to avoid losses than to make gains, something that points to Cuba rather than Berlin.³⁵

The notes of the Presidium meetings after the missiles were discovered reveal no arguments that withdrawing the missiles would mean the end of the plans to change the status quo in Berlin or, more broadly, to alter the balance of military power.³⁶ Instead, there was a great deal of discussion of protecting Cuba, and pride in the fact that thanks to the crisis 'the whole world is focused on Cuba'.³⁷ In parallel, it is significant that as far as we can tell from the fragmentary records, the discussion in the Presidium authorizing the deployment, although not truly deliberative, focused on protecting Cuba and did not mention Berlin.³⁸ The advantages of rectifying the strategic balance, however, may have been so obvious as not to have required explication, and Berlin had been the subject of earlier Presidium discussions.

The fact that Khrushchev sent ground forces, supported by tactical nuclear weapons, also points to the defense of Cuba as the motive because while they could make invasion extremely costly, they could not protect against American airstrikes that could have destroyed the Soviet strategic assets. But this leads back to the question of why, if this was his motive, Khrushchev sent the strategic missiles at all. Not only were they highly provocative, but it is not only in hindsight that we can see how disadvantaged Khrushchev would be if they were discovered before the deployment was complete. On the other hand, ground forces would seem to have provided a quite effective deterrent to invasion, as Khrushchev himself explained to his colleagues when he decided to withdraw the strategic forces.³⁹ Such a deployment could not have warded off covert assassination attempts or continuing low-level sabotage, but neither could the strategic missiles have done so. The temptation to conclude that forces that threatened the US were incompatible with a defensive mission needs to be resisted, however: the US and its allies thought that parallel forces were needed in Europe to deter against a Soviet attack.

Much of the skepticism toward the defensive account stresses the perceived disproportion between the risks of the deployment and the value of Cuba. While it is safe to say that the latter was underestimated by American decision-makers at the time and by many scholars for a subsequent period, it remains hard to estimate. The weight currently put on this factor by many analysts both reflects and supports the conception of Khrushchev as a revolutionary romantic. It is clear that much more than Stalin and probably Brezhnev, Khrushchev sought to increase Soviet influence and the spread of Communist regimes in the Third World. To separate power-political from ideological/identity motives is probably impossible here, but the latter have gained most currency over the years, and are

epitomized by Mikoyan's remark that 'we have been waiting all our lives for a country to go Communist without the Red Army, and it happened in Cuba. It makes us feel like boys again!' Although Sergey Radchenko perceptively notes that these and related 'snippets' gain much of their plausibility by being so vivid and frequently repeated even if the ultimate source remains unclear,⁴⁰ they are indeed plausible. Furthermore, not only does Prospect Theory imply that Khrushchev and his colleagues would grow attached to any country that had come over to their side, but more than defense was involved because to have lost Cuba would have been the end of Soviet ambitions in Latin America, if not in the rest of the Third World, and to have increased Khrushchev's vulnerability to Chinese attacks. In addition, the great efforts to which Khrushchev went to repair relations with Castro after the crisis instead of washing his hands of a leader who had showed himself to be dangerously irresponsible points to the considerable value he placed in the regime. Much of Khrushchev's behaviour is consistent with a commitment to Cuba, and what later scholars called revolutionary romanticism is another name for the 'harebrained schemes' that his colleagues saw as an ineradicable character trait that required removing him from office.

Nevertheless, to protect Cuba by measures that turned out to increase the danger to it does seem odd. That such oddities are a staple of international politics, however, should be apparent even to those who do not see the security dilemma as central. Perhaps better evidence that Cuba was far from the whole story is provided by the fact that Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko did not follow up when Kennedy, and later Secretary of State Rusk, told him that the US had no intention of invading Cuba and would be willing to make a pledge not to do so. Kennedy repeated the promise three times and added, as Gromyko reported, 'If Mr. Khrushchev addressed me on this issue, we could give him corresponding assurances on that score.'⁴¹ Even more, when Khrushchev realized that he could end the crisis by withdrawing his missiles in return for an American pledge not to invade, he did not declare victory and leave the field. Although Oleg Troyanovsky, Khrushchev's translator and foreign policy assistant, reports that on receiving Kennedy's initial letter demanding the missiles' removal and instituting a blockade, Khrushchev immediately exclaimed 'we've saved Cuba!'⁴² his initial replies did not offer to withdraw the missiles in exchange for Cuba's security. If Cuba had been his main concern, the pledge would have been much more than a face-saving device: it would have given him what he really cared about, and the missiles would have served their purpose. But after proposing this bargain he upped the ante without waiting for Kennedy's response, and when he decided to settle for the pledge he and his colleagues did so with a sense of relief, without any apparent elation for having reached their main goal. The Soviet reaction supports the conclusion of Arnold Horelick, a Soviet expert and later intelligence official, that 'to regard the outcome of the

Cuban missile crisis as coinciding in any substantial way with Soviet intentions or interests is to mistake the skillful salvage of a shipwreck for brilliant navigation'.⁴³

We should also not neglect the role of the increasingly troublesome rivalry with China, which magnified the need to protect Cuba as well as to secure a favourable settlement in Berlin.⁴⁴ To pull off a major coup and show Soviet power and role in the world might not convince Mao to fall into line, but surely would diminish the power of the Chinese critique of Soviet leadership.

Trying to combine all of this into a coherent judgment may be not only difficult, but misguided. Aside from the fact that multiple impulses and motives are possible, Khrushchev, more than many political leaders, was impulsive and an improviser. He had objectives, but often they were not supported by coherent plans. His associates, even those who admired him, were keenly aware that he often failed to think things through. Politicians are less disturbed by inconsistencies than are academics, and this was particularly true for Khrushchev. We may be looking for coherence where it is absent, and what is maddeningly inconsistent to us may just be Khrushchev's normal way of proceeding.

How did the blockade work?

Why Kennedy chose the blockade has been discussed more than exactly how it worked to bring pressure to bear on Khrushchev. The two questions are linked, of course. While critics of the blockade pointed out that even if successful it could only prevent additional strategic forces from arriving at the island but not remove those already in place, proponents believed it would, or at least might, bring Khrushchev to his senses. In part, this was a debate between those who felt that only brute force could be effective and those who thought that coercion might suffice. As Thomas Schelling pointed out two years before the crisis, threats and force can not only protect or seize territory and weaken the adversary's military capabilities (brute force), they can also be used to threaten or inflict pain on the other side and make it worthwhile for him to make concessions (coercion). The latter became much more important with nuclear weapons, especially in the form of mutual second-strike capability, when military victory was out of reach.⁴⁵ Although the members of the ExComm did not use the terms 'brute force' and 'coercion', this is part of what they were arguing about. The blockade's proponents did not fully explain how it would contribute to coercion, however. My sense is that they had some intuitive understanding of it but also felt that a full articulation would be less than completely convincing, even to themselves. Indeed on Friday 26 October Kennedy told the ExComm that 'we're either going to trade [the missiles] out, or we're going to have to go in and get them out ourselves'.⁴⁶ Even at this late date, Kennedy did not fully appreciate that the pressures generated by the

fear of an American invasion and the danger that things would get out of control could reach his goal without the necessity for either brute force or a trade.

Despite the ExComm's criticisms and doubts, it is clear in retrospect that the blockade served two functions which, when supplemented by the build-up that underscored the threat to invade if necessary, proved effective. The first mechanism was to signal the American commitment to seeing that the missiles were removed. In this way it was like a loud and rude diplomatic note. Kennedy put Khrushchev, allies, and the American public on notice that the missiles simply had to go. As Schelling had made clear, such commitments work by increasing the price that the actor will pay if he fails to live up to his word.⁴⁷ The blockade pledged the US to seeing that the missiles were removed and so implicitly promised that even harsher measures would follow if the Soviets did not comply. This I infer was the thinking behind the common statements in the ExComm that the blockade would give the Soviets reason to reevaluate their policy. And this was how the Soviets interpreted things. From the start, Khrushchev and his colleagues realized that by taking such a public stand, Kennedy had made it hard for him to retreat even if he wanted to. As Dobrynin put it toward the end of the crisis, 'a certain danger of the situation is that the President has largely engaged himself before the public opinion of America and not only America'.⁴⁸ One reason for the need to maintain secrecy was that if Khrushchev knew that the US had discovered the missiles, he could have made a public announcement making clear that he would not pull back. In a game of Chicken the first player to commit itself wins.

The announcement of the blockade was indeed a strong message of commitment, but its implementation was more than that. And something more was needed because in September, before the missiles were discovered, Kennedy had said that the US would not permit such an emplacement, and Khrushchev's response was not to pull back but to send more tactical nuclear weapons to the island.⁴⁹ The blockade upped the ante because once ships, planes, and men were put into motion no one could be sure what would happen next. Knowledgeable people – and both Kennedy and Khrushchev were knowledgeable – understood that events could get out of control. This meant that nuclear war could have occurred even though neither leader wanted it.

Indeed, if complete control were guaranteed, the crisis would not have been dangerous, and the balance between the need to minimize danger and the need to use it to exert pressure was a central dilemma throughout the crisis, as it was throughout the Cold War. Nuclear war was what Kennedy called 'the final failure' – the worst possible outcome, much worse than having to back down – and in parallel from the time when Khrushchev decided that he would send missiles to Cuba, he emphasized that these would never be used.

Every idiot can start a war, but it is impossible to win this war ... therefore the missiles have one purpose – to scare [the Americans], to restrain them so that they have appreciated this business [and] to give them back some of their own medicine.⁵⁰

At the Vienna summit meeting, Khrushchev derided the notion of accidental war.⁵¹ During the crisis, however, he not only understood the danger, but described it most eloquently in a letter to Kennedy:

Mr. President we and you ought not now to pull on the end of the rope in which you have tied the knot of war, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter the knot will be tied. And a moment may come when that knot will be tied so tight that even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it. And then it will be necessary to cut that knot, and what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly well of what terrible forces our countries dispose.⁵²

The blockade was then not only a signal of commitment; it was what Schelling called a 'threat that leaves something to chance'.⁵³ As Soviet ambassador to the UN, Valerian Zorin, put it in reporting his conversation with UN Secretary General U Thant on the day the crisis reached its climax, 'we emphasized that it is necessary to act quickly, since our ships cannot remain on the open sea for an indefinite period of time, and since the situation cannot be allowed to get out of control'.⁵⁴ Everyone affirmed that the situation could not be allowed to get out of control, but this was premised on the realization that it could get out of control. In fact, as Len Scott has argued, if a nuclear weapon were fired in the crisis, this decision probably would have been made by a military subordinate, not by either of the leaders.⁵⁵ Khrushchev tried to keep his own soldiers in Cuba under close command, and Kennedy expended great energies on overseeing and monitoring what the Navy was doing. But both realized that there were severe limits on what they could do – and they were right. As Sergei Khrushchev characterizes it, the line between upholding the Soviet 'dignity of a great power ... [and] making a fatal miscalculation ... was ... almost invisible'.⁵⁶ This is why, contrary to American fears, Khrushchev did not respond to the blockade by exerting pressure on Berlin, rebuking a colleague who suggested this: 'keep that kind of advice to yourself. We don't know how to get out of one predicament and you drag us into another'.⁵⁷ Kennedy also sought to be cautious, but not all American actions conformed. He did not understand the dangers involved in dropping signaling depth charges on Soviet submarines, nor did he think to suspend test flights of missiles and U-2 missions over the Arctic or understand that the US fighters scrambled to protect the plane that stayed over Soviet territory were armed with nuclear tipped air-to-air missiles.⁵⁸

Khrushchev's abilities to control his forces in Cuba and in the submarines, let alone Fidel Castro, were even less. Indeed it was an unauthorized shooting down of a U-2 flight over Cuba (ordered not by Castro, as the American thought, but by the Soviet officer on the scene) that deeply disturbed both sides. Sergei Khrushchev reports that 'it was at that very moment – not before or after – that Father felt the situation slipping out of control... As Father said later, that was the moment when he felt instinctively that the missiles had to be removed, that disaster loomed'.⁵⁹ Perhaps at least as important was Castro's letter arguing the invasion was about to start and that the Soviet Union should launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike. Khrushchev regarded this as crazy and feared that the Cuba leader would take some rash action that might trigger a war.⁶⁰ The situation was then simply too dangerous to be allowed to continue: as Fyodor Burlatsky, Khrushchev's speech writer, put it later, 'he had decided that it was enough'.⁶¹

In parallel, at the end Kennedy felt such a sense of urgency that he did not wait to see whether Khrushchev might withdraw the missiles in return for a no-invasion pledge before simultaneously sending his brother to Ambassador Dobrynin to sweeten the pot with the Jupiters in Turkey (along with a very tough warning that an immediate reply was needed). Just as Khrushchev's worry was reflected in his decision to stop haggling, Kennedy told Khrushchev that he was sending his acceptance via public broadcast, as Khrushchev had done with his last message, 'because of the great importance I attach to moving forward promptly to the settlement of the Cuban crisis. I think that you and I... were aware that developments were approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable'.⁶²

In such a situation, both leaders had to balance the imperative to avoid war with the need to show resolve, partly by denying the danger. So in order to demonstrate that he did not feel that the risks were excessive and that he was not unduly moved by the American threat, Khrushchev strived to keep up appearances that all was normal. 'It doesn't pay to show that we are nervous.'⁶³ But while both sides feared undesired escalation, the pressures were greatest on Khrushchev because he had information on three frightening matters that Kennedy lacked. The first really was misinformation – Khrushchev and his colleagues, misunderstanding the American government, worried that the Pentagon would either act without authorization or bend the weak and inexperienced President to its will. At the climax of the crisis, Dobrynin reported that Robert Kennedy had hinted that his brother could no longer be confident of controlling the military, and the seeds of Khrushchev's concern that the military might act on its own were planted not only by general Soviet beliefs about the American political system, but by Bolshakov's report six months earlier that the Attorney General told him about the power and independence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁶⁴

Second, Khrushchev but not Kennedy knew that Castro was increasingly panicky and difficult to control. The Soviets had assured the Americans that it was they rather than Castro who were in control, and the Americans accepted this. But as the crisis went on, Khrushchev had reason to worry about what Castro would do. The Americans remained blissfully ignorant of this danger.

They also were ignorant of the number Soviet forces in Cuba, estimating them at something like a third of the actual figure. Toward the end of the crisis, they were told but did not focus on the fact that these forces were equipped with tactical missiles that likely had nuclear warheads (although they never learned that there were two types of such weapons, one of which was being positioned to attack Guantánamo). Khrushchev knew this very well, and understood as the Americans did not that an invasion would lead to a major clash between American and Soviet forces, one in which the latter might use tactical nuclear weapons even if Khrushchev withheld authorization. It remains a mystery to me why the likelihood that an invasion would face tactical nuclear weapons did not stop the ExComm's deliberations in its tracks. But the fact remains that it did not, and although the Americans realized that an invasion would be dangerous and bloody, they did not come to grips with the extent to which this was true.⁶⁵

In all likelihood, furthermore, Khrushchev guessed that Kennedy did not share the last two of these worries. He then realized that Kennedy did not feel all the pressures to back down that he did, with the resulting decrease in his bargaining leverage. In addition, although Kennedy felt that escalation to nuclear war would be the worst outcome, he also realized that the nuclear balance was very much in the American favour. It is striking that as far as we can tell, neither side's leaders asked for briefings on the likely consequences of a nuclear war.⁶⁶ This does not mean that they did not think about it, and the Americans knew both that they might not escape damage in a nuclear war (especially if they did not pre-empt) and that the Soviet situation was even worse. In fact, it was much worse than Kennedy realized; the American estimates that the Soviets had something like 75 ICBMs was off by roughly a factor of four. Khrushchev then knew that while the USSR would be destroyed the US would suffer much less (whether either he or Kennedy thought about the Soviets' capacity to destroy Western Europe is not known, and few observers noted that the American stance that it valued Western Europe so much that it would treat an attack on it as an attack on the US – enshrined in Article V of the NATO treaty – implied that the Soviet ability to hold the Continent hostage was equivalent to the ability to destroy much of the US). Khrushchev may have also assumed that the combination of spy satellites and human agents (Oleg Penkovsky's spying had recently been uncovered) had led Kennedy to believe that the US had first-strike capability and could come through a nuclear war without significant damage.

Although a full discussion of the role of the strategic balance is beyond the scope of this paper, Kennedy was probably less influenced by American nuclear superiority than Khrushchev was by Soviet inferiority. To the extent that the latter sought to put missiles into Cuba in part in order to rectify the strategic balance, he would have been highly sensitive to how far behind the Soviets were and why it mattered. That at their June 1961 meeting in Vienna Khrushchev so quickly agreed with Kennedy's (incorrect) statement that the two sides had equal nuclear power⁶⁷ is not surprising (although Kennedy's statement is), for this at minimum is what he was seeking. He knew his country was not there yet, however. The influence of the strategic balance on Kennedy is less certain. As most of the ExComm members stressed later, everyone believed that even a single bomb going off in an American city would be a disaster that would not be compensated for by the utter destruction of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, in the presidential campaign Kennedy had said he would move vigorously to close the 'missile gap' and was relieved on assuming office to discover that it was in the American favour. When Richard Nixon became president he frequently bemoaned the fact that the balance he inherited was so much less favourable than the one in October 1962 and implied that Kennedy was able to act strongly then because of the nuclear advantage. The participants in the crisis might have sincerely denied this, but as I noted above people often are unaware of the influences on their own behaviour. Perhaps Kennedy and his colleagues gained confidence by the balance (and by the knowledge that Khrushchev was aware of how badly outgunned he was), and this may even have contributed to their commitment to having the missiles removed because they had reason to believe that they had the leverage to do this.

For the Soviets it was not only the threat that leaves something to chance in the form of the blockade and the aerial reconnaissance that generated pressure. The looming danger was that the US would invade Cuba, and neither Khrushchev nor Castro had any doubt that the US could overwhelm the island. For Khrushchev, this would be a three-fold disaster as it would be a humiliating defeat, bury any hope for détente (needed, among other things, for Khrushchev to be able to reduce the crushing burden of military expenses), and could well escalate. While some American hardliners, especially but not only in the military, wanted to overthrow Castro, Kennedy saw the grave dangers in an invasion and probably believed that even if it did not lead to a wider war, the Soviets might take Berlin or, at minimum, would end the search for better relations with the US. So Kennedy strongly resisted arguments for invasion, but he could not dismiss them and feared that if the crisis did not end soon he might have to take this step. Khrushchev was even more worried, so he avidly and nervously watched for all signs that the US would invade, including a spurious tip from a bartender at the Washington Press Club that the force was about to sail.⁶⁸ According to some accounts, the fear was

fuelled by an equally false report that Kennedy was about to make another nationwide address, which Khrushchev thought would announce the attack. Indeed the movement of troops and other preparations might have been sufficient to induce the Soviets to pull back even without the blockade, and without the fear of invasion it is possible that Khrushchev would have preferred an air attack to withdrawal. Kennedy wanted to avoid an invasion, but Khrushchev had to. To say that he retreated under these pressures is not to say that he was weak or foolish; far from it, he was sensible.⁶⁹

How did the crisis end?

Most of the debate about how the crisis ended centers on the nature and impact of Kennedy's commitment to withdraw the Jupiter missiles from Turkey. Was this a bargain, and if so was it an implicit or explicit one, was it an agreement, was it an arrangement, was it an understanding, was it a 'hedged promise'⁷⁰ – and is there a real difference between these? Because 'arrangement' is the most neutral term, I will use it. The scholarly debate about exactly what the arrangement was is particularly difficult, not only because the record is incomplete, but because the point was not an outcome, but how each side (or each person in each side) interpreted it. Unlike other unresolvable debates, such as that concerning Khrushchev's motivations for deploying missiles to Cuba, this one makes literally no sense as it is usually posed as a question of what was agreed to because there is no real arrangement aside from what the participants believed about it.

The controversy should not obscure seven areas of agreement, however. First, Kennedy considered the possibility of something along these lines from the first days of the crisis.⁷¹ The fact that Khrushchev raised it did not come as a surprise to him, and he was very annoyed that the State Department had not done more to lay the foundation for the arrangement during if not before the crisis.⁷² Interestingly, on 19 October (i.e. before it was public that the US knew of the missiles), Dobrynin told Moscow that on the 16th (i.e. the day Kennedy learned of the emplacement), in a closed meeting with media executives and reporters Kennedy talked about the Soviet military presence in Cuba and said that 'There can be no deal struck with the USSR regarding its renunciation of bases in Cuba in exchange for the USA's renunciation of bases in other parts of the world (in Turkey, for example).'⁷³

Second, the missiles were seen by the civilian leaders as obsolete by the time they were installed, and the necessary target coverage could be supplied in a more secure fashion by the Polaris submarines that were soon to move into the Mediterranean. Although Kennedy had not ordered the Jupiters to be removed, he did want them out, had called for a study to be done, on the first day of the crisis mused that this 'gives us an excuse to

get them out of Turkey and Italy', and during the final day's deliberation said that 'we last year tried to get the missiles out of there because they're not militarily useful'.⁷⁴ Even the members of the ExComm who vigorously opposed a trade did so because of the bad impression it would make, not because they thought the US was losing a military asset. (The missiles had no military value to the US because they were highly vulnerable, which meant that they were of no use as a retaliatory force, and indeed the lack of this kind of utility made them provocative. But this does not mean that the Soviets did not see them as a threat because they could have been used for a first strike. Nevertheless, although the evidence is not as clear, it does appear that Khrushchev thought these missiles were militarily insignificant, knew that this was the US view, and understood that Polaris submarines would soon replace them, thus presumably increasing his confidence that Kennedy would accept a trade).⁷⁵

Indeed, even without the crisis and without the bargaining, the missiles probably would have been withdrawn quite soon. These two aspects should be separated. The pre-crisis deliberations of both the Kennedy and the Eisenhower administrations and the amount of attention paid to the Jupiters even before Khrushchev raised the issue make it clear that the leading figures in the government felt that the alliance was better off without these missiles, especially when the Polaris submarines were available. But the issue had not seemed urgent, especially in light of the Turks' desire to keep them, and so they might have remained in place for another couple of years had there been no crisis. But even without having to make the arrangement, the crisis itself heightened the sense of urgency on the part of Kennedy in a way that I think allows us to be fairly confident that the missiles would have been removed within something like a year even had Khrushchev not raised the issue. In this regard, it is telling that the US removed the missiles from Italy as well as from Turkey even though Khrushchev never called for this.⁷⁶ (Why both sides focused on the missiles in Turkey and ignored those in Italy is a puzzle, although at least some of the reason is the obvious parallel between the former and Cuba due to the geographical proximity to the threatened superpower.)⁷⁷ If there was a trade, it was not an equal one since what Khrushchev gave up was important to both him and Kennedy and what Kennedy surrendered was not. As in much international politics, the outcome was roughly congruent with the distribution of power.

A third area of agreement is that in the tense debate following the arrival of Khrushchev's letter calling for a missile swap Kennedy was alone in believing that the US almost surely would have to accept it and that the harm to the NATO alliance would be slight, in part because NATO could be maneuvered into endorsing it as a way of avoiding more dangerous actions. Whether this difference of opinion is to be explained by differences in individual views and willingness to run risks or whether it is more attributable to the roles that people had, with the President having

ultimate responsibility and therefore seeing the world differently, is impossible to determine. Whatever the source, his views were insistent and unequivocal.⁷⁸

The fourth and related point is that while Kennedy was influenced by the argument of his Soviet expert Llewellyn Thompson that Khrushchev would back down without any arrangement about the Jupiters, he was not convinced that this would work, and so after the ExComm meeting he gathered a small group of colleagues and decided that Robert Kennedy would tell Dobrynin that if the Soviets withdrew their missiles, the Jupiters would soon be removed. In passing we should note that Kennedy's approach to this issue shows the limits of the ExComm as he ignored its advice and kept it in the dark about what he was doing.⁷⁹

Fifth, we will never know exactly what Robert Kennedy said to Dobrynin or what the latter heard (these can be different, of course), and we do not have a record, let alone a tape-recording, of the meeting in which President Kennedy and his colleagues decided on what message his brother would carry. We have Dobrynin's long cable to Moscow and a shorter memo by Robert Kennedy to Rusk, but the memo was clearly circumspect and the cable is subject to normal ambassadorial biases. While diplomats are trained to report accurately, not only do their expectations and needs influence what they hear, but what they write is often colored by the desire to have their home governments adopt the policy they favour. Although this complicates the lives of both scholars and policy-makers, it is not surprising that the participants' memos of conversations are often different. We have to resign ourselves to the fact that while we know more about this interaction than we do about many others, we will never know what was said, let alone the tone of voice and body language that can create important impressions and expectations.

Perhaps the details do not matter because for Kennedy and his colleagues the fate of the Jupiters was much less important than that the discussion not be revealed. Secrecy had to be maintained; allies and the general public had to be deceived. It would then be a mistake to say that Kennedy accepted Khrushchev's offer, because the latter involved a public trade. I will come back to why this mattered.

Finally, the arrangement almost surely was not responsible for Khrushchev's response. He was ready to settle for the promise not to invade Cuba earlier and does not seem to have been committed to the sweetener. Although there is some doubt on this point, it appears that Dobrynin's report only reached the Presidium after Khrushchev had announced his decision, and according to Troyanovsky the Soviets were more impressed by the reports that Kennedy might yield to Pentagon pressure than they were by the promise to remove the Jupiters.⁸⁰ Indeed, if Sergei Khrushchev is correct, his father did not consider what he heard to be a significant concession, and in fact concluded that 'a trade was no longer feasible. There was no use harping on the Turkish missiles. They were not

what counted. The idea of a trade would have to be given up. It was a shame. But life was more important than prestige'.⁸¹ As far as we can tell, Khrushchev never bragged to his colleagues that the removal of the Jupiters was a great victory and that it showed that the Soviet Union could no longer be bullied. Instead, he seems mostly to have been relieved that the crisis ended without an invasion and to have been impressed by what he thought was Kennedy's ability to stand up to the military, something that paved the way for the mini-détente in 1963.

These points are probably more important than the remaining disputes about how the arrangement should be characterized. Central to the latter is whether Robert Kennedy merely informed Dobrynin that the missiles in Turkey would soon be out, whether he promised to withdraw them as a *quid pro quo* for the Soviets removing their missiles from Cuba, or whether it was something in between. Later accounts by members of the small group that set the policy say that Robert Kennedy was instructed to say the former,⁸² but Dobrynin's report is a bit different:

'And what about Turkey?' I asked R. Kennedy.

'If that is the only obstacle to achieving the regulation I mentioned earlier, then the president doesn't see any unsurmountable [*sic*] difficulties in reconciling this issue,' replied R. Kennedy. 'The greatest difficulty for the president is the public discussion of the issue of Turkey. Formally the deployment of missiles in Turkey was done by special decision of the NATO Council. To announce now a unilateral decision by the president of the USA to withdraw missile bases from Turkey – this would damage the entire structure of NATO and the US position as the leader of NATO, where, as the Soviet government knows very well, there are many arguments. In short, if such a decision were announced now it would seriously tear apart NATO.'

'However, President Kennedy is ready to come to agree on that question with N.S. Khrushchev, too. I think that in order to withdraw these bases from Turkey,' R. Kennedy said, 'we need 4–5 months. This is the minimal amount of time necessary for the US government to do this, taking into account the procedures that exist within the NATO framework.... However the president can't say anything public in this regard about Turkey,' R. Kennedy said again.⁸³

There is some discrepancy between this version and Robert Kennedy's briefer report to Dean Rusk:

He then asked me about Khrushchev's other proposal dealing with the removal of missiles from Turkey. I replied that there could be no *quid pro quo* – no deal of this kind could be made. This was a matter that had to be considered by NATO and it was up to NATO to make the decision. I said it was completely impossible for NATO to take

such a step under the present threatening position of the Soviet Union. If some time elapsed – and per your [Rusk's] instructions, I mentioned four or five months – I said I was sure these matters could be resolved satisfactorily.⁸⁴

The last sentence was crossed out by hand, but is confirmed by Dobrynin's.

Other differences between the two accounts are subtle but real. It does not concern the fate of the Jupiters – as I noted, despite Khrushchev's complaints, neither he nor the American leaders considered the missiles to have any military value. Rather the sparring then and later concerned not what the US would do, but why it was doing it. Not surprisingly, ambiguity is high here, and indeed facilitated the arrangement, which each side could interpret as it chose. This is not uncommon because actors want to project desired images, something that often involves seeking acceptance of their motives.⁸⁵ In particular, states do not want to be seen as having given in to pressure. The reason is obvious, although its wisdom can be debated: to do so is to imply that you are weak and that further pressure in this or other encounters will lead to further concessions. So after an arrangement has been made, each side often will play up the importance of what the other has done and play down the importance of its moves if they might be portrayed as concessions (although when reciprocity is expected the actor may exaggerate the value of what she has given up). States then bargain over how they had bargained, and formulations are often awkward. For example, the fighting between Hamas and Israel in November 2012 ended in a ceasefire in which Hamas claimed that in return for its restraint Israel had agreed to relax the blockade on Gaza. Israel denied this, and a month later when it allowed building material in, stressed not only that this was for the private sector and not the government, but also that the transfer was conducted 'against the background of the talks with the Egyptians and the quiet that has prevailed on the border' rather than being the fulfillment of a settlement with Hamas.⁸⁶ Was this a bargain, an arrangement, an understanding, a unilateral move, or a combination, rendered ambiguous on purpose?

It is therefore interesting that while Robert Kennedy's version has him explicitly denying that there would be a quid pro quo, his memo does not say that he told Dobrynin that the decision to withdraw the Jupiters had been made earlier, and Theodore Sorensen felt the need to add this to Kennedy's account for *Thirteen Days*.⁸⁷ This was the version the US wanted to have accepted because it minimized the extent to which the Soviets had gained anything from placing missiles in Cuba, and it corresponds to Bundy's and Rusk's account of the formulation that the latter proposed that had made Kennedy's advisors comfortable about offering an arrangement to Dobrynin.⁸⁸ If the Soviets believed that the Americans had already decided to remove the missiles, or even that they were looking for an

opportunity to do so, then they would not have concluded that the US had retreated. Regardless of exactly what Robert Kennedy said, it is clear that his brother wanted the missiles out; it was not removing them but doing so under pressure that was troublesome. This means that, for the US at least, the appearance was the substance. Even in principle, we cannot peel off layers of faulty memories, distorted communications, and imprecise statements to find an underlying reality. What mattered was how the parties interpreted the arrangement. Khrushchev wanted to minimize the extent to which audiences, both domestic and foreign, believed that he had been reckless in placing missiles in Cuba and feckless in withdrawing them at the first whiff of gunpowder. Kennedy needed to be seen as tough, but not irresponsible. The fate of the Jupiters mattered only for impression management, and so success or failure necessarily resided in the minds of various perceivers.

Two days later Khrushchev sent an unsigned letter formalizing the arrangement.⁸⁹ This triggered an urgent visit by Robert Kennedy to return it, explaining (according to Dobrynin) that there was always a danger that even the most confidential of records would become public and that 'the appearance of such a document could cause irreparable harm to my political career in the future'.⁹⁰ Dobrynin and, later, Khrushchev agreed to the letter's return without protest, perhaps eased by the fact that Kennedy gave a selfish reason that did not reopen questions of Soviet and American resolve. Dobrynin did press Kennedy to confirm the 'understanding' (a term his cable used repeatedly), however, and even after Kennedy had done so Dobrynin reports that 'I asked him again about whether the President really confirms the understanding with N.S. Khrushchev on the elimination of American missile bases in Turkey. Robert Kennedy said once again that he confirmed it, and again that he hoped that their motivations would be properly understood in Moscow', although whether the latter phrase refers to the motives for the arrangement or to the need for secrecy remains unclear, as does whether Khrushchev sought a formal exchange of letters because he worried that Kennedy would renege, wanted to convince Kennedy that the Soviets considered that this had been a *quid pro quo*, or hoped to make gains by publicizing the arrangement.

In this regard it is interesting that Dobrynin notes parenthetically that 'the greatest suspicion in the two Kennedy brothers was elicited by the part of Khrushchev's letter which speaks directly of a link between the Cuban events and the bases in Turkey', but in fact Khrushchev's letter only alludes to a link rather than clearly stating it, and Dobrynin's concern in the meeting was to have Kennedy reaffirm that the missiles would be removed rather than to stress that this was a trade, which implied that for Dobrynin at least the Jupiters themselves did matter. Robert Kennedy's notes of what he planned to tell the ambassador include the statement that there was 'no *quid pro quo* ... as I told you [at the meeting of 27 October]'.⁹¹ So while Dobrynin's term 'understanding' has great appeal,

in fact it is far from clear that the two sides shared an understanding of the extent and kind of linkage that was involved and of the magnitude of the American concession (or whether there was a real concession at all). If the words that Sorensen added to Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days* reflected the understanding of the Americans involved, it was more of an explanation of what would happen than it was a concession.

Aside from this exchange, neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev attempted to convince the other to accept his desired interpretation of the arrangement, or even to convince the other that he held a certain view of it. Part of the reason was that they were consumed by the subsequent bargaining over the bombers and other weapons whose status remained ambiguous,⁹² and part was that so few people on either side were knowledgeable that any discussion would have had to be reserved for special channels, and this did not seem a good use of these resources, especially since the dialogue was not likely to yield any advantage.

The muted tussle over interpretations was related to but not identical with the short-lived dispute about whether the arrangement would be kept secret. Secrecy facilitated each side holding different interpretations because there was no need to spell out the arrangement. But public statements are not entirely incompatible with ambiguity and multiple interpretations. If the Shanghai communiqué by the US and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1972 was extreme in this regard, with each side stating its views and acknowledging the disputes, many agreements, even formal ones, are quite ambiguous and some are accompanied by statements by one or both sides about how they interpret it. Secrecy was important for the Americans because it allowed them to portray the crisis as more of an American victory than it actually was. This point should not be exaggerated, however. The American no-invasion pledge was public, and for those who were committed to overthrowing Castro this was a major concession (one that Kennedy had resisted giving),⁹³ in fact a more important one than removing obsolete missiles from Turkey that the administration wanted removed. But Kennedy and his colleagues did not want the American public or allies to know that he had moved at least part of the way to meet Khrushchev's demands, and the fact that the arrangement was kept secret both points to the centrality of the interpretation of why the US acted as it did rather than what the US did and underscores American power in its ability to resist an open trade.

Although it seems odd for Robert Kennedy to have talked about his own political future at this juncture, it was obvious that the Republicans and even Democratic hawks would have used the arrangement to disparage those who were associated with it. Perhaps at least as important was the belief that although the allies usually urged the Americans to be less stiff-necked towards the Soviet Union, they would have been alarmed at the arrangement. This was especially true of the West Germans, who suspected (correctly) that Kennedy was willing to make what were for them

unacceptable concessions over West Berlin. Throughout the Cold War, the US believed that its allies both lacked resolve and were hypersensitive to the US making deals behind their backs. While the US view of allies seems illogical, seeing them as both too ready to make concessions and as afraid that the US would do so, the allies did indeed hold these contradictory fears.

For Kennedy, then, what was at stake was largely his reputation for standing up to Soviet pressure and threats. Although whether and how states acquire reputations is the subject of dispute in the IR literature, there is little doubt that states believe that others do judge them and are influenced by their reputations.⁹⁴ The American attitude, then, was not unusual. What was a bit odd, however, is that reputation is usually believed to be most important in the eyes of adversaries, although the views of allies matter as well. Here, of course, Khrushchev knew of the arrangement, and if Kennedy and his colleagues carefully thought about it they probably would have guessed that Khrushchev regarded it as a greater concession than they did. Although the refusal to make the arrangement public could contribute to an American reputation for resolve, what the Soviets knew – or believed – about it was beyond retrieval. So even if reputation in Soviet eyes was most significant to Kennedy, only the allied views could be affected at this point. And it is not out of the question that this concern was more important to Kennedy even before he made the arrangement. He was deeply aware of the fissures in the alliance and the distrust of the US. Furthermore, he probably instinctively understood what a former British Minister of Defence said: 'It takes only 5% credibility of American retaliation to deter the Soviets, but 95% credibility to reassure the Europeans.'⁹⁵ He was right, and Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister who almost always urged American presidents to be flexible and negotiate, believed that 'anything like this deal would do great injury to NATO'.⁹⁶

Also very important was Kennedy's reputation with the American public, especially in light of his re-election concerns. Although his pledge not to invade Cuba did not come in for extensive domestic criticism, perhaps because only a few people outside of Washington thought that the US ever would invade and so regarded this as a concession, the fact that Kennedy's desire to get rid of the Jupiters had been kept secret meant that it would have been impossible to have portrayed their withdrawal as anything other than giving in to Soviet pressure. Kennedy probably would have been willing to pay the price if this had been required in order to end the crisis (using the UN or the NATO Council as a cover to reduce the damage), but avoiding it if at all possible was an imperative in light of the series of foreign policy failures that had beset the administration. At minimum, a public deal would have made it much more difficult for him to follow the conciliatory diplomatic path he embarked on in the spring.

The other message that Robert Kennedy conveyed also shows the actors' concern with interpretations, but here they were conspiring or

conniving⁹⁷ with each other rather than struggling. In both Kennedy's and Dobrynin's accounts it is obvious that the former gave an ultimatum, and Khrushchev labels it as such in his memoirs.⁹⁸ Kennedy gave a deadline for compliance and made clear that if it were not forthcoming the US would attack. But ultimatums are simply not acceptable in modern diplomacy, at least not among states of roughly equal power and standing, because acceding to one is seen as humiliating and a clear indication of weakness. So Kennedy and Dobrynin agreed that the ultimatum was not an ultimatum. In Kennedy's words, 'this was not an ultimatum ... but just a statement of facts'. Dobrynin reports that he 'noted that it went without saying that the Soviet government would not accept any ultimatums and it was good that the American government realized that'.⁹⁹ (The very fact that Dobrynin had to stress that he was not interpreting the American message as an ultimatum indicates that any sensible observer would recognize it as one.) By volunteering that this was not an ultimatum and allowing Dobrynin to underscore this, Kennedy made acceptance easier, and indeed the fact that Dobrynin went out of his way to say that it was not an ultimatum implied that he thought his government would accept it as long as it was not so labelled. This was not a matter of saving face in the sense of sparing Soviet feelings; if the US had defined its message as an ultimatum, then by withdrawing the missiles the Soviets would have been bowing to superior American power rather than carrying out a statesman-like act to bring the crisis to a close. In a similar spirit, in his initial response to the blockade Khrushchev told Kennedy that 'I would like to give you a friendly warning that the measures announced in your statement represent a grave threat to peace and security in the world'.¹⁰⁰ Obviously there was nothing friendly about this, but saying it was, was itself a placating gesture. The other side of this coin is that in his next letter Khrushchev refers to the American demands as an ultimatum.¹⁰¹ Obviously this was technically incorrect, as Kennedy had specified neither a deadline nor the action that the US would take if need be. But he did demand that the missiles be withdrawn, and by calling this an ultimatum Khrushchev signaled that he would not comply.

Final observations

Although in the end the arrangement about the Jupiters was a side-show, the diplomacy surrounding it was fascinating and ingenious, and it does shed light on the participants' priorities and calculations. Kennedy's flexibility both illuminates his general outlook and, as I will discuss below, some general characteristics of the Cold War, and Khrushchev's desire to salvage as much as he could from the crisis in parallel reveals something of his character. But we should not lose sight of the fact that what drove each side was the fear of war, which bore down even more heavily on Khrushchev than on Kennedy. Available Soviet records indicate that his

willingness to make concessions and to do so quickly varied directly with his fears of an invasion and things getting out of control. He avidly consumed the numerous intelligence reports, most of them unfounded, concerning whether or not an invasion was imminent. When he thought it was not, he would 'look around' to see if he had more time and leverage to exact concessions.¹⁰²

Although the missile crisis stands out for its drama and danger, it is typical of the Cold War in six ways, some of which contradict general IR theories. First, the bargaining over symbols and the struggle for interpretations that were so important in the final phases were common during the Cold War. Ironically, the very power of nuclear weapons meant that confrontations over matters of real value had to be minimized, and in the absence of the willingness to use such weapons, surrogate struggles were needed to show credibility. Psychology and symbolism were thus central to the ways in which nuclear weapons had influence.¹⁰³ Bloody struggles of course existed, most obviously in Korea and Vietnam. But these were never fights over material resources and military assets. They were attempts at impression management.

Second, judgments of relative military power mattered in the crisis as it did throughout the Cold War, but communication was also central, although this need not imply cooperation. At every stage of this episode the two sides puzzled over what the other would do next and how it would react to various moves the state might make, and in parallel tried to convince the other about how it would act – sometimes accurately and sometime misleadingly. This came up most sharply when McNamara explained to the Chief of Naval Operations that following Navy standard operating procedures was not adequate because this was not simply a blockade but 'a means of communication between Kennedy and Khrushchev',¹⁰⁴ and when Robert Kennedy shrewdly pointed out that any American ship that might intercept a Soviet vessel should have on board at least one person who spoke Russian. Much of the Cold War was about each side communicating what was most important to it, what it would and would not tolerate, and the risks it was willing to run. Of course this was not simple because each side had incentives to deceive the other and in fact did not know how it would respond to a major challenge. But the constant search for credibility, most obvious on the American side, was driven by and carried out through communication.

Third, credibility was central to the crisis at all stages, as it was to the Cold War. Considerations of the military balance in the sense of the relative advantage and disadvantages that would accrue were a war to be fought were not unimportant, but were framed by the felt need to convince adversaries and allies that the state would fight if need be. As far as we can tell, Khrushchev's decision to place missiles in Cuba, whatever his motives, was not preceded by any detailed military analysis. He knew that his military strength would be increased, but this was less important in

terms of brute force than it was for bolstering his credibility, although whether for defending Cuba, putting pressure on West Berlin, or generally establishing a larger role for the USSR (or all three) is hard to determine. Eisenhower's decision to put Jupiters into Italy and Turkey was sparked by the need to reassure allies after the Soviets launched sputnik, and Kennedy's re-evaluation of the decision was cut short by his weak performance at the Vienna summit.¹⁰⁵ During the missile crisis itself, of course, the sides jostled to bolster the credibility of their threats, and the bargaining over the arrangement for the Jupiters was driven by fears and hopes about how adversaries and allies (and domestic audiences) would see the credibility of Soviet and American threats and promises in the aftermath. It explains why Kennedy was willing to make the arrangement but insisted on keeping it secret and why he refused to do so as part of his opening bid, believing that Adlai Stevenson's proposal to do so at the start would only lead to further Soviet demands.¹⁰⁶

Concern with credibility can be found throughout history, but, like the willingness of each side to make concessions in order to avoid war, was heightened by nuclear weapons. The very fact that resort to all-out war would be, in Kennedy's words quoted earlier, the 'final failure' meant that states were preoccupied by how they could make the threat to fight at all believable. Given the dreadful consequences of war, threats did not have to be anything like completely believable to be effective, but no one could be sure how much credibility was enough, which helps explain why both sides constantly sought ways to protect and build their reputations for resolve.¹⁰⁷ Most of the scholarship here has concentrated on the American preoccupation, often critically so. But whether foolish or not, it was clearly shared by Soviet leaders. Credibility as both a desired goal and an instrument was central to Khrushchev's 'meniscus strategy' of increasing tensions to compensate for military weakness,¹⁰⁸ it was what he sought in calling for a missile trade,¹⁰⁹ and throughout the crisis he continued his habit of talking about the importance of displaying his own 'nerve' and weakening Kennedy's – and did so in much cruder terms than the Americans used.

Fourth, and linked to the reasons why credibility was so important, the costs of a nuclear war were so great that neither side was willing to try to exact the last possible concession from the other at the cost of continuing a confrontation that might get out of control. Khrushchev would have withdrawn the missiles in return for a no-invasion pledge; the sweetener of the Jupiters arrangement was not needed. For his part, Kennedy was almost certainly willing to give more than that and probably would have made the trade in public if this had been necessary. Here too the missile crisis was not unique. Kennedy was willing to make major concessions over Berlin if Khrushchev had pushed harder, and the latter in turn might not have resisted if the US had dismantled the Berlin Wall in its first few days. I am not implying that the leaders were foolish or feckless; far from it, they

sensibly understood that nuclear weapons required an unusual degree of prudence.¹¹⁰

Fifth, as the previous paragraph indicates, Kennedy and Khrushchev consistently had to make trade-offs between the danger of war and the cost of diplomatic concessions. This contributed to the pendulum swings between periods of détente and periods of high tension throughout the Cold War. So it is not entirely surprising that the extreme danger of the missile crisis was followed by a concerted effort to manage relations quite differently. But this effort was not automatic and took real statesmanship on the part of both leaders. Kennedy's American University speech in June 1963 reaching out to the Soviet Union was a major step toward conciliation. That it reflected the President's deep-seated convictions that were not universally shared is shown by the fact that the State and Defense departments were excluded from the process because they might have tried to undercut it.¹¹¹ Khrushchev's willingness to reciprocate should also not be taken for granted. While it was coupled with efforts to gain nuclear and political parity with the US, it was also a genuine effort to reach agreement, including the informal understanding that he would no longer try to change the status quo in Berlin. This was not the only way a leader could have responded to the crisis. Khrushchev admired Kennedy's willingness to restrain the military and believed that this showed that, contrary to his earlier beliefs, Kennedy was not only someone who could not easily be bullied, but was also a leader who one could do business with.

A final characteristic of the crisis may be less typical of the Cold War, although perhaps if we look more carefully we will find that it played a larger role than we might think. Here I am referring to the trust that Kennedy placed in Khrushchev. It was fine for the Attorney General to say that the arrangement had to be kept secret and for Dobrynin to say that it would be. But why should Kennedy have had any faith that the Chairman would live up to his word? Even in its most benign interpretation, the arrangement was discrepant from the image Kennedy was trying to project, and the fact that he demanded secrecy gave Khrushchev a hostage. As Len Scott notes, 'Khrushchev kept his silence',¹¹² but Kennedy was running a great risk because at any point Khrushchev could have gone public. Even though proof would have been impossible, once attention was focused on a swift withdrawal of the Jupiters, many people undoubtedly would have concluded that Kennedy had not only agreed to a trade, but had lied about it. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that Kennedy placed his fate in Khrushchev's hands. Of course if Khrushchev had revealed the secret he would have destroyed his relationship with Kennedy, but in some circumstances this might have seemed worthwhile and, in any event, Kennedy knew that Khrushchev was impulsive. What Khrushchev's intentions were in this regard is not entirely clear. Sergei Khrushchev reports that while his father 'wanted very much to get written guarantees' about the Turkish missiles, this was not vital. 'White House promises to

remove the missiles would come in very handy for foreign consumption, to counter those people who would inevitably rant and rave that he had retreated under pressure from the imperialists.¹¹³ This obviously implies that he planned to tell the Chinese and others of the arrangement, which meant that it would almost inevitably become public.¹¹⁴ How this fits with what Sergei reports was his father's desire to build a trusting relationship with Kennedy is unclear, and was probably yet another contradiction Khrushchev did not think through.

So this appears to have been an instance of unusual trust, one that is hard to explain by standard IR theories. But perhaps there was more trust in the Cold War than most of our accounts would have it. Could we have otherwise survived?

Notes

- 1 I am grateful for comments by Richard Immerman, Mark Kramer, Melvyn Leffler, Leopoldo Nuti, Stephen Sestanovich, Len Scott, Marc Trachtenberg, Philip Zelikow and an anonymous reviewer.
- 2 Kent's comment is in 'A Crucial Estimate Relived', originally published in CIA's classified *Studies in Intelligence* in 1964 and reprinted in Donald Steury (ed.), *Sherman Kent and the Board of National Estimates: Collected Essays* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency 1994) p. 185. Although this is not the place to discuss all the sources of the US intelligence failure, central was the inability of American leaders and analysts to empathize with Khrushchev and understand the pressures on him, McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Vintage Books 1988) pp. 415–20.
- 3 Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow (eds), *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2002) p. 62.
- 4 But had they placed a higher probability on the Soviet's putting missiles in, they would not have reduced the U-2 coverage on 10 September in response to the danger that the newly emplaced anti-aircraft missiles might bring down a reconnaissance flight and trigger a politically costly situation in the run-up to the Congressional elections, David Barrett and Max Holland, *Blind over Cuba: The Photo Gap and the Missile Crisis* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press 2012).
- 5 May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, p. 197.
- 6 Ibid., p. 182.
- 7 Ibid., p. 332.
- 8 Ibid., p. 71.
- 9 James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 1990) pp. 215–16.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 263–4; Dobrynin's cable of 25 October 1962, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8–9 (Winter 1996–7) 288.
- 11 Both game theory and schools of social constructivism that stress that reality is constituted by intersubjective understandings depend on the players having stable expectations about the other and so run into difficulties in these situations. The Director of the CIA, John McCone, had predicted the Soviet action (although his reasoning was incorrect) but he refrained from bragging

- and while generally taking a hard line during the crisis was not totally confident.
- 12 For other examples, of Kennedy and his colleagues trying to explain Khrushchev's behaviour, see May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 42, 249, 315.
 - 13 For the Pentagon's estimate that US troops would suffer 18,500 casualties in an invasion even if the Soviets did not use tactical nuclear weapons, see the analysis and documents on the National Security Archive: www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB397/ (last accessed 27 September 2014).
 - 14 Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 209–12.
 - 15 James Fearon, 'Rationalist Explanations for War', *International Organization*, 49/3 (Summer 1995) 379–414.
 - 16 Stephen Walt, 'Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies', *International Security*, 23/4 (Spring 1999) 34, note 85; Jonathan Mercer, 'Rational Signaling Revisited', in James Davis (ed.), *Psychology, Strategy and Conflict* (New York: Routledge 2013) p. 70.
 - 17 Robert Lovett quoted in Sheldon M. Stern, *The Cuban Missile Crisis in American Memory: Myths versus Reality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2012) p. 27.
 - 18 John F. Kennedy, 'Foreword' to Theodore Sorensen, *Decision-making in the White House* (New York: Columbia University Press 1963) p. xi.
 - 19 Timothy Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2002).
 - 20 Timothy Naftali, 'The Malin Notes: Glimpses inside the Kremlin during the Cuban Missile Crisis', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 299–301.
 - 21 The American decision to deploy missiles to Europe was not well thought out either. See Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters 1957–1963* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1997).
 - 22 Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], 1961–1963, Vol. VI, Kennedy–Khrushchev Exchanges* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office 1996) p. 168. Raymond Garthoff argues that even the Soviet leaders 'recognize[d] that the initiative in precipitating the crisis, if not the responsibility and blame, resided in their decision on deploying the missiles': Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution 1989) p. 158.
 - 23 I have discussed this problem in explaining President Bush's decision to invade Iraq in 'Explaining the War in Iraq', in Trevor Thrall and Jane Cramer (eds), *Why Did the United States Invade Iraq?* (New York: Routledge 2012) pp. 25–48. For a discussion of the general problem of a priori under-determination and *ex post facto* over-determination, see James Kurth, 'U.S. Policies, Latin American Politics, and Praetorian Rule', in Philippe Schmitter (ed.), *Military Rule in Latin America* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage 1973) pp. 244–58.
 - 24 William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: Norton 2003) p. 532; also see May and Zelikow, 'Conclusion', in May and Zelikow (eds), *Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 416–19.
 - 25 Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, trans. and ed. by Strobe Talbott (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1970) p. 494; Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, trans. by Shirley Benson (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 2000) p. 489; Janos Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press 1972) p. 137. Interestingly enough, the remark does not appear in the Radvanyi's reporting cable summarizing Mikoyan's talk, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 445–8.

- Mikoyan's son provides a different and I think strained interpretation of the latter statement, Sergo Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis: Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November*, ed. by Svetlana Savranskaya (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press 2012) p. 94. The Jupiter missiles in Turkey that figured in the later bargaining played at least some role in Khrushchev's decision to send missiles to Cuba. Although it is hard to say how much weight we should put on his annoyance at realizing that there were hostile missiles on the other side of his Black Sea vacation residence and his desire to give the Americans 'a little of their own medicine' (Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 494), their example stirred Khrushchev's thinking and the precedent gave him not only rhetorical justification, but a degree of legitimacy, and perhaps contributed to his sense that the US would get over its shock and accept the deployment. On the last point, see James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (New York: Pantheon 1993) p. 79; Richard Ned Lebow and Janis Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1994) pp. 77–8.
- 26 Double standards are almost universal, and the Soviet leaders certainly held their fair share of them. For a popular summary of the psychological research, see Robert Kurzban, *Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2010).
- 27 Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, p. 79.
- 28 Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*. For general discussions of the importance of status and honour, see, for example, Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday 1995); Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2008). Sergei Khrushchev links status to the defense of Cuba, arguing that he believed that 'if the Soviet Union was to be recognized as a great power, it must inevitably assume responsibility for the security of its allies. Otherwise, no one would believe it to be a world leader', Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 482.
- 29 As Bundy perceptively remarks, 'the more "expert" men were in attending to the Berlin crisis, the stronger their disposition to read the Soviet deployment to Cuba as a move in the Berlin game', Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 422. For a strong argument that Berlin was indeed central and a good canvassing of the alternatives, see Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman 1999) pp. 82–109.
- 30 For summaries of Khrushchev's belligerent remarks about Berlin in the summer of 1962, see Taubman, *Khrushchev*, pp. 539–40; Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton 2006) pp. 446–7, 458; May and Zelikow, 'Conclusion', in May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 426–7. Dobrynin testifies that his conversations with Khrushchev when he was departing to assume his position of ambassador lead him to conclude that 'Khrushchev believed he had a chance to shift the status quo in his favor in Berlin', Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Times Books 1995) p. 64; also see pp. 61–2. Khrushchev linked Cuba and Berlin in a letter to Kennedy of September 28 (i.e. after Kennedy's statement that missiles in Cuba would be unacceptable but before they were discovered): *Kennedy–Khrushchev Exchanges*, pp. 158–9, and, in an odd linkage, on July 30 Kennedy appears to have agreed to cease low-level surveillance flights over the Soviet ships heading to Cuba in return for a Soviet promise to put the Berlin issue 'on ice', Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: Norton 1997) p. 194. Taubman suggests that

- we should not be too quick to take the threats to Berlin at face value: Khrushchev perhaps 'didn't ... know his own mind at all, an explanation for why no one else did either', *Khrushchev*, p. 540.
- 31 Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 528. Sergei also says that Berlin did play a role, but only in providing an example of how a superpower could and had to protect its outpost: p. 482.
 - 32 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, chapter 17.
 - 33 Ibid, pp. 440–3; Presidium notes, May 21, 1962: <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/kremlin> (last accessed 18 September 2014).
 - 34 Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 445.
 - 35 Fursenko and Naftali stress another dimension of the Cuban issue. In the spring and summer of 1962 Khrushchev was very worried that Castro would switch his allegiance from the Soviets to the Chinese, Fursenko and Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble', pp. 167–70.
 - 36 For an exception, see Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 483. Furthermore, the record of the Presidium meetings (the 'Malin notes') are sketchy and incomplete.
 - 37 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 307–10. The quote is from p. 307.
 - 38 For a different reading of the Soviet deliberations, see May and Zelikow, 'Conclusion', in May and Zelikow (eds), *Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 416–17, 420–1.
 - 39 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, p. 484.
 - 40 Sergey Radchenko, 'The Cuban Missile Crisis: Assessment of New, and Old, Russian Sources', *International Relations*, 26 (September 2012) 332–3.
 - 41 Gromyko's cable of 20 October in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8–9 (Winter 1996–7) 280–1.
 - 42 Quoted in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, p. 562.
 - 43 Arnold Horelick, 'The Cuban Missile Crisis: An Analysis of Soviet Calculations and Behavior', *World Politics*, 16 /3 (April 1964) 365.
 - 44 Adam Ulam, *Expansion and Coexistence: The History of Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917–67* (New York: Praeger 1968) pp. 670–1; Ulam, *The Rivals: America and Russia Since World War II* (New York: Viking 1971) pp. 328–30.
 - 45 Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1960).
 - 46 May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, p. 283.
 - 47 Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*.
 - 48 Dobrynin's cable of 25 October, in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8–9 (Winter 1996–7) 288. Recent literature in international politics stresses the importance of the commitment to domestic audiences, which is often said to give democracies a bargaining advantage. For a summary, see the symposium 'Do Audience Costs Exist?' *Security Studies*, 21 (July–September 2012) 369–415.
 - 49 Indeed on the first day of the crisis Kennedy said that although perhaps he should not have drawn the line in this way, once he had done so 'and then they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then I would think that our risks increase', May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, p. 62.
 - 50 Fursenko and Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble', p. 182; Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 493, 495–6.
 - 51 Department of State, *FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. V, Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office 1998) p. 177.
 - 52 *Kennedy–Khrushchev Exchanges*, p. 177.
 - 53 Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, chapter 8. There were lots of ways force would escalate, and Kennedy and his colleagues had little reason to decide which of them was the most likely; McNamara, quoted in Blight and Welch, *On the*

- Brink, p. 192. The extent of this kind of danger was central to defense debates in the Cold War, and remains an important topic for research. For discussion, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1989) pp. 84–98.
- 54 Zorin cable of 26 October, in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8–9 (Winter 1996–7) p. 290.
- 55 Len Scott, 'Intelligence and the Risk of Nuclear War', in David Gioe, Len Scott, and Christopher Andrew (eds), *An International History of the Cuban Missile Crisis: A 50-year retrospective* (Abingdon: Routledge 2014) chapter 3.
- 56 Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 568.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 560.
- 58 For a discussion of what was happening with the submarines, see Svetlana Savranskaya, 'New Sources on the Role of Soviet Submarines in the Cuban Missile Crisis', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 28/2 (April 2005) 233–59.
- 59 Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glastnost Tapes*, ed. and trans. by Jerrold L. Schecter and Vyacheslav Luchkov (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company 1990) p. 178. For the parallel American feelings that things were getting out of control, see Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 426.
- 60 For Castro's explanation for the letter, see Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, pp. 109–12.
- 61 Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, p. 264. As early as 25 October, the Presidium notes reveal Khrushchev saying that although the USSR needed to get an American promise not to invade Cuba, 'beyond that, it is not worth forcing the situation to the boiling point', *Cold War International History Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 309. The shooting down of the U-2 and Castro's letter showed that the situation was dangerous and might spin out of control but they did not reveal American willingness to run high risks since they were things the US had not done. In theory, even greater pressure on Khrushchev would have been exerted by actions that the Americans took knowing that they were risky. Such actions would have both increased the danger of war and revealed high levels of American resolve, but since American leaders shared Khrushchev's aversion to high risk they preferred to avoid such actions.
- 62 *Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges*, p. 187. Throughout the crisis the Americans felt time pressures generated by the continuing work on the missile sites, and in their deliberations talked about when the missiles would become operational. But much of this discussion was confused and the importance of this factor remains unclear.
- 63 Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, pp. 560, 562; see also Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 497.
- 64 Fursenko and Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble', p. 185; Dobrynin cable of 27 October, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (Spring 1995) 80. Khrushchev's memory of Dobrynin's cable is much more extreme and dramatic, talking about the possibility that the military would 'overthrow [the President] and seize power', *Khrushchev Remembers*, pp. 497–8. For the discussion by Soviet and American participants concerning this discrepancy, see Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 264–5.
- 65 May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, note 2, p. 474; Blight, Allyn, and Welch, *Cuba on the Brink*, pp. 255, 261.
- 66 Sergei Khrushchev reports that the Presidium did get a briefing on the effects of a nuclear exchange, but 'Father listened with half an ear. The solution must be sought in diplomacy, not in military plans', *Nikita Khrushchev*, pp. 597–8. No such briefing appears in declassified Soviet records, but these are incomplete.
- 67 Department of State, *FRUS, 1961–1963, Vol. V, Soviet Union*, pp. 187, 192. The

- notes of the Presidium meeting following McNamara's 'no cities' speech of 9 June 1962 include this strange comment: 'They are not equal, but they were saying that the forces are equal', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 304.
- 68 As Sergei Khrushchev puts it, 'fear has big eyes', *Nikita Khrushchev*, pp. 536, 624.
- 69 Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*, p. 230.
- 70 This is the term used by Barton Bernstein in his perceptive 'The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?' *Political Science Quarterly*, 95/1 (Spring 1980) 98.
- 71 A good overview is Don Munton, 'The Fourth Question: Why Did John F. Kennedy Offer up the Jupiters in Turkey?' in Gioe, Scott, and Andrew, *An International History of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, chapter 13. For one version of how early reports that the American might be willing to engage in a missile trade reached Khrushchev, see Fursenko and Naftali, *'One Hell of a Gamble'*, pp. 249–50.
- 72 For Kennedy's annoyance, see May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes* pp. 659–60; for a summary of the ExComm discussion of removing the missiles, see Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, pp. 127–32, 146–7. Indeed, as Nash points out, the ExComm 'fully expected the Soviets to demand a missile trade', *The Other Missiles*, p. 132, and the only surprise was that it was so long in coming.
- 73 Dobrynin cable of 19 October 1962, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8/9 (Winter 1996–7) 279. Why Kennedy said this is unclear. I doubt if he was trying to commit himself to refusing to make such a trade because it is unlikely that he knew the talk would reach Moscow (and if he did he would have been running the risk of tipping off the Soviets to the fact that the missiles had been discovered) and, the talk being off the record, his comments were not made public. Indeed, as far as I can tell, no American record of this talk has yet been published.
- 74 May and Zelikow, *Kennedy Tapes*, p. 307. Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to say that Kennedy followed the admonition of Obama's Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel: 'you never want a serious crisis to go to waste, and what I mean by that is an opportunity to do things that you think that you could not do before'; Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, 'Interview with *Wall Street Journal*', *Wall Street Journal*, 19 November 2008. An interesting counterfactual is how the crisis would have unfolded had he issued the warning earlier. Done early enough, it might have made it a bit less likely that Khrushchev would have put missiles into Cuba. But had it been done after Khrushchev's decision was made but before October, it might have complicated matters because a trade would have not been a possible way to resolve the crisis.
- 75 Fursenko and Naftali, *'One Hell of a Gamble'*, p. 275; also see Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 604, Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, ed. and trans. by Strobe Talbott (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company 1974) p. 512, and Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glastnost Tapes*, p. 179. In November 1962, Mikoyan told the Warsaw Pact ambassadors that Kennedy had told him that 'the Polaris-type submarines make the bases in England, Italy, and Turkey redundant. The American party had already worked out a plan, he said, to eliminate these bases', cable from the Hungarian legation in Washington to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 5 December 1962, in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 447. But our knowledge of how the Soviets, and especially the Soviet military, saw the value of the Jupiters is very limited.
- 76 For the full story of the Jupiters in Italy from the emplacement to the withdrawal, see Leopoldo Nuti, 'Dall'operazione Deep Rock all'operazione Pot

Pie: una storia documentata dei missili SM Jupiter in Italia', *Storia delle Relazioni Internazionali*, 11/12 (1996-7) 95-138 and 105-49; see also Leonardo Campus, 'Italian Political Reactions to the Cuban Missile Crisis', in Gioe, Scott, and Andrew, *An International History of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, chapter 12. As Campus notes, in their memoirs both Robert Kennedy and Khrushchev do mention the former as including the missiles in Italy in the arrangement, Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton 1969); Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, p. 109; Khrushchev, *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev, Statesman, 1953-1964* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press 2007) p. 350; Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, p. 512.

- 77 For a discussion, see Leopoldo Nuti, 'Italy and the Cuban Missile Crisis', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 17/18 (Fall 2012) 662.
- 78 For the participants' discussion of the impact of responsibility during the crisis, see Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 107-8.
- 79 Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, p. 148. Dean Rusk says that many of the influential discussions were between pairs of the participants outside of the meetings: Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk (ed.), Daniel Papp, *As I Saw It* (New York: Norton 1990) p. 232.
- 80 Naftali, 'The Malin Notes', p. 302; Fursenko and Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble', p. 285.
- 81 Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 623.
- 82 Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, pp. 432-3; Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 240; Rusk's interview in Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 172-4; McNamara quoted in *ibid*, p. 191; Dean Rusk, George Ball, Robert McNamara, and Roswell Gilpatric, 'The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis,' *Time*, September 27, 1982, 85. Perhaps the most nuanced judgment is the one reached by Raymond Garthoff, a former intelligence analyst who played a supporting role in the crisis (although he was not privy to the arrangement) who later became an accomplished scholar, 'It was not a direct element of a deal, a quid pro quo, but it was raised in the negotiation and, from the Soviet standpoint, was a consideration in making the deal', Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, p. 162. He also refers to the Jupiters as a 'sweetener', *ibid*, pp. 47, 95.
- 83 Dobrynin cable of 27 October, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (Spring 1995) 80.
- 84 *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8-9 (Winter 1996-7) 346.
- 85 Robert Jervis (ed.), *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1970; second edn., New York: Columbia University Press 1989).
- 86 Isabel Kershner, 'Israel, in Shift, Lets Building Materials Cross Into Gaza', *New York Times*, 31 December 2012; for the subsequent situation, see Fares Akran and Jodi Rudoren, 'Gaza Farmers Near Fence with Israel Remain Wary', *ibid.*, 8 June 2013.
- 87 Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David A. Welch (eds), *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 27-28, 1989* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America 1992) pp. 92-3.
- 88 Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, pp. 432-3; Rusk, *As I Saw It*, p. 240; Rusk's interview in Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 172-4; McNamara quoted in *ibid*, p. 191.
- 89 Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, pp. 189-90.
- 90 Dobrynin cable of 30 October, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8-9 (Winter 1996-7) 304. The letter was literally returned; it is not in the American records.
- 91 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston, MA: Houghton

- Mifflin 1978) p. 523. In fact, Khrushchev's letter only implicitly made the link to the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles from Cuba. Whatever the degree of linkage, the precedent had an interesting if fleeting echo. When President Nixon learned that the Soviets were constructing a submarine base at Cienfuegos in Cuba, he immediately sent a note to Kissinger including the suggestion that the US put missiles in Turkey in order to 'give us some trading stock', Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company 1979) p. 642.
- 92 The fullest account is David G. Coleman, *The Fourteenth Day: JFK and the Aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton 2012).
- 93 Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, p. 431; May and Zelikow (eds), *Kennedy Tapes*, p. 308.
- 94 Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1977).
- 95 <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/wpna-7026ce-interview-with-denis-healey-1986-part-2-of-3> (last accessed 5 June 2014); also cited in Keith Payne, 'The Future of Deterrence: The Art of Defining How Much Is Enough,' *Comparative Strategy*, 29 (July 2010) 220.
- 96 Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961–1963* (New York: Harper & Row 1973) p. 217; also see pp. 187, 212–13.
- 97 Bertrand Badie, *Diplomacy of Connivance*, trans by Cynthia Schoch and William Snow (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2012).
- 98 Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 497. For the retrospective disagreements among the American participants on whether Kennedy did or was instructed to deliver an ultimatum, see Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, pp. 66–8. A fascinating and important issue, but one that is a digression here, is whether this was a bluff or whether President Kennedy would have ordered other measures, such as a tightening of the blockade and/or a willingness to make the trade in public rather than actually use force. I think the evidence indicates that while a strike and invasion was not to be excluded, force would not have been the next step. This would mean, however, that the US was bluffing, and would explain why McNamara later said he did not believe that Robert Kennedy's message to Dobrynin was an ultimatum, Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, p. 189.
- 99 Kennedy, 'Memorandum for the Secretary of State from the Attorney General', 30 October 1962, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 8–9 (Winter 1996–7) 346; Dobrynin cable of 27 October 1962, *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, 5 (Spring 1995) 80.
- 100 Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, p. 565. He presumably is using the Russian text; the version in the American records is slightly different, *Kennedy–Khrushchev Exchanges*, pp. 166–7.
- 101 *Ibid.*, pp. 169–70.
- 102 Fursenko and Naftali, 'One Hell of a Gamble', p. 259; also see Bundy, *Danger and Survival*, pp. 439–45; May and Zelikow, 'Conclusion', in May and Zelikow (eds), *Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 430–8.
- 103 For further discussion see Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, chapters 5–6.
- 104 Robert McNamara in Blight and Welch, *On the Brink*, p. 64.
- 105 Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*, pp. 12–26, 100–1; Lebow and Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War*, p. 45; Nur Bilge Criss, 'Strategic Nuclear Missiles in Turkey: The Jupiter Affair, 1959–1963', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 20/3 (September 1997) 114–15.
- 106 Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy*, p. 516. Whether or not Kennedy was correct remains a crucial question, as does the extent to which he was he was

- motivated by domestic rather than international politics. My reading of Kennedy is that the latter dominated, and my reading of Khrushchev is that Kennedy judged his adversary correctly, but obviously proof is beyond reach.
- 107 Nash, *The Other Missiles of October*; Robert McMahon, 'Credibility and World Power: Exploring the Psychological Dimension in Postwar American Diplomacy', *Diplomatic History*, 15 (Fall 1991) 455-71; Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder (eds), *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition In The Eurasian Rimland* (New York: Oxford University Press 1991).
 - 108 Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, chapter 17.
 - 109 Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, p. 512.
 - 110 Sergo Mikoyan excoriates Khrushchev for his refusal to consult experts that led him to make numerous unnecessary concessions, and while there is quite a bit to this, it is hard to deny that Khrushchev was wise in giving a priority to ending the crisis: Mikoyan, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis*.
 - 111 Ted Sorensen, *Counselor: A Life at the Edge of History* (New York: HarperCollins 2008) p. 326.
 - 112 Len Scott, 'Eyeball to Eyeball: Blinking and Winking, Spy Planes and Secrets', *International Relations*, 26 (September 2012) 361. Khrushchev mentions but does not stress the arrangement in his memoirs: *Khrushchev Remembers*, p. 512.
 - 113 Sergei Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev*, pp. 640-1.
 - 114 Khrushchev apparently did tell Castro, who later hinted at the arrangement but never announced it, Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy*, p. 513.