

Doctrine announced Washington's intention, then unrealizable, to dominate the Western hemisphere.

Not the Russians of that moment then, but rather the right to dominate, a leading principle of foreign policy found almost everywhere, though typically concealed in defensive terms: during the Cold War years, routinely by invoking the "Russian threat," even when Russians were nowhere in sight. An example of great contemporary import is revealed in Iran scholar Ervand Abrahamian's important upcoming book of the U.S.-U.K. coup that overthrew the parliamentary regime of Iran in 1953. With scrupulous examination of internal records, he shows convincingly that standard accounts cannot be sustained. The primary causes were not Cold War concerns, nor Iranian irrationality that undermined Washington's "benign intentions," nor even access to oil or profits, but rather the way the U.S. demand for "overall controls" -- with its broader implications for global dominance -- was threatened by independent nationalism.

That is what we discover over and over by investigating particular cases, including Cuba (not surprisingly) though the fanaticism in that particular case might merit examination. U.S. policy towards Cuba is harshly condemned throughout Latin America and indeed most of the world, but "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" is understood to be meaningless rhetoric intoned mindlessly on July 4th. Ever since polls have been taken on the matter, a considerable majority of the U.S. population has favored normalization of relations with Cuba, but that too is insignificant.

Dismissal of public opinion is of course quite normal. What is interesting in this case is dismissal of powerful sectors of U.S. economic power, which also favor normalization, and are usually highly influential in setting policy: energy, agribusiness, pharmaceuticals, and others. That suggests that, in addition to the cultural factors revealed in the hysteria of the Camelot intellectuals, there is a powerful state interest involved in punishing Cubans.

Saving the World from the Threat of Nuclear Destruction

The missile crisis officially ended on October 28th. The outcome was not obscure. That evening, in a special CBS News broadcast, Charles Collingwood reported that the world had come out "from under the most terrible threat of nuclear holocaust since World War II" with a "humiliating defeat for Soviet policy." Dobbs comments that the Russians tried to pretend that the outcome was "yet another triumph for Moscow's peace-loving foreign policy over warmongering imperialists," and that "[t]he supremely wise, always reasonable Soviet leadership had saved the world from the threat of nuclear destruction."

Extricating the basic facts from the fashionable ridicule, Khrushchev's agreement to capitulate had indeed "saved the world from the threat of nuclear destruction."

The crisis, however, was not over. On November 8th, the Pentagon announced that all known Soviet missile bases had been dismantled. On the same day, Stern reports, "a sabotage team carried out an attack on a Cuban factory," though Kennedy's terror campaign, Operation Mongoose, had been formally curtailed at the peak of the crisis. The November 8th terror attack lends support to Bundy's observation that the threat to peace was Cuba, not Turkey, where the Russians were not continuing a lethal assault -- though that was certainly not what Bundy had in mind or could have understood.

More details are added by the highly respected scholar Raymond Garthoff, who also had rich experience within the government, in his careful 1987 account of the missile crisis. On November 8th, he writes, "a Cuban covert action sabotage team dispatched from the United States successfully blew up a Cuban industrial facility," killing 400 workers according to a Cuban government letter to the U.N. Secretary General.

Garthoff comments: "The Soviets could only see [the attack] as an effort to backpedal on what was, for them, the key question remaining: American assurances not to attack Cuba," particularly since the terrorist attack was launched from the U.S. These and other "third party actions" reveal

again, he concludes, "that the risk and danger to both sides could have been extreme, and catastrophe not excluded." Garthoff also reviews the murderous and destructive operations of Kennedy's terrorist campaign, which we would certainly regard as more than ample justification for war, if the U.S. or its allies or clients were victims, not perpetrators.

From the same source we learn further that, on August 23, 1962, the president had issued National Security Memorandum No. 181, "a directive to engineer an internal revolt that would be followed by U.S. military intervention," involving "significant U.S. military plans, maneuvers, and movement of forces and equipment" that were surely known to Cuba and Russia. Also in August, terrorist attacks were intensified, including speedboat strafing attacks on a Cuban seaside hotel "where Soviet military technicians were known to congregate, killing a score of Russians and Cubans"; attacks on British and Cuban cargo ships; the contamination of sugar shipments; and other atrocities and sabotage, mostly carried out by Cuban exile organizations permitted to operate freely in Florida. Shortly after came "the most dangerous moment in human history," not exactly out of the blue.

Kennedy officially renewed the terrorist operations after the crisis ebbed. Ten days before his assassination he approved a CIA plan for "destruction operations" by U.S. proxy forces "against a large oil refinery and storage facilities, a large electric plant, sugar refineries, railroad bridges, harbor facilities, and underwater demolition of docks and ships." A plot to assassinate Castro was apparently initiated on the day of the Kennedy assassination. The terrorist campaign was called off in 1965, but reports Garthoff, "one of Nixon's first acts in office in 1969 was to direct the CIA to intensify covert operations against Cuba."

We can, at last, hear the voices of the victims in Canadian historian Keith Bolender's *Voices From the Other Side*, the first oral history of the terror campaign -- one of many books unlikely to receive more than casual notice, if that, in the West because the contents are too revealing.

In the current issue of *Political Science Quarterly*, the professional journal of the association of American political scientists, Montague Kern observes that the Cuban missile crisis is one of those "full-bore crises... in which an ideological enemy (the Soviet Union) is universally perceived to have gone on the attack, leading to a rally-'round-the-flag effect that greatly expands support for a president, increasing his policy options."

Kern is right that it is "universally perceived" that way, apart from those who have escaped sufficiently from the ideological shackles to pay some attention to the facts. Kern is, in fact, one of them. Another is Sheldon Stern, who recognizes what has long been known to such deviants. As he writes, we now know that "Khrushchev's original explanation for shipping missiles to Cuba had been fundamentally true: the Soviet leader had never intended these weapons as a threat to the security of the United States, but rather considered their deployment a defensive move to protect his Cuban allies from American attacks and as a desperate effort to give the U.S.S.R. the appearance of equality in the nuclear balance of power." Dobbs, too, recognizes that "Castro and his Soviet patrons had real reasons to fear American attempts at regime change, including, as a last resort, a U.S. invasion of Cuba... [Khrushchev] was also sincere in his desire to defend the Cuban revolution from the mighty neighbor to the north."

"Terrors of the Earth"

The American attacks are often dismissed in U.S. commentary as silly pranks, CIA shenanigans that got out of hand. That is far from the truth. The best and the brightest had reacted to the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion with near hysteria, including the president, who solemnly informed the country: "The complacent, the self-indulgent, the soft societies are about to be swept away with the debris of history. Only the strong... can possibly survive." And they could only survive, he evidently believed, by massive terror -- though that addendum was kept secret, and is still not known to loyalists who perceive the ideological enemy as having "gone on the attack" (the near universal perception, as Kern observes). After the Bay of Pigs defeat, historian Piero Gleijeses writes, JFK launched a crushing embargo to punish the Cubans for defeating a

U.S.-run invasion, and "asked his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, to lead the top-level interagency group that oversaw Operation Mongoose, a program of paramilitary operations, economic warfare, and sabotage he launched in late 1961 to visit the 'terrors of the earth' on Fidel Castro and, more prosaically, to topple him."

The phrase "terrors of the earth" is Arthur Schlesinger's, in his quasi-official biography of Robert Kennedy, who was assigned responsibility for conducting the terrorist war, and informed the CIA that the Cuban problem carries "[t]he top priority in the United States Government -- all else is secondary -- no time, no effort, or manpower is to be spared" in the effort to overthrow the Castro regime. The Mongoose operations were run by Edward Lansdale, who had ample experience in "counterinsurgency" -- a standard term for terrorism that we direct. He provided a timetable leading to "open revolt and overthrow of the Communist regime" in October 1962. The "final definition" of the program recognized that "final success will require decisive U.S. military intervention," after terrorism and subversion had laid the basis. The implication is that U.S. military intervention would take place in October 1962 -- when the missile crisis erupted. The events just reviewed help explain why Cuba and Russia had good reason to take such threats seriously.

Years later, Robert McNamara recognized that Cuba was justified in fearing an attack. "If I were in Cuban or Soviet shoes, I would have thought so, too," he observed at a major conference on the missile crisis on the 40th anniversary.

As for Russia's "desperate effort to give the U.S.S.R. the appearance of equality," to which Stern refers, recall that Kennedy's very narrow victory in the 1960 election relied heavily on a fabricated "missile gap" concocted to terrify the country and to condemn the Eisenhower administration as soft on national security. There was indeed a "missile gap," but strongly in favor of the U.S.

The first "public, unequivocal administration statement" on the true facts, according to strategic analyst Desmond Ball in his authoritative study of the Kennedy missile program, was in October 1961, when Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric informed the Business Council that "the U.S. would have a larger nuclear delivery system left after a surprise attack than the nuclear force which the Soviet Union could employ in its first strike." The Russians of course were well aware of their relative weakness and vulnerability. They were also aware of Kennedy's reaction when Khrushchev offered to sharply reduce offensive military capacity and proceeded to do so unilaterally. The president failed to respond, undertaking instead a huge armaments program.

Owning the World, Then and Now

The two most crucial questions about the missile crisis are: How did it begin, and how did it end? It began with Kennedy's terrorist attack against Cuba, with a threat of invasion in October 1962. It ended with the president's rejection of Russian offers that would seem fair to a rational person, but were unthinkable because they would have undermined the fundamental principle that the U.S. has the unilateral right to deploy nuclear missiles anywhere, aimed at China or Russia or anyone else, and right on their borders; and the accompanying principle that Cuba had no right to have missiles for defense against what appeared to be an imminent U.S. invasion. To establish these principles firmly it was entirely proper to face a high risk of war of unimaginable destruction, and to reject simple and admittedly fair ways to end the threat.

Garthoff observes that "in the United States, there was almost universal approbation for President Kennedy's handling of the crisis." Dobbs writes, "The relentlessly upbeat tone was established by the court historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., who wrote that Kennedy had 'dazzled the world' through a 'combination of toughness and restraint, of will, nerve and wisdom, so brilliantly controlled, so matchlessly calibrated.'" Rather more soberly, Stern partially agrees, noting that Kennedy repeatedly rejected the militant advice of his advisers and associates who called for military force and the dismissal of peaceful options. The events of October 1962 are widely hailed as Kennedy's finest hour. Graham Allison joins many others in presenting them as

"a guide for how to defuse conflicts, manage great-power relationships, and make sound decisions about foreign policy in general."

In a very narrow sense, that judgment seems reasonable. The ExComm tapes reveal that the president stood apart from others, sometimes almost all others, in rejecting premature violence. There is, however, a further question: How should JFK's relative moderation in the management of the crisis be evaluated against the background of the broader considerations just reviewed? But that question does not arise in a disciplined intellectual and moral culture, which accepts without question the basic principle that the U.S. effectively owns the world by right, and is by definition a force for good despite occasional errors and misunderstandings, one in which it is plainly entirely proper for the U.S. to deploy massive offensive force all over the world while it is an outrage for others (allies and clients apart) to make even the slightest gesture in that direction or even to think of deterring the threatened use of violence by the benign global hegemon.

That doctrine is the primary official charge against Iran today: it might pose a deterrent to U.S. and Israeli force. It was a consideration during the missile crisis as well. In internal discussion, the Kennedy brothers expressed their fears that Cuban missiles might deter a U.S. invasion of Venezuela, then under consideration. So "the Bay of Pigs was really right," JFK concluded.

These principles still contribute to the constant risk of nuclear war. There has been no shortage of severe dangers since the missile crisis. Ten years later, during the 1973 Israel-Arab war, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger called a high-level nuclear alert (DEFCON 3) to warn the Russians to keep their hands off while he was secretly authorizing Israel to violate the cease-fire imposed by the U.S. and Russia. When Reagan came into office a few years later, the U.S. launched operations probing Russian defenses and simulating air and naval attacks, while placing Pershing missiles in Germany with a five-minute flight time to Russian targets, providing what the CIA called a "super-sudden first strike" capability. Naturally this caused great alarm in Russia, which unlike the U.S. has repeatedly been invaded and virtually destroyed. That led to a major war scare in 1983. There have been hundreds of cases when human intervention aborted a first strike minutes before launch, after automated systems gave false alarms. We don't have Russian records, but there's no doubt that their systems are far more accident-prone.

Meanwhile, India and Pakistan have come close to nuclear war several times, and the sources of the conflict remain. Both have refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, along with Israel, and have received U.S. support for development of their nuclear weapons programs -- until today in the case of India, now a U.S. ally. War threats in the Middle East, which might become reality very soon, once again escalate the dangers.

In 1962, war was avoided by Khrushchev's willingness to accept Kennedy's hegemonic demands. But we can hardly count on such sanity forever. It's a near miracle that nuclear war has so far been avoided. There is more reason than ever to attend to the warning of Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, almost 60 years ago, that we must face a choice that is "stark and dreadful and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?"

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