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Stories Remembered and Forgotten

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Previous and recent writings on the Cuban missile crisis call into question the sorts of history that can and should be available for international security policy and analysis. The capacity of history is seriously limited with respect to evaluations of crisis outcomes, prescriptive and cautionary maxims, narrative completeness, and cause-and-effect inferences. Yet history as remembered is a valuable and inherent part of national security thinking. Ways are suggested to treat history to gain more from it. These principles apply at least as much to modern decision technology uses of history as to more traditional approaches.

We all agreed in the end that if the Russians were ready to go to nuclear war over Cuba, they were ready to go to nuclear war, and that was that. So we might as well have the showdown then as six months later.

—Robert F. Kennedy, 1962

The President drew the line precisely where he thought the Soviets were not and would not be; that is to say, if we had known that the Soviets were putting 40 missiles in Cuba, we might under this hypothesis have drawn the line at 100, and said with great fanfare that we would absolutely not tolerate the presence of more missiles in Cuba . . . one reason the line was drawn at zero was because we simply thought the Soviets weren't going to deploy any there anyway.

—Theodore Sorenson, 1987

The Cuban missile crisis is much with us in its twenty-fifth anniversary period. The so-called new history offers public revelations of what was known at the time by some policy participants and confidants, and

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the benefits of their hindsight based on subsequent information. This article uses the recent outpouring of new history to draw cautionary lessons of several kinds. These lessons have importance for three reasons.

First, the recalled history of that crisis has had remarkably potent effects in shaping subsequent U.S. foreign policy decision making, education, and training. It has been put forward even by its critics as a crucial source of analogies, precedents, and decision maxims (Lebow, 1981, 1983, 1987). And it has been held up as an exemplary illustration of the right way to decide and act in war-prone confrontations (Janis, 1972; Neustadt and May, 1986: 1-16). What we should learn from it is a matter of much more than academic interest. The "lessons" go to the heart of national security decision making in the nuclear era—to the basics of deterrence, crisis management, and crisis avoidance.

Second, the long-standing debates and controversies about the uses of history in the analysis of international security affairs have never been fully resolved (see, for example, May, 1973; Kahler, 1979; Hoffman, 1979; Ravenal, 1978; Podhoretz, 1982; Zimmerman and Axelrod, 1981). Nevertheless, recent writing has strongly argued for more use of history in security analysis (e.g., Gaddis, 1987) and operational security decisions (Neustadt and May, 1986). The most basic issues about the relevance of history may indeed be unresolvable. Yet we are condemned to its influence, a fate recognized across the social sciences.

Political scientist Dwain Mefford (1987) contends that "interpreting situations essentially entails posing and reworking historical analogies . . . situations [are] understood against the backdrop of selected past incidents. Options are identified and decisions structured largely through the posing and juxtaposing of analogies" (p. 222). From other social sciences, Freeman, Romney, and Freeman (1987) contend that memory as embodied in a "mental structure" based on past experience pervasively influences what is recalled and indeed noticed. Conveyed history, like that of the Cuban missile crisis, is then both shaped by that structure and shaping what people attend to in new situations. Yet what we remember is inherently prone to error—"People are not passive recording devices like cameras or tape recorders" (p. 313).

The history of the history of the Cuban missile crisis can suggest guidelines for the use of history that guard against historical inaccuracy, and thus against unwarranted "mental structure." We are warned of some distortions—distortions the consequences of which could mislead policy with respect to current and future situations.

Third, the new decision technologies in their application to foreign affairs, often grouped under the umbrella of artificial intelligence (Cimbala, 1987), share a reliance on heuristics drawn from history. This common dependence on selectively remembered and stored stories holds across precedent-based decision models (e.g., Tanaka, 1984), intentional inferencing systems (e.g., Thorson, 1984), rule-based production systems (e.g., Hudson, 1987), and perceptual models (e.g., Herrmann, 1984). It underlies decision aids, be they based on documentary materials or on recall by and observation of experts.

The creators of the new decision technologies as applied to international affairs are then strong believers in the importance of history. That is, they are committed to searching for stored precedent logics and to influencing what is stored (Alker, Bennett, and Mefford, 1980). "What salient positive or negative historical episodes are remembered by the subject for imitation or avoidance, and how does past experience constrain policy perception and choice?" (Chan and Sylvan, 1984: 5-6; also see Bennett and Alker, 1977; Alker and Christensen, 1972). The predominant artificial intelligence conception of how people cope with current situations is by reference to analogous past situations, especially to those judged to be outstandingly successful or disastrous (Schrodt, 1987; Simon, 1979; Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky, 1982; Gilovich, 1981; Winston, 1979; Carbonell, 1983).

In short, the new decision technologies do not free us from the impact of the received version of the Cuban missile crisis and the dilemmas posed by using history. If anything, they have the opposite consequences. They embed history in ways not always obvious to their users and can readily reify distortions. Warranted reliance on these decision technologies demands confidence in the standards for the use of history followed by their developers. Those standards should not be fundamentally different from those for more classic historians who wish to improve the basis for current and future decisions.

The "new" history of the Cuban missile crisis provides us, then, with an opportunity to contribute to a debate about more general issues. It can call attention to lessons relevant both to those of us who are primarily "users" or "consumers" of national security history and to those of us who are would-be "producers" of tools for eventual use by policy elites and their staffs.

No attempt is made in the following pages to provide new information about the historical events and motivations of the time, or to portion out blame or praise to those who were in the crucible of the

crisis. Many of the lessons drawn are not freshly minted in any strong sense. The importance of these lessons does not rest on their originality. Instead, it follows from the extent to which they have been slighted even for what is probably the most exhaustively analyzed crisis of the post-World War II period (for useful lists of major writings, see Welch and Blight, 1987/88: 5-6; Lebow, 1983: 431; and Garthoff, 1987).

RETAINED EVALUATIONS AND MAXIMS

Stories may live on for one or more reasons. They may provide narratives that convey a point in compelling terms. They may be cited as the basis for explicit maxims or decision rules justified by their association with widely perceived successes and failures. Changes in narratives can change the point conveyed or the maxims that are buttressed. That is, the user of the story or its lessons is led to different assessments. Sometimes the revised assessments change evaluation of the consequences of the historical case—the aspects of success and failure and their magnitudes. Sometimes they modify assessments of causality. An altered narrative may do this by calling attention to hitherto ignored actions or by revising previously accepted judgments about the impact of already-known actions. Sometimes altered assessments raise doubts about feasibility. That is, the revised narrative does not change judgments about what it is good to do, but rather about the extent to which those judgments are practical given constraints of institutional tendencies and available information. This last possibility implies acceptance of the wisdom of the maxims while drawing lessons far different in their implications.

Particular changes in the narrative of the Cuban missile crisis and their implications are addressed in a subsequent section. We turn first to evaluations and maxims present in the literature for a considerable time. This material has several sorts of relevance for us. First, it has implications for the treatment of history in conventional and new decision technology endeavors. It implies what we should have been doing even before the new history. Second, it has implications for the “mental structure” constructs that the case already warranted with respect to cardinal national security issues.

The evaluation of consequences hinges of course on values and envisioned alternative outcomes. Differences on these fundamentals have long characterized evaluations of our case. One school has claimed

success in terms of both crisis management and coercive diplomacy. This evaluation rests primarily on negative outcomes avoided, in particular, nuclear war and the loss of U.S. deterrent credibility. A second school recognizes success on the score of crisis management, but emphasizes disappointment on that of coercive diplomacy. That is, it gives more weight to unrealized and allegedly available benefits. A third school treats the crisis as a profound failure of crisis avoidance and thus of deterrence. This evaluation gives primacy to the risks that were incurred. For the last school, the crisis was at best a microsuccess embedded in a far more crucial failure.

The recent history of the crisis adds little to those visions (Blight, Nye, and Welch, 1987). Those who have claimed success can still emphasize that war was avoided, U.S. alliance credibility preserved, the unacceptability of direct deception of U.S. leaders by Soviet leaders affirmed, the survivability of the SAC bomber force preserved for a few more years, Republican domestic critics substantially disarmed, and somewhat of a *détente* climate subsequently established. Those who claimed that much more could have been accomplished to deal with the "Cuban problem" decisively because of Soviet caution and U.S. military preponderance (Taylor, 1982), or through subsequent creative diplomacy (Garthoff, 1987), can continue to do so. Those who have emphasized the failure of crisis avoidance and deterrence have no additional reasons to modify their view (Lebow, 1983).

Nor does the new history resolve another facet of evaluative debate, that of time perspective. It remains reasonable to assess the outcomes differently depending on the relative priority allotted to the immediate crisis period relative to states of affairs years later. In short-term perspective the Cuban missile crisis can reasonably be held up as a crisis-avoidance failure. Yet in long-term perspective it may have been an enormous success. The very failure associated with the crisis may have worked to induce greater awareness of the imperatives for and obstacles to crisis avoidance by the military superpowers. For example, the "brink" of Cuba '62 may have led the United States and the Soviet Union to act in ways that avoided a "brink" in the 1980s over Soviet military transfers to Nicaragua. An opposite shift in assessment would not be unreasonable for coercive diplomacy. Here a short-term success in removing a Cuban-based military threat to the U.S. homeland would be juxtaposed against a longer-term Cuban-based threat (Soviet Bear bombers, advanced MIGs, and nuclear-associated naval capabilities).

Many experts have seen the usefulness of the Cuban missile crisis story more as a source of maxims than of positive or negative appraisals

of political-military outcomes. Some of the maxims are enabling. They recommend what to do in analogous situations. They are in effect weak causal statements (if you do X, you probably will achieve a desired objective). Other maxims are cautionary. They warn about what can go wrong far more than they prescribe what will work. (If you seek a particular objective or seek to use a particular means, you may not have the desired effect.)

A predominance of enabling or of cautionary maxims at least has clear implications for what decision makers should expect—success or disappointment. A rough balance between the two sorts of maxims leaves decision makers in a quandary. History then puts them into a state of uncertainty. Decision technologies based on that history can have only inconclusive implications.

What maxims are given salience follows almost inevitably from previously arrived at evaluative judgments. Those who see success are predisposed to search for and find enabling maxims; those who see failure, to come up with cautionary ones. Only the most experienced (or jaundiced), such as Dean Acheson (1969), are likely to associate outcomes with “luck”—dumb or otherwise.

A famous contemporary set of enabling maxims is associated with Robert Kennedy (1969). In effect, he points out positive precedents associated with the Cuban missile crisis. In maxim form, these amount to the following prescriptions: maximize time for decisions and adversary responses; inhibit initial response tendencies; preserve diversity of opinion in one’s own decision process; use expertise on the adversary; ensure civilian control of the military; give the adversary a face-saving way to comply with your requirements; and safeguard against inadvertent escalation. These obviously relate to crisis management, as do some additional maxims proposed by Sorenson (1965) that he attributes to the Kennedy administration. He recommends that other crisis managers: keep decision-making secret to achieve disciplined signaling to foreigners and mute possible domestic opposition; engage in information-rich and detailed evaluation of alternative courses of action (also, Janis, 1972); escalate incrementally; emphasize the substance rather than the form of adversary concessions; and refrain from gloating over adversary concessions. A more theoretically based set of crisis-management-enabling maxims provided by Holsti, Brody, and North (1969) emphasized many of the same points and also argued that the crisis shows the merits of dealing directly with the primary adversary; selecting responses crudely proportional to recent adversary actions;

and ensuring that perceptions of the adversary's actions neither exaggerate or underestimate their actual degree of threat.

Prior literature also puts forward positive lessons in the sense of enabling maxims for successful coercive diplomacy. Schlesinger (1965) and Taylor (1982) conclude from the Cuban missile crisis that decision makers are well advised to demonstrate strength through concrete military actions; exploit secrecy to limit adversary time for deliberation and developing options; prepare visibly for worst-case conflict; exploit regional conventional-force superiority; protect alliance commitments and allied confidence; frustrate adversary attempts to reduce their strategic inferiority; and treat adversary proxies (e.g., Cuba) as being under the full control of the primary opponent (e.g., the Soviet Union).

The discussion of enabling maxims suggested by the prior literature on the crisis alerts us to another complication in bringing history to bear on subsequent policy. The enabling maxims associated with success for several desired states of affairs may clash. The tension between the enabling maxims suggested by the Cuban missile crisis for successful crisis management and for successful coercive diplomacy was recognized many years ago by Alexander George (1971). History in effect seemed to him to provide less than compatible lessons on what should be done with respect to such central matters as constraining the use made of military superiority; providing the adversary with incentives for speedy compliance; controlling the timing of negotiations to apply maximum pressure on the opponent; and formulating and conveying the acceptable grounds for terminating the crisis. In short, history restricted to enabling maxims need not provide clear guidance for subsequent action.

Even without this sort of complication, the import of enabling maxims may well be devalued by that of cautionary ones from the same case. The Cuban missile crisis has been a rich source of such warnings with respect to concerns with crisis avoidance, crisis management, coercive diplomacy, and creative diplomacy.

Allison (1971) has provided a worrisome set of cautionary maxims by stepping out of the unitary-actor framework. Intelligence provided to central decision makers will often be late or incomplete. Public declaratory warnings may paint their sources into a domestic political corner more than they deter a foreign opponent. Specialized implementing organizations may misunderstand or exaggerate options and their requirements. The courses of action that emerge for consideration at high policy levels may largely be a product of coincidence rather than of systematic policy generation. Options may be chosen less because of

their merits than because of the flaws of available alternatives (“do something”) or imperfect information. The adversary may take note of unauthorized actions by subordinates without knowing that they are unauthorized.

Others have called attention to additional cautionary maxims that have at least equally grave implications. Lebow (1983) argues that the crisis shows the inadequacy of enabling crisis avoidance and deterrence maxims. In other words, it shows that an opponent’s leadership may take enormous risks without believing in the likelihood of commensurate gains, or on the basis of wishful thinking about those gains. Taylor (1982) contends that some sorts of immediate crisis management and coercive diplomacy successes are likely to prove illusory and inhibiting. That is, an adversary may engage in postcrisis noncompliance and place the “winner” in an unappealing policy dilemma. The choices may well come down to accepting erosion of the terms of settlement or to admitting that the proclaimed success was seriously overstated. George (1971) points out that chosen courses of actions may trigger unforeseen and possibly counterproductive associated actions, for example, the role of U.S. submarines as distinct from the blockade *per se*. There may even be postcrisis opportunistic actions within the “successful” policy system that warn future decision makers against too willing behavior in line with enabling maxims. For example, the successful protagonists (the Kennedy circle) may have used their success to settle old political scores against domestic rivals (Stevenson) who acted in terms of the diversity-of-opinion ground rule.

The previous discussion of evaluations and maxims drawn from long-available writings on the Cuban missile crisis suggests several standards for those who would relate history to current and future policy choice. The standards apply to both traditional and decision technology uses, although the means of putting them into practice may differ.

First, evaluations should be stored and presented as arguments rather than as “facts.” This properly reflects inherent uncertainty about causality, and differences of opinion about the relative importance of various aspects of outcomes. Any particular evaluation follows from more or less plausible sets of “if-then” assertions and policy priorities. Few stories merit being remembered solely as failures or successes.

Second, stories should be carried forward in ways that call attention to their relevance for multiple policy strategies and concerns. The Cuban missile crisis has implications for all and not just one of the

broad, continuing foreign policy concerns of crisis management, crisis avoidance, coercive diplomacy, and postcrisis exploitation.

Third, evaluations and maxims pertinent to a crisis story should not be cut off at the end of the intense crisis. They should be made and remembered for subsequent points in time. Results and lessons are not so easily limited in time. As we have seen, the Cuban missile crisis illustrates how assessments can differ sharply depending on judgments about the pertinent period. The relevant enabling and cautionary maxims can also be sharply affected by inappropriately truncating the relevant period. One reason for turning to history is to compensate for defects in a current policy process. A familiar defect is postcrisis inattention. That is, attention shifts to other matters, and there is inadequate continuing concentration on maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs that may follow the crisis events.

Fourth, enabling and cautionary maxims should be treated evenhandedly. Efforts should be made to facilitate attention to both sorts of lessons. This becomes particularly important when the crisis story becomes a vehicle for political competition, policy justification, and interpreting subsequent situations. One-sided interpretation should be made as difficult as possible.

Fifth, enabling maxims conducive to one major objective and counterproductive for another need to be associated with both sorts of implications. Entries on both accounts need to be recognized. That may of course lead to controversy and doubt about following such maxims. Rational action comes to hinge on hard choices about priorities. That is, the maxim only enables decision makers if they prioritize in a particular way. History used in a priority-forcing way can make the act of choice harder rather than easier.

Finally, stories popularly held to be dramatic, major successes or failures have particular potency in subsequent policy situations. It is especially important in those cases to make awareness of maxims about decision process imperfections as unavoidable as possible. In foreign affairs, it is relatively easy to slip into unitary-actor thinking. That can distort the uses of history in several ways. Both involve unwarranted inferences about cause and effect. For remembered successes (like the Cuban missile crisis), there often is a tendency to slight flaws in the decision process. For remembered failures, there often is a tendency to overlook corrective steps that may have been taken in the interim. Both lead to misapplications of history, but with differing conclusions. The success-tinted memory may lead to underestimating risks of failure; the failure-tinted memory, to overestimating those risks.

NARRATIVE ADDITIONS AND MAXIM MODIFICATIONS

The previous section drew on long available history of the crisis to suggest some standards for history and historically based decision aids. These standards dealt with the retention, retrieval, and presentation of evaluations and maxims. This section notes some recent contributions to the central description of the crisis and their implications for maxims (Blight and Welch, 1989). It then suggests some additional considerations for the proper compilation and presentation of history.

With respect to actors in the crisis, recent evidence suggests that the Cubans may have played a far more significant role than U.S. officials have credited them with before or since. The key to the issue involves Cuban control of surface-to-air missiles, possibly with or possibly without Soviet approval (Hersh, 1987; Ellsberg, 1987). The use of those SAMs against U.S. overflights as a matter of Cuban decision was not considered by the United States; it may have been by the Soviets. Accounts of the crisis are obviously flawed if they unwarrantedly discount the possibility of independent action by a relevant government.

With respect to the issues at stake in the crisis, recent writing makes important points about both Soviet and American perspectives at the time. Raymond Garthoff (1984, 1987) makes a strong case that the Soviets had good reason to construe the context of the crisis in two ways. One centered on U.S. actions and preparations to topple the Castro regime. In November 1961, President Kennedy created Operation Mongoose to overthrow Castro. In March 1962, General Taylor, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that Mongoose would have to culminate in a "decisive U.S. military intervention." It was scheduled for October 1962 (Keller, 1989a). The pace of U.S. covert operations against the Cuban homeland and commerce with it had accelerated in the weeks before the crisis. There was a spate of public congressional and executive branch actions compatible with such an intention. At the classified level, Secretary of Defense McNamara on October 6 ordered plans for invasion set in motion. Shortly before, Robert Kennedy urged CIA Director McCone to intensify Mongoose operations (Salinger, 1989). The other, and probably more fundamental, reason was the perception that the Kennedy administration was moving toward using its strategic superiority to exert pressure on the Soviets on a variety of fronts. Garthoff, like Lebow, rejects the once-popular view that the Soviets held Kennedy to lack resolve.

As for the United States, the Sorenson statement quoted at the beginning of this article discounts the motive of a precrisis, deeply personal commitment by President Kennedy to prevent any particular further Soviet deployment in Cuba. The quote does suggest that the president felt it essential to demonstrate publicly that he could successfully draw a line that the Soviets would not cross. That interpretation is compatible with an expectation of forthcoming Soviet pressure against Berlin.

How each superpower interpreted the motives of the other remains far clearer for the United States than for the Soviets. The American leadership clearly construed Soviet motives as centered on redressing their strategic inferiority. Yet there was little consensus as to whether the strategic motives were more offensive or more defensive in nature. The evolution of the crisis was marked by U.S. behaviors, some previously known and others recently revealed, that make sense for each interpretation. The possible Soviet motive of deterring an invasion of Cuba received little attention or credence. Yet the resolution of the crisis acceptable to the United States clearly appealed to that motive. Domestic motives on the part of Khrushchev were not attended to. As for the Soviets, we still do not know to what extent they carried throughout the crisis their apparent precrisis recognition of Kennedy's motivations vis-à-vis Republican critics and the coming midterm congressional elections.

The recent history adds to already-known examples substantial evidence that U.S. behavior was far from the coordinated, coherent, well-informed, and collegial patterns the enabling maxims for crisis management suggest. There were significant actions probably known to the Soviet leadership, but not known to or authorized by that of the United States. In particular, SAC commander Powers sent in the clear orders for a DEFCON 2 alert level, and Jupiter missiles in Turkey were transferred to Turkish command. Earlier writing tells of other actions that could have been construed by the Soviets as "signals" that were known to the U.S. leadership but not authorized by them, such as statements by executive branch spokespersons and a Walter Lippman column. Other actions that were in some sense authorized and known were not related to the crisis deliberations, especially the covert operations against Cuba.

Intelligence provided to U.S. decision makers was substantially imperfect, whatever the intelligence community may have known. Soviet troop strength in Cuba was grossly underestimated; Soviet

ICBMs deployed at home were grossly overestimated (Lewis, 1989). The Soviet missile deployment was not predicted, and important behaviors during the crisis were not forwarded. The U.S. interpretation that the senior Soviet leadership had authorized the SAM fire against U.S. overflights may simply have been wrong (Bernstein, 1987). There does not seem to have been much in the way of an ongoing intelligence assessment of what the Soviets would know about U.S. actions and intentions.

Initiatives of both a threatening and a conciliatory character were undertaken by senior officials without the knowledge of other participants in the crisis management group. On the one hand, Robert Kennedy made ultimatumlike and time urgent statements to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, even though the CIA never confirmed the presence of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba. Some Soviets now admit to having had 20 nuclear warheads in Cuba (Keller, 1989b). On the other hand, preparations were made by the president and Secretary of State Rusk to use United Nations Secretary General U Thant as an intermediary for a trade involving some U.S. missiles in Europe for the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Ambassador Dobrynin now claims to have understood from Robert Kennedy on October 27 that the U.S. would reciprocate Soviet missile withdrawal from Cuba by U.S. missile withdrawal from Turkey (Keller, 1989b).

The quality and completeness of Soviet intelligence remains unknown in important respects. We still do not know what U.S. response to the deployment was estimated or to what extent it was believed that the deployment could be completed in secrecy. The Soviets clearly had access to numerous public U.S. statements by members of the administration and the Republican opposition made prior to the crisis that lent themselves to inferring a U.S. posture of knowledge combined with its denial. Unlike the United States, the Soviets would surely have known at least after the fact if SAM uses were undertaken unilaterally by the Cubans or by lower levels of the Soviet military (Bernstein, 1987).

The available evidence strongly suggests that neither superpower had perfect command and control. We remain ignorant, however, of the degree of symmetry in the command and control attributed to the other side.

The recent history provides the grounds for, but usually stops short of, a more forcefully domestic interpretation of U.S. behavior. Anderson (1987a) has addressed ways in which the heralded delays in moving to action by the United States are indicative less of a search for cognitive

certainty and more of one for providing the “trappings” conducive to consensus, coalition building, and the appearance of reasoned reflection. An emphasis on domestic image rather than on international outcome (other than war avoidance) surely is compatible with adherence to the miscalculated line drawn by JFK and the special secrecy surrounding the missile trade option.

At the risk of oversimplification, the recent history modifies the narrative record in truly ironic ways. For those who have seen success in terms of the prudent pursuit of minimum essential objectives, the record suggests far less restraint in terms of threats posed by the United States and public adherence to far more than what the president held to be minimum essential objectives. For those who have seen undue restraint in coercive diplomacy, the revised record suggests good reasons for the Soviets to have seen much more assertive coercive diplomacy than has been widely recognized. For those who have held U.S. management up as a model of presidential leadership and high-level control, the revised record adds to already-known evidence of autonomous actions by ostensibly subordinate officials and organizations. That is, the gap between presidential desires and U.S. actions was substantial. These disparities may or may not have been known to the Soviets. That would have depended on their intelligence capabilities and interpretations, which remain obscure. Accordingly, it is highly speculative to attribute particular causal impacts to either specific threatening or prudential moves by the United States.

The recent additions to the narrative still do not render it complete. Yet they do augment the lessons about national security and the treatment of history introduced previously.

The additional lessons for national security policy emphasized by the recent history focus on the priority for crisis avoidance, improvements in and awareness of the imperfections of intelligence and command and control, and facing up to the possibility that smaller allies and clients can act autonomously (Blight et al., 1987; Garthoff, 1987; Hersh, 1987; Ellsberg, 1987). These surely are appropriate lessons and ones with implications for the design of decision process improvements. The implications pertain both to narratives and to maxims.

Narratives to illuminate crisis avoidance should encompass the behaviors and judgments that induced the crisis and unsuccessful attempts or missed opportunities to abort it. That would extend the temporal coverage of a narrative based on the time between setting crisis-triggering actions in motion and their impact. Preventing those

actions would take us back still further to their causes. In the Cuban missile crisis case, it would take us back at least some months before October 1962, and possibly as far back as the first months of the Kennedy administration. It would also lead us to address the reasons why the Soviets did not back away from the deployment adventure in response to JFK's September warning speeches.

Of at least equal importance, the narrative would address internal politics more substantially than the recent history has. If the Republicans had not chosen to make Soviet deployments in Cuba an issue would they have generated a crisis? What would it have taken to avoid the domestic pressures for treating the matter as important? Situation assessments should then very much include domestic politics, a subject national security planners are tempted to avoid (e.g., Davis, 1987). We need narratives with far broader topical as well as temporal coverage. Time needs to be extended before and after the dramatic incidents, and internal as well as foreign policy factors must get recognition.

At a minimum, the narrative and the associated maxims should illuminate why the crisis was not avoided. One suspects that would lead the data story into core beliefs about national security and strategies for domestic political competition in the United States and the Soviet Union, what have been referred to elsewhere as "deep mytho-historical context" and "commonly understood ways in which the world works" (Lenat and Clarkson, 1987: 166-167).

Matters of intelligence and command and control cannot be encompassed by a narrative that focuses on either a unitary national actor or a small circle of the most senior officials. They can of course be addressed rather simplistically, as in the maxim to make sure civilians keep the military on a short leash. Such an approach, as illustrated by that maxim, has several problems. First, it may simply rest on a false causal judgment—that the military as a class is more prone to escalatory acts than civilians. In the missile crisis case that was not always true. For example, Senator Fulbright advocated extreme action and SACEUR Norstad blocked proposed extreme action (Holsti et al., 1969). Second, it cannot adequately explain details of why particular behaviors do and do not occur. Third, it may unwarrantedly imply that intelligence and command and control imperfections are avoidable. After all, the intelligence problems in the crisis involved the prime focus of U.S. intelligence attention—Soviet nuclear weapons capabilities and intentions—and a hostile third country (Cuba) particularly susceptible to monitoring. The command and control problems took place even with an assertive

secretary of defense and substantially involved the military command that had been a principal focus of civilian command and control—SAC. Unfortunately, an informative narrative would have to contain an extraordinary wealth of the kinds of detail governments often hide. It will be hard to improve on Allison's cautionary maxims, and tempting to act as if the problems to which they refer have been fixed.

The new history then counsels the most serious caution about the completeness of narratives, and as a corollary about cause and effect judgments. It is hard to be confident about cause and effect, the why of history, when one is only imperfectly informed about the what of history. The implications for the enabling and cautionary maxims that have been put forward for the Cuban missile crisis are dissimilar. The cautionary dictates are reinforced. The enabling prescriptions seem more statements of "ideal" principles and less ones of actual behavior. That does not deprive them of value, but it changes the way in which they can be of value. What happened well illustrates how imperfect policy can be, even with very good intentions. History needs to inform subsequent decision makers of gaps between principles and practices, not just about principles.

For crisis management, an implication is that crisis containment and termination may be far more robust processes than many have thought, at least for confrontation between the nuclear superpowers. Both resulted in a context far different from that of fine-tuned signalling, comprehensive and clear intelligence, coherent ensembles of actions, and consciously integrated strategy.

The enabling maxims for coercive diplomacy also are put in a different light by the new history of the crisis. The surmise that the Soviets would not find Cuba worth war was correct. Yet there were major weaknesses in the discipline and self-awareness of U.S. signaling of resolve, and capacity to infer or even recognize Soviet acts of commission and omission. It now appears that our coercive diplomacy was considerably harsher than older accounts suggested, or even than national policymakers knew at the time. One moral of the story is to caution decision makers against assuming that they are fully informed about the behaviors of their own government that may convey threat and resolve to an antagonist. Another is that special historical efforts may be needed to avoid underestimating the strength of the signals needed to induce an antagonist to infer that a backdown is necessary to avoid war. The narrative's subject matter should include covert operations, communications security and transparency, and a broad range of simultaneous political-military activities by the protagonist government.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES: CAUTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The continuing interest in the Cuban missile crisis is indicative of a widespread desire to benefit from history. "Analogy extension" (Tama-shiro, 1984: 212) is all too understandable as it helps to bolster confidence in the feasibility of policy success in a dangerous world. Such appetites for helpful history are likely to persist. We need to recognize their persistence, the problems that poses, and the implications for those who would like to meet those appetites as responsibly as possible.

We know that policy groups will search for helpful analogies in the heat of a crisis. What they seek and find will be shaped by an "accepted history" shaped in turn by the residues of postmortems and interpretations of what were previously viewed as striking successes and failures. That is, long before a new situation crosses policymakers' desks, relevant institutions have committed to lessons of history. These commitments take forms as diverse as doctrine or conventional wisdom, policy procedures and processes, policy structures, personnel incentives, and policy and budgetary positions (Lovell, 1984). Analogies and precedents thus operate not in raw form but in terms of retained residues. Those residues may be more or less faithful to what really characterized the historical occurrence and its consequences. Current situations are in a sense forced into the mold of one or another interpretation of the past, whether or not the shoe fits, and whether or not the shoe was an illusion in the first place. As a practical matter, it seems cognitively sound, emotionally reassuring, bureaucratically defensible, and politically responsible to conform to the absorbed precedents and analogies and not to reopen them. Cultural rules have evolved and acquired the status of objective knowledge (Anderson, 1984; Majeski, 1987; Majeski and Sylvan, 1984). Cardinal foreign policy crises are difficult enough without adding such additional burdens.

Warranted evaluations and maxims and warranted doubts and uncertainties will not be applied to the present except as they are evoked by the retained memories of the precedent or analogy. Accordingly, the issues of what should be stored and thus be at least available for retrieval are of great substantive importance. The objective after all is not just to find analogies and precedents that will predict subsequent decision unit behavior. Criteria limited to matching real-world outcomes and modeling the process that produced them are not sufficient (Anderson, 1987b). The ultimate point is to facilitate a use of history that will provide the

wisdom to arrive at best available outcomes. Pyrrhic predictions should be no more rewarding than pyrrhic victories.

When the subject matter of interest is that of crises between nuclear superpowers, the motives for analysts and decision technologists obviously go far beyond predicting crisis behavior or even providing useful analogies for crisis management. They should also include planning for crisis avoidance. These broader objectives are of particular importance when the intent is to provide tools for use by real-world policymakers in planning for and performing their duties in situations of the gravest national security significance. For example, the details of stories are much more than academic niceties if the intended research product is a set of computer-based routines for improved national command decision making (Davis, Bankes, and Kahan, 1986).

Our discussion of the history of the Cuban missile crisis suggests some crucial elements of the precedents and analogies conducive to a wise use of history. Incompleteness or downright error in capturing these elements may well degrade rather than enhance subsequent policy. Narratives should include the following:

- (a) all those actors with the latitude to act in more than one way that *prima facie* matters for the outcome directly and indirectly (Pool and Kessler, 1969)
- (b) the context of the story as construed by each of those actors and the construction attributed to each other, recognizing that the public face of construed and imputed context may well differ among actors and from those they actually held (Tama-shiro, 1984)
- (c) the major behaviors taken by each actor, those known to its leadership and to that of the others, those authorized by an actor's leadership and perceived by other actors to have been authorized—note that the story may begin, be interrupted, and conclude at different times for different actors
- (d) the motivations and intentions of each actor and those attributed to each other in terms of threats to be blunted and opportunities to be realized—recognizing the possible simultaneous presence of multiple motives, both domestic and foreign (Thorson and Andersen, 1987)
- (e) the capabilities of each actor, those known to its leadership, and those attributed to other actors
- (f) the rules used by each actor to infer the intentions of others from their behavior, and those imputed to other actors for inferring the intentions of the protagonist (Thorson, 1984)
- (g) the views of central decision makers about the extent to which their own implementation and information bureaucracies will filter and forward information and comply with or override guidance, those other nations' central decision makers are believed to hold for the protagonist government, and the cybernetic malfunctions attributed to the policy processes of other governments (Bobrow, Chan, and Kringen, 1979)

- (h) the principal analogical stories in use by each government, their implications for the situation at hand, and the events likely to cue particular analogies
- (i) the domestic threats to central decision makers associated with crisis occurrence, management and perceived consequences, and the behaviors conducive to minimizing those threats (Anderson, 1987a, 1987b).

This checklist of descriptive material surely is not inappropriately ambitious given concerns with crisis avoidance as well as management, crisis outcomes as well as decision processes, and exploring alternative course of action to cope with current threats and opportunities. The last point implies the need to present precedents and analogies in ways that consider counterfactuals. The ultimate policy contribution is after all to improve estimates of the cause and effect of various courses of action in the present. History can help as it illuminates what might/could/would have happened with different behaviors and judgments in the past (Bennett, 1984; Thorson and Sylvan, 1982). Otherwise, the story at most is about what did happen and can only have weak implications for what will make certain things happen, or not happen, in a contemporary situation. Yet our previous discussion shows that there are numerous reasons for concern about the feasibility of completing even the descriptive narrative for precedents and analogies.

Some national governments are closed as a matter of policy and practice. Most governments are as interested in shaping foreign perceptions conducive to subsequent strategic interaction as they are in providing informative accounts of their own past behavior. These desires apply with special force to risk-taking propensity, intelligence capability, and military command and control. Almost all regimes, bureaus, and individual participants have stakes in the subsequent domestic perceptions of their behavior, and are bound by some norms of confidentiality and secrecy regulations. Many leaders, and their followers, are at least tempted to use behavior in an international crisis to bolster their domestic positions against critics and competitors. There are then strong motives to tailor history to secure preferred distributions of praise and blame. Policy elites do have policy convictions, convictions they wish to have aided and abetted by the "repertory of historical examples that are repeatedly invoked" (Mefford, 1987: 226). They know that by shaping the stories that are remembered and forgotten they can affect the odds for some versus other subsequent lines of policy and institutional practice. There are both parochial and diplomatic motives to tailor stories.

We are all aware of the temptations in the event of visible failures. The Cuban missile crisis shows that the temptations can be at least as

great for what at the time are apparent successes, especially ones that involved incurring very substantial risks. There are obvious motives to portray the risks as necessary and the successes as being of a magnitude commensurate with the risks. Apparent success makes the precedent even more attractive as a vehicle for what are thought to be nationally valuable policy principles. To ignore such a vehicle is to ignore the opportunity to exercise beneficial influence on subsequent policy. Revealing history is then not simply, or perhaps even primarily, a politically neutral act. Steps that affect the remembering and forgetting of particular international crisis stories wittingly or unwittingly enter into competitive manipulations to affect subsequent policy and politics.

The temptations to tailor history that affect crisis participants and foreign policy experts have their counterparts for those who would better understand decision processes and provide tools for their improvement. It is understandably attractive to work on crises, events with great stakes and of intrinsic interest. Policy elites and the interested public surely have an appetite for contributions to reduce uncertainty about how protagonists can succeed in such dramatic security situations. It is tempting to accept revealed history as substantially accurate and complete. Some kinds of analysis and prescription can proceed that would otherwise have to be set aside for an indefinite future. Yet decision technologists who compile "data-stories" (Bennett, 1984) and embed them in systems for precedential and analogical inferencing are not free agents when they select, omit, code, and cross-reference stories and aspects of stories. They are significant captives of those who provide the materials they use, and the more cardinal the crisis, the greater the reasons to expect political and policy "spin" on that material. The spin may be a matter of omission rather than commission, advertent or inadvertent. Nevertheless, there are substantial chances of creating unwarranted conventional wisdom and causal inferences, including undue optimism about policy processes.

What is the general import for those of us who consume history to produce contributions to foreign policy decision processes? Crises have had special appeal as a focus for work to harness history to the new decision technologies. Their policy interest appeals have already been mentioned. They also have had special technical appeal based on the view that they were relatively manageable research topics. This judgment about tractability has rested on two assumptions. The first was that the work involved could readily be limited to a rather short period (days or weeks rather than years or decades) and to a limited number of

participants. That is, the crisis was readily separable from ongoing domestic and foreign policy dynamics and complex sets of institutions. The second assumption was that adequate information was available about the crisis, an assumption that assumed a certain forthcomingness by the executive participants in it. We can know enough about what really happened because the individuals involved have told us. The combination of decomposability and information availability enables history complete enough to generate strong and warranted precedents and soundly based analogies. Eventually we can arrive at confirmed instrumental maxims well connected to precedents associated with policy success and failure. In the most optimistic form, history can yield tested recipes for crisis conduct.

The new and the old histories of the Cuban missile crisis suggest that these views are unduly optimistic. Instead, we should entertain grave uncertainties and inconsistencies about evaluation, narrative completeness and accuracy, maxim compatibility, cause and effect inferences, and research tractability. We have suggested a number of implications for analytic tasks given those problems and a continuing desire to focus on crises. The difficulty of acting on these suggestions is substantial and at least warrants a great deal of humility about policy usefulness. There are obvious reasons to question whether those tasks are feasible and promise more than the most uncertainty-creating lessons. Accordingly, one may well conclude that the attractions of the crisis focus have been overrated.

There is a stronger *prima facie* case for more broadly conceived uses of history intended to clarify general policy objectives, broad strategies, satisficing thresholds, domestic political evaluation criteria, and classes of events that invoke and intensify particular broad strategies. Such a focus will not explain, predict, or prescribe quite specific actions. It has, however, the merits of being less dependent on elusive details, more relevant to the extended sweep of international relations, and even potentially of statistically testing outcomes against strategies.

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