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## Crises

#### Contention 1 is crises—

#### Modern policy debate has become a sandbox for scenarios of the nuclear apocalypse – whether it’s failure to pass immigration reform, a loss of hegemony, or an Israeli first strike on Iran, nearly every debate devolves into competing depictions of a devastating nuclear crisis which would end the world.

#### And yet, for all of our focus on these terrifying scenarios, very little attention is paid to the realities of nuclear war – abstract phrases like “extinction” and “try or die” are used without an articulation of how to prevent it, except voting aff or neg.

#### Instead, we propose a more realistic and pragmatic relation to nuclear war – one which begins with the closest the world has ever come to nuclear war – the Cuban Missile Crisis, where the United States and Soviet Union averted conflagration at the last moment.

Blight ‘89

James, PhD Psychology, HarvardCIGI Chair in Foreign Policy Development, Professor at BSIA, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis*

The situation on the evening of October 27 looked **very grim.** As our critical oral history has unfolded, we have discovered that in those moments the men closest to the President were intensely conscious of the nuclear danger, and that Soviet leaders felt the same way. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) was put on airborne alert and, for the first and only time, SAC went to Defense Condition (Def Con) 2, during which the B-52 bomber forces prepared for their missions and the lids were removed from the silos containing American ICBMs targeted on the Soviet Union. In fact, as we discovered not long ago, Def Con 2 was declared "in the clear" via an unscrambled signal. SAC Commander General Thomas Power did so without approval and apparently with the intent of showing the Soviets\* evident nuclear inferiority in their faces, thereby giving every impression that the Americans were in the final stages of preparing for a preemptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. We now know that, in response, **near-panic broke out at Khrushchev's dacha,** 30 kilometers outside Moscow, as he and several aides rushed an immediate and conciliatory reply by car into the city for immediate transmission over Radio Moscow. Having received what he believed to be Kennedy's final offer, and with the knowledge that he no longer controlled events in Cuba and that Castro was apparently trying to provoke a war, Khrushchev could only hope his message would reach Kennedy in time. Kennedy and Khrushchev went to bed that night having inadvertently moved the world closer to nuclear war than at any time before or since. Was the crystal ball about to shatter? Kennedy and his advisers wondered whether, as recent events seemed to suggest, Khrushchev and his colleagues would actually go to war over u few dozen missiles in Cuba. The men in the Kremlin, meanwhile, wondered whether the American military had overwhelmed the President and were about to destroy the Soviet Union in a nuclear attack. Nothing could be clearer than that neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev wanted war. Bach seems also to have believed that the other was looking for a way out. Equally clear is their pessimism on what has become known to many former associates of both as "Black Saturday," October 27, 1962, when the onrush of events toward war seemed to be surpassing their ability to manage them. Yet the solution was found the night of "Black Saturday" and the early morning hours of the following Sunday, as minds, rather than armies, met in the night. The Soviets would remove their missiles; the Americans would leave Cuba alone; the Turkish missiles would be removed in due course, although they were not to be part of the public deal.

#### Despite this inherent risk, the missile crisis has been over-determined as the example of rational, calculative decision making divorced from emotion. Expunging fear from the record has left a vastly insufficient understanding of the crisis that only a counterfactual can remedy.

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But to believe these things is, within the present climate of nuclear studies, to risk appearing to promote the virtues of irrational actors in nuclear crises, **which is nonsensical**. To put the matter plainly, fear (and the emotions generally) are regarded by nearly all exponents of "nuclear crisis management" as, to quote the estimable Horace Fletcher, "not respectable things." This is not the place for a fullblown critical history and analysis of nuclear crisis management as a discipline, but some points are clear. First, the discipline was born shortly after the missile crisis when, according to Coral Bell. Robert McNamara said in testimony to Congress: "There is no longer any such thing as strategy; only crisis management."1 By "crisis management," moreover, was meant (at least as McNamara was interpreted) the systematic attempt to rationalize the conduct of international crises. Finally, the reconstructed Cuban missile crisis became the sine qua non of crisis management. **It is typically described** by specialists in crisis management as the calmest, coolest, most measured and laudable example of exerting rational control over a complex and dangerous international situation. **Emotion is rarely mentioned**, except perhaps by pointing out that the excomm members were, after all, human and may occasionally have lost their tempers. Even the hottest debate in this held is carried on between people such as Alexander George, who believe that prospects for rationalizing (and thus resolving) nuclear crises are, if not exactly good, then at least possible, and those like Richard Ned Lebow, who believe that such prospects are poor at best.4 The point I wish to emphasize is that all parties to this controversy seek to expunge "fearthought from forethought," both in their interpretations of the missile crisis and in whatever applications they envision in some future crisis. To all of them, following what they have imagined to be McNamara's own analysis of the missile crisis and his alleged endorsement of crisis management, fear is bad, because it is maladaptive and can lead only to bad management. This of course means that in a nuclear crisis, increased fear will lead to an increased likelihood of nuclear holocaust. Because fear is so widely believed to be maladaptive by participants in the missile crisis and analysts alike, anyone arguing for the adaptive importance of fear will not have an easy time of it. The problem here, as elsewhere in the study of nuclear crises, is this: participants and analysts alike have for various reasons failed to appreciate the vast difference between a rational reconstruction, **derived by looking backward** at a selected, distorted, artificially coherent set of mental snapshots of the past, on the one hand, and, on the other, the uncertain phenomenology of living the event forward **without the slightest idea of how it will turn out**. This tilting toward rational reconstruction amounts to the widespread inability among all manner of **students** of the missile crisis, and of the discipline devoted to the study of crises, to believe that fear was thick in the psychological texture of the missile crisis and, even more important, that this fear was and remains unprecedented. It was a profound fear, and that fear was not fear of calculated attack, as one characteristically finds at the psychological root of conventional deterrence failures, but was largely fear of inadvertence—of fate, if you will. I believe that if we try to step backward into the missile crisis and look forward with the confused and fearful participants, we see inadvertent nuclear danger and fear of the shattered crystal ball. **Without this look and this feel**, the resolution of the missile crisis **cannot be explained satisfactorily**. The advocates of the rational/irrational actor psychologies who dominate the discussion cannot explain it because they don't understand the adaptive role of fear in the resolution. If we better comprehend what the missile crisis was like for the key participants, the adaptive role of fear will become more obvious, as will the justice of holding that the goal of leaders in a nuclear crisis ought not to be to expunge "fearthought from forethought," but to encourage it, and that such encouragement would be an altogether adaptive attitude to take.

#### This is more than a history lesson—absent a counterfactual examination of the missile crisis, a future nuclear situation will overwhelm decision makers and result in annihilation.

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The fearful adaptation is the sense we ought make of the crisis, to what use might this knowledge be put by those who must continue to live indefinitely under the same basic conditions that characterized the nuclear world of 1962? Now, as then, the United States and Soviet Union remain highly competitive; they own nearly all the world's nuclear weapons; and they both retain, consistent with the received wisdom of nuclear deterrence, the capacity to destroy each other as functioning societies. What does a phenomenological analysis of the role of fear in the missile crisis tell us about our nuclear future and First, should we be optimistic, even casual, about the likelihood of prevailing in future U.S.-Soviet crises? Can we, should we, rely on something like a psychological firebreak of fear to save us in the next nuclear crisis? The answer is that we should not. Two sets of reasons—one historical, the other contemporary (and both psychological)—suggest that we would be **foolish** to expect a canonical, peaceful replay of the Cuban missile crisis. **The historical reason is** time. Figure 10.1 summarizes the psychological progression toward adaptive fear during the missile crisis. It took Kennedy and his advisers nearly a week to negotiate the psychological minefield from shock to outrage, to belligerence, to circumspection, to fear, and thence to caution and the need to resolve the crisis quickly, with a compromise. Khrushchev had even less time—less than two days before the quarantine of Cuba became effective—and, as we saw in Chapter 2, his psychological evolution may have been barely rapid enough to keep pace with the events in the crisis. This leads to the second point of (contemporary) wisdom. There is **practically no likelihood** that leaders in another nuclear crisis would have that much time in which to arrive at the phase of adaptive fear. In post-Watergate and post-Vietnam Washington, an EXCOMM-like group, meeting secretly for six days and nights, would be almost impossible. In Moscow, too, glasnost, for all its positive attributes, has already opened up Soviet decision-making to outside scrutiny to an unprecedented degree. But perhaps more important, the weapons systems and procedures have changed dramatically since 1962. We now have short flight times of highly accurate missiles, fewer slow, recallable bombers, and tightly wound and highly interdependent superpower command and control systems. It is possible, therefore, that any future nuclear crisis might be constrained to only minutes**,** rather than days or weeks, before the systems did what they were made to do, which is launch a nuclear war.1 It seems quite unlikely that psychological evolution now would keep pace with escalating nuclear danger. These considerations lead directly to the conclusion reached by all participants in the Cuban missile crisis, whether hawks or doves, Soviets or Americans: never again! We must never come that close again! Nuclear crises must be prevented because they cannot be managed reliably. The question is: What do we do about such a conclusion? How do we act on it, in ways that are consistent with what we think we have learned about the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis? In addressing this question, I will refer briefly to the most concentrated and systematic effort to address the question that I am aware of. It derives from the Harvard Nuclear Study Group, subsequently (after 1983) the Project on Avoiding Nuclear War (ANW). In their first book. Living with Nuclear Weapons, this group identified and named the crystal ball effect, which is the central factor in their conclusion that we not only must continue living with nuclear weapons but we can expect to do so.1 The crystal ball effect amounts to foreknowledge of the effects of any major nuclear war. Foresight, knowledge, and understanding are, in this view, adaptive. Knowledge of the highly probable effects of a nuclear war leads to the equally (highly) probable propensity to avoid one, leading to reduced probability of a superpower crisis, hence to reduced likelihood of war between them, and therefore to reduced odds of a nuclear war. The crystal ball effect does indeed help to explain why the bitter Cold War that developed after World War II has yet to produce a single nuclear weapon fired in anger. Soon, however, the members of the ANW Project came to believe that the crystal ball effect, by itself, might be insufficient. In addition to foreknowledge of the unarguably catastrophic effects of a Major nuclear war, the ANW Project came eventually to focus its efforts on identifying incremental steps that might reduce the danger of nuclear war. They concluded in Hawks, Doves, & Owls that while deterrence is robust, rendering very low the likelihood of surprise attack, much remains to be done about reducing the risk of inadvertent nuclear war in crises.1 They called these "owlish" measures, in contrast to traditional "hawkish" emphasis on strength and "dovish" inclination toward conciliation. The overall goal was to articulate ways to reduce the probability of nuclear war along various hypothetical paths. The authors concluded by admitting that, in addition to bolstering deterrence, ways must be found to reduce reliance on deterrence over the long run.'1 This task was taken up in the research effort published as Fateful Visions, a comparative, critical study of ten "visions," or possible nuclear futures, in which reliance on nuclear deterrence was greatly reduced.5 While the ANW Project reached no firm consensus in support of any single "vision," the participants concluded that the key to reducing reliance on the threat of nuclear catastrophe has to be the improvement of the U.S.-Soviet political relationship. We must, they concluded, find ways to move to a more cooperative, trusting competition with the Soviet Union.6 This, they asserted, will provide the extra measure of confidence needed to continue living with nuclear weapons, and thus to enjoy the stability they appear to have brought to great power relationships, but without unacceptable risk of their actually being used. Thus the ANW Project has concluded that, in addition to the brute, factual force of the crystal ball effect, we need to be constantly at work bolstering deterrence for the short run, even as we improve U.S.-Soviet political relations, reducing the need for deterrence in the long run. Nothing in the foregoing analysis of the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis calls these sensible conclusions into question. We need to become and remain actively involved in augmenting the crystal ball effect, as we constantly try to reduce the probability that rational people will believe it is in their interest to initiate a nuclear war. Yet, the phenomenological reconstruction of the last hours of the Cuban missile crisis does suggest that the crystal ball effect, however augmented, may be a **necessary though insufficient** condition for avoiding nuclear crises and nuclear war. For the record shows, I believe, that the crystal ball effect operated profoundly in both the White House of John Kennedy and the Kremlin of Nikita Khrushchev, but did not prove sufficient either to transform U.S.-Soviet political relations or to prevent a deep nuclear crisis. These changes came only after the deeply disturbing, apparently close brush with nuclear catastrophe. It came only after leaders had acquired, in addition to their notional knowledge of the probable effects of a major nuclear war, a sense of its real possibility and of each one's terrible responsibility in the event of nuclear catastrophe. To the foreknowledge implied by the crystal ball effect was added fear of the shattered crystal ball. Once the knowledge was wedded to the fear, a transformation in U.S.-Soviet political relations did occur in the remarkable spring and summer of 1963. Nothing since the Cuban missile crisis has approached its level of nuclear danger. But, **fear is not enough**, for next time we may not have a chance to reach the stage in a crisis where it might perform its adaptive transformations. But neither, I think, is foreknowledge enough, because such knowledge, undriven by visceral fear of its possibility, will have a tendency to fall into the trash heap of received wisdom; its acceptance will arrive by rote and not from conviction, and its effect—the crystal ball effect—will thus **evaporate over time**. If this should happen, and if by inadvertence we should once again find ourselves on the brink of a superpower crisis, it may be attributable in large measure to our having forgotten **the fear that gripped our leaders the last time around.** Let us therefore not forget the fear, even as we work to bolster and augment deterrence. That fear of inadvertent nuclear war was terrifying, and its salutary effect was fully commensurate with the awesome responsibility for nuclear catastrophe felt by those in charge. If we believe now, as we should, that our primary foreign policy goal ought to be the transformation of U.S.-Soviet political relations, let us try to recall **vividly** why such a transformation occurred then, over a quarter-century ago. **It will not be easy to learn the lesson without that experience**, but we must try. We cannot afford not to, for we cannot afford the direct experience of another full-blown nuclear crisis between the superpowers. It has long been traditional to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to absorb The full shattering force of the crystal ball effect, to understand with one's mind and heart that such catastrophes must never happen again. It is a rare person who, in that setting, knowing that history, does not shed tears for what happened in August 1945. But to add the other **necessary ingredient,** the fear of the shattered crystal ball, **we should develop ways to revisit the Cuban missile crisis**, phenomenologically, as it appeared and felt at the time**.** It is hard historical and psychological realism that leads me to hope we will eventually find ways to move us closer to, if not tearfulness, at least **shattering fearfulness as we step backward into the forward-moving events of October 1962.** I began the phenomenological part of this volume with the analogy, in Chapter 5, of a driver who stops his car in fear of an apparition in the road, The analogy had several purposes: to introduce the concept of fear into the discussion; to show that if we try to recover psychological life, rather than annihilate it, we explain the action of interest very differently; and to suggest that the process of psychological recovery requires interpretation, **by which one tries to get even further inside the viewpoint of the experiencing person**. But however adequate (or inadequate) the analogy may be methodologically, it hardly captures the **kind or depth of fear** to be found in the participants of the Cuban missile crisis. It refers to fear for oneself, and it is momentary. In the missile crisis, the fear was associated with **responsibility for a catastrophe**, **and it was shattering**. I will therefore conclude with another analogy about a different car and driver, in a different kind of situation, that has several of the key psychological constituents of the situation faced by leaders in the White House and Kremlin in October 1962. Leamus had managed to get an air passage to Cologne and picked up a car at the airport. It was still quite early in the morning and he'd hoped to miss most of the autobahn traffic to Karlsruhe, but the heavy lorries were already on the move. He drove 70 km. in half an hour, weaving between the traffic, taking risks to beat the clock, when a small car, a Fiat probably, nosed its way out into the fast lane forty yards ahead of him. Leamus stamped on the brake, turning his headlights full on and sounding his horn, and by the grace of God he missed it, missed it by a fraction of a second. As he passed the car he saw out of the corner of his eye four children in the back waving and laughing, and the stupid frightened face of their father at the wheel. He drove on, cursing, and suddenly it happened, suddenly his hands were shaking feverishly, his face was burning hot, his heart palpitating wildly. He managed to pull off the road into a lay-by, scrambled out of the car and stood, breathing heavily, staring at the hurdling stream of giant lorries. He had a vision of the little car caught among them, pounded and smashed until (here was nothing left, the bodies of the children torn like the murdered refugees on the road across the dune. He drove very slowly the rest of the way and missed his meeting with Karl. He never drove again without some corner of his memory recalling the tousled children waving to him from the back of that car and their father grasping the wheel like a farmer at the shafts of a hand plough.' Let this be our goal: to find ways to encourage leaders on whose shoulders nuclear responsibilities may one day ultimately rest to remember what (the fictional) Leamus and Kennedy, Khrushchev, and their advisers remember (or remembered). It might have happened. It might have been otherwise. It would have been their responsibility. And **let us begin where the actors began**, in the event of a very near miss, **by focusing on the experience of the nearness and deemphasizing explanations of the miss**.

#### Our investigation shatters the overly-theoretical view from nowhere—a forward-being orientation is necessary to nuclear learning and new policy decisions—any other orientation guarantees error replication.

Blight ‘89

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This parable of fear, action, and reflection poses a fundamental question for anyone engaged in almost any sort of psychological inquiry. **Where does the inquiry begin?** Do we take the path of experimental science and begin by seeking a detached, objective view of the situation as it "really" exists (or existed)? Do we then follow this up with an attempt to measure the psychological distance between what we take to be objective reality and the mere appearance of it, according to some individual or group? And do we finally seek to explain some event by attributing it to error or illusion? In this way of explaining behavior, the efficacy of human action is at least implicitly, but often quite explicitly, taken to be the difference between what individuals would have done if they had known as much as the psychologists (or other analysts) examining their behavior and what, in their ignorance, they actually did. The parable demonstrates, I believe, just how **hegemonically persuasive** this kind of explanation is to modern sensibilities. We begin, in the marvelous phrase of the philosopher Thomas Nagel, seeking "the view from nowhere," a neutral corner of the universe from which objects and situations will appear as they really are, not just as we believe they really are.8 Nearly every force in the contemporary intellectual Zeitgeist pushes us to try to begin our psychological inquiry there—nowhere in particular, within no one's view at all—so that we can claim in the end to have achieved an objective explanation of whatever it is we wish to understand. But **if we try to begin with a view from nowhere**, then I believe we must stand, like it or not, **for the** annihilation of psychological life **as it is experienced**, and the elevation of abstraction, especially more-or-less well developed theories of human behavior. Thus in the parable, Ihe driver may be seen simply to have made an error, an incorrect judgment. Perhaps, having learned of his error, his judgment in the future will improve. In any case, we will want to use this data—the estimated psychological distance between fact and illusion—as part of our effort to construct an ever more inclusive and predictive theory of human perception and behavior. Using our corroborated theory, we would hope thereby to suggest ways of narrowing the gap between illusion and reality. Alternatively, as the narrator of the parable suggests, we may choose to begin our inquiry with a view from **somewhere**—somewhere deep inside the viewpoint of the person whose action we seek to understand. If this is where we choose to begin—where experiencing persons begin—then we will seek not an objective assessment of the gap between perceptual illusion and actual reality, but instead a **systematic description** of the experience in which the action is embedded. Instead of getting as far as possible outside an individual's viewpoint, we will instead seek ever deeper entry into it. Our goal will be to provide a description of what the experience seemed to be about and what it was like to have had such an experience. In effect, we will seek to get so far into the viewpoints of others that we begin to appreciate just how their situations looked and felt **to them**. We will seek to recover their psychological life, **not** to **annihilate it.** So if, for example, we begin our inquiry into the behavior of the driver of the car from his viewpoint and ask why he stopped the car so suddenly, we are likely to begin with the conjecture that he stopped because he was afraid to go on. The bulk of any subsequent inquiry would be given over to seeking a deeper and broader understanding of why the situation seemed so fearful when he slammed on his brakes. In other words, instead of focusing our inquiry' on establishing the distance between illusion and reality, we will instead try to understand the connection between the experience and the behavior. We will want to know not why the driver was mistaken, but why he was afraid. A causal account of a given behavior can be generated from within each perspective. Looking backward at the action in the parable, seeking an objective view from nowhere, we might conclude that the driver slammed on his brakes prematurely and unnecessarily hard because he was paying insufficient attention lo the road, because his vision was obscured by foggy conditions, and so on. This would explain the observable behavior. **But looking vicariously forward,** seeking entry into the evolving psychological life of the driver as it was lived, we might conclude that he slammed on his brakes because he experienced a wave of fear in the presence of the frightening apparition that seemed to rise up in the road. It is important to recognize that causal accounts such as these do not necessarily compete with each other, in the sense that one must be correct and the other mistaken. They are instead **complementary**; both may be correct. There was a tree in the road. It did seem at the moment of braking that something much more menacing than a tree was blocking the driver's path. He slammed on his brakes in a panic because of a mistaken perception. He slammed on his brakes in a panic because he was afraid of the apparition he saw before him. Thus it is impossible to choose one account over the other on the basis of factuality or even of the internal coherence of the explanations. For although they purport to explain the same action, the accounts appeal to different universes of facts: as viewed backward from nowhere or vicariously forward from somewhere. Yet **one must choose**. **It is obviously** impossible **to begin a coherent inquiry from within both perspectives.** But in acknowledging the necessity of choosing a place to begin from these complementary modes of psychological inquiry, we come to an absolutely basic fork in the methodological road. The choice of paths therefore is of fundamental importance to the sort of endeavor the psychology of **avoiding nuclear war** **in crises** is going to be. On what basis, then, should we choose? The conclusion of the parable provides the clue. Despite knowing, after the fact, that his panic was unwarranted, despite realizing that it had not been a sinister apparition that he had seen, despite having concluded that it was only a dead tree in the road, the narrator confesses that a parting glimpse of the scene in his headlights makes him shudder all over again. With speed and glee unwarranted by the facts, he hurries from the place. As he reenacts the original encounter, even with the facts fresh in his mind, his fearful, panicky reaction is recapitulated. One is inclined to predict, on this basis, that any future encounters of this sort will also evoke the same response pattern: Fear-\* Sudden Stop-\* Examination of the Facts —> Flight from the Scene -\* Backward Glance —> Fear All Over Again. In other words, the knowledge that one has made an error, and that an objective view of the situation yields the conclusion that one's fear and subsequent action were unwarranted by the facts, is often unlikely to alter one's perception and action the next time a similar situation is encountered. This of course should not be taken to mean that we are incapable of learning from our mistakes. We obviously can. But it does mean that in situations of surprise, uncertainty, potentially high stakes, and thus considerable fear, the fact of our past mistakenness may not be nearly as compelling as the fearful facts that seem to be emerging before us. Looking backward with certainty, we understand that we have often been mistaken in such situations. **Looking forward uncertainly**, and with a great deal apparently at stake, **we cannot help feeling that this time our worst fears will be vindicated**. This has implications that should be immensely troubling to practitioners of the paradigmatic psychology of avoiding nuclear war who are united in their enthusiasm for discovering errors in the decisionmaking of leaders with nuclear responsibilities. In this already large and rapidly expanding body of work, nuclear decision makers are characterized as irrational, mendacious, paranoid, close-minded, shortsighted, and by many more psychologically based epithets. But as I argue in what follows (and as 1 have argued at great length elsewhere), these attributions of mistakenness have failed to have **any impact** whatever on nuclear policy-making.\* The reason is clean the accounts emphasizing errors, or gaps between the illusions of policymakers and the reality as determined by the psychologists, strike the policymakers almost **universally as psychologically unreal**, as merely disguised attempts to demonstrate that, in fact, nuclear policymakers know considerably less about avoiding nuclear war than do nuclear psychologists. Even former policymakers, looking backward at their efforts to manage nuclear risks in a crisis, see nothing in the psychological accounts that reflects an understanding of what they faced, and what their successors will face in any future nuclear crisis. Thus, **on the basis of policy-relevance**, we should choose to begin our inquiry with a psychology that seeks entry into the **forward-moving psychological life of policymakers.** However much or little we may learn from such an endeavor, we stand a **far greater chance** of actually communicating those lessons to nuclear policymakers. In that case, we psychologists, whether we call ourselves "psychologists" or not, will have learned to speak their language rather than (implausibly) requiring them to learn ours. We will in that case, to reinvoke the morbidly vivid image of Trevor-Roper, have become the caretakers of the psychological life of decision makers, rather than its undertakers. Finally, there is a more important reason for seeking to recover rather than to annihilate the evolving psychological life of nuclear policymakers. It is this: although fear **can** often lead to mistaken judgment, profoundly emotional reactions to situations are seldom **wholly without foundation**. Our mental life is, in a word, usually adaptive. If we are very fearful, for example, there is usually a reason: something to be afraid of. As William James (following Darwin's lead) pointed out more than a century ago, our emotional reactions are at the very core of our capacity to survive, and it is not for nothing that our emotions are often stubbornly resistant to cognitive control.10 We evolved and survived as a species because we developed the ability to sense and avoid danger. In the chapters that follow, I will cite much psychologically based criticism of the managers of the missile crisis and of nuclear policymakers in general. AH of this criticism is predicated on the assumption that emotional reactions to nuclear danger are either unimportant or to be avoided. What we should seek, according to this view, is greater rationality. I disagree. Greater "rationality" should not be our goal. This is not to say, however, that I believe "irrationality" is required to reduce nuclear risks. But it does mean that such a conclusion—to improve the rationality of nuclear policymakers in specific situations—derives from beginning the whole inquiry in the **wrong place**, **seeking a view from nowhere**. Once again, the key to the proper response is in the parable. 'The dark and sinister shape was there before me on the road," the narrator recalls, "and the conduct of my foot proves it." Indeed it does. For although he was mistaken, as he later discovered, in his estimate of what was before him, he was absolutely correct to discern danger and thus to stop before colliding with whatever was in the road. I argue likewise in Part Four, below, with regard to the nuclear danger present in the missile crisis. The key participants may (or may not) have overestimated the degree of nuclear danger they were in. But the fact—the living psychological fact—that they feared they were in mortal danger had everything to do with why they, too, slammed on their own brakes and sought a peaceful retreat from the dreadful apparition of major nuclear war that seemed to be before them. Thus, the more we discover about the way the look and feel of inadvertent nuclear danger evolved, the greater the likelihood that we will eventually articulate a psychological approach that seems **real to policymakers**, and the greater will be our understanding of the adaptive role of feared nuclear inadvertence in the nuclear crisis of October 1962 **and in the one we are ever trying to prevent.**

#### A focus on crises is crucial.

Blight ‘89

James, PhD Psychology, HarvardCIGI Chair in Foreign Policy Development, Professor at BSIA, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis*

In his biography of John F. Kennedy, A Thousand Days, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., refers to the week of the Cuban missile crisis, October 22-28, 1962, as "The Great Turning” a week permanently emblazoned in the memories of all who lived through it near the center of power and responsibility.' Psychologist James Blight takes us in this book back to the experiences of those who managed the crisis, with special attention to the turning point, its final forty-eight hours when events seemed to be spiraling beyond control and when nuclear war appeared to be a real possibility, just before the abrupt and peaceful resolution announced by a radio message from Soviet Chairman Nikita Khrushchev at 9:00 a.m. EST, October 28. The beauty of this book is that its author is able to convey what the experience of trying to manage that crisis was like. He does so not primarily as would a biographer, historian, or even a psychologist, although he brings these and other disciplinary skills to bear on his material. Rather, he invites the reader into the confusing novelty and uncertainty of the missile crisis in order to make **policy-relevant points**. He argues persuasively, in my view, that only by understanding clearly what this nuclear crisis was like will we understand the human and institutional requirements any such future episode is likely to involve. Before I encountered Blight, I thought it unlikely that anything significant remained to be learned about this most studied event of the nuclear age. I was wrong. I am now persuaded by this book that until we understand much more fully the nuclear learning of the Cuban missile crisis, our own second-order nuclear learning will be incomplete in important ways. Nuclear deterrence is far more complex than the models in the minds of most academic policy analysts. According to the prevailing models, the American advantage of seventeen to one, and the vulnerability of the Soviet forces, should have deterred Khrushchev from placing missiles in Cuba and encouraged Kennedy to take larger risks than he did. Only by looking more carefully at the psychology of real leaders in crises can we understand such anomalies. Almost everyone nowadays applauds interdisciplinary research, especially on issues as important as reducing the risk of a nuclear war. Yet few are actually able to practice it to any significant degree, and almost never do we encounter a work such as this book that is so thoroughly interdisciplinary that it is impossible for its author or potential audience to be assigned to any one discipline. It will become clear to the readers of this book that its author is conversant not only with disciplines traditionally connected with nuclear questions, such as nuclear strategy, arms control, and political science, but also with psychology in its many forms, with history, and with moral philosophy. James Blight is a professional psychologist whose interest in nuclear issues led him to become a research fellow of Harvard's Project on Avoiding Nuclear War (ANW). In 1982, Harvard President Derek Bok responded to the public concern about what was perceived by many to be the dangerously high and rising risk of all-out nuclear war by encouraging a faculty group to publish Living with Nuclear Weapons.2 In that book, my colleagues and I concluded that in the world as we know it, there is no realistic escape from the risk of nuclear war, but that it is **imperative** to avoid deep nuclear crises in which the risk of nuclear war might suddenly arise. In just such crises, "the shattered crystal ball" of nuclear war (as we put it), may indeed **become a reality,**3 We did not provide many suggestions about how to reduce the risk of nuclear war, but this was the central mission of the ANW Project, which Graham Allison, Albert Carnesale, and I launched in 1983 with the support of the Carnegie Corporation. It was the rationale behind the Project's first book. Hawks. Doves & Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War.\* Partway through our research for that book. Blight joined the Project. He was instrumental in causing the members of the Project to focus carefully on crisis, especially the manner and extent to which a crisis might constrain the rationality of decision makers, and on the possibility that the psychological effects of nuclear crises, like the physical effects of nuclear weapons themselves, may in certain respects be qualitatively different from their conventional counterparts. During the period in which Hawks, Doves & Owls was being prepared, Blight wrote a series of controversial articles primarily for professional psychologists, inviting those who had taken an interest in issues of nuclear risk to focus attention on nuclear crises.\* These pieces reflected the prevailing opinion within the ANW group and, indeed, within the nuclear policy community generally: the immediate prerequisite to a major nuclear war would likely be a deep superpower crisis. But, whereas most analysts lend to invoke "crisis" somewhat mechanically as an independent variable, Blight began to develop the concept as a dependent variable. He asked questions such as: How do leaders actually determine when they are in an international crisis? Does their experience of nuclear crises have unique properties? How do leaders' beliefs about the danger in which a nuclear crisis has placed them relate to their actions? With such questions in mind. Blight began to take a new look at the limiting case of the phenomenon: the Cuban missile crisis. After immersing himself in the vast literature of the missile crisis. Blight noticed a significant point that seemed to him to have been overlooked, which eventually became the starting point for a new research project on nuclear crises.\* According to Blight, neither form of the paradigmatic psychology used to frame our understanding of international crises allows us plausibly to explain the peaceful outcome of the events of October 1962. The "rational actor" psychology, favored by an entire generation of nuclear strategists, leads us to believe that the Americans, who possessed a vast numerical superiority over the Soviets in deliverable nuclear weapons, should have launched a preemptive strike against the Soviets if the crisis was perceived to be a very deep one, close to the outbreak of war. Since Kennedy is reported to have believed during the crisis that the likelihood of war was perhaps as high as 50 percent, the President, according to this simplified view of rationality, should have ordered a nuclear strike to disarm the Soviets and thus to eliminate the possibility that they would preempt.1 Alternatively, what Blight in this book calls the "irrational actor" psychology also leads us to expect the same outcome, although for different reasons. If the Cuban missile crisis carried a risk of war as high as 50 percent, according to this view, the resulting stress, faulty judgment, and eventual panic should have led to war. Both rational actors and/or irrational actors in the White House or Kremlin should, according to prevailing psychological wisdom, have ordered a preemptive nuclear strike, which in fact never occurred. Blight concluded that either the peaceful resolution of the crisis was a fluke or that the psychological theories whose tenets lead one to expect the wrong outcome—the Cuban war or even a nuclear war-should be regarded as seriously deficient. Of course, such a judgment may reasonably be disputed. One could argue, for example, that in retrospect Kennedy exaggerated his real-time perception of the likelihood of war. If true, this would make the actual decision to withhold any strike more classically rational, just as it would lead us to expect the presence of less stress-induced panic. But Blight had already begun a series of lengthy discussions with members of Kennedy's inner circle, who confirmed to him that the situation by the end of the crisis had seemed very grim, perhaps as grim as the President suggested in his estimate of a 50 percent chance of a superpower war. Thus, to oversimplify a complex decision on his part, Blight chose to go with the outcome of the crisis rather than with the psychologies that, in his view, could not plausibly explain it. This was a bold choice; probably only a psychologist without a strong previous commitment to the virtually paradigmatic psychologies of rational and irrational actors, and one in addition with a primary interest in policy implications, would have moved so quickly and decisively to a new kind of psychological analysis of nuclear crises. He calls his approach a phenomenological psychology of crises and avoiding nuclear war. What he means by this term is refreshingly straightforward: if we want to understand the "psychology\*' of an event like the missile crisis, we should first take the simple but far from easy step of seeking entry into what it was like, at the time, to try to manage the Cuban missile crisis. Thus he began to put some empirical flesh on a "psychological" concept that had by then become central to the work of the ANW Project, the "crystal ball effect." Blight asked: What must have it been like to look into the nuclear crystal ball when it seemed closer to shattering than at any time before or since? What he found is that, for key American and Soviet managers of the crisis, it was frightening, but not in the sense that one's life is on the line and that one might therefore die in an attack. Rather, each leader appeared to have been struck by the apparently much more disturbing thought that, some finite number of moves down the road, he could conceivably be responsible in some measure for the worst catastrophe in history—a nuclear holocaust. But there is a second aspect to this commonsense, phenomenological approach; it concerns what this deep fear was about. It is on this point that, I would argue, Blight's work presents the greatest challenge to traditional ways of thinking about the issue of nuclear crisis stability. He shows that by the last forty-eight hours of the acute phase of the crisis (roughly, October 26 to 28), the object of the fear for the principal managers of the crisis had shifted from what he calls **nuclear attack to nuclear danger**. At the heart of the look and feel of nuclear danger is the conviction that while neither you nor your adversary has any interest in attacking the other with nuclear weapons, the crisis you are both in may still be in danger of spinning out of control and into an inadvertent, unwanted war. This fear of nuclear inadvertence is the fear that, he argues persuasively, led to the nuclear learning that informed our escape without a war in the Cuban missile crisis. It seems to me unlikely that knowledgeable readers of this book will agree with all its provocative arguments. For example, 1 am not sure that the Cuban missile crisis is sui generis, the first and only time decision makers experienced the full extent of what he calls the '"evolution of situational perversity," leading them to believe that the abstract possibility of inadvertent nuclear war had become a dangerously high and rising probability. My own judgment on this point will be withheld until Blight's data are in on Berlin, a crisis many people at the time believed to be very dangerous. There are bound to be many other points of contention. Strategists and political scientists influenced by game theory will be challenged by Blight's insistence that the resolution of the crisis refutes their rational actor psychology of nuclear crises. Psychologists and some other political scientists will have to come to grips with Blight's data indicating that, in spite of the great nuclear danger (or perhaps because of it), there is little or no evidence of psychological stress or breakdown in Kennedy's inner circle, as many observers have long assumed. It is also possible that many psychologists will find Blight's phenomenological psychology too simple—not complex enough to reflect accurately what they take to be the advanced state of their psychological science. (As a non-psychologist, I find the simplicity of his approach a virtue.) Some historians will no doubt have difficulty with the author's forthright search into the past for policy-relevant answers to contemporary questions, and by his use of many nontraditional sources of data, including interviews, conference discussions, secret tapes made by Kennedy, and statements by Soviets whose credibility is often difficult to assess conclusively. Finally, I imagine that Blight's policy conclusion—that in a nuclear crisis a little deterrence goes a long way, but that some may still be necessary—will upset the many people who seem to doubt one or both of these conclusions. To all these potential skeptics, I confess that as I observed the unfolding of James Blight's research on the Cuban missile crisis, I too was often skeptical, but I am now compelled by his argument that in the deepest nuclear crisis, leaders were fearful; that their fear was of losing control of events; that this fear seems to have led to learning that produced a peaceful resolution; and, finally, that this cluster of factors is likely to be **salient if we ever again face a crisis as dangerous as that of October 1962.** I hope that Blight's contribution will bring a whole cluster of nuclear-related disciplines to this common knowledge, by means of this empirical study of the uncommon danger experienced by real people. We must never pass that way again, and James Blight shows us as never before why that is so, **by showing us what it was.**

## Contingency

#### Contention two is contingency—

#### Living in the uncertainty of the present of the missile crisis is key to disrupting determinist understandings of history.

Blight ‘89

James, PhD Psychology, HarvardCIGI Chair in Foreign Policy Development, Professor at BSIA, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis*

In an engaging and challenging essay published on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the day the Cuban missile crisis peaked and was resolved. H. R. Trevor-Roper has argued for the inclusion in our understanding of the past what he calls "The Lost Moments of History."1 He means to reintroduce into serious historical inquiry the idea of "turning points," those moments when the flow of historical life might have moved decisively in directions quite different from the paths that ultimately were taken. Trevor-Roper himself is most interested in such "moments" in the past when calamities, such as the Thirty Years' War or the rise of Hitler in Germany, might have been averted. He realizes immediately, of course, that he has embarked upon a hazardous course. For playing the game of "lost moments," while eternally popular among amateurs with a fascination for the past, is regarded as entirely off-limits to serious students of history. So after announcing his intention to discuss a number of such "moments," Trevor-Roper admits that already he "can hear the objection. The lessons of history, it will be said, must be deduced from what has actually happened, not from what has not happened. And of course I must agree that this is true."2 So must we all. The Thirty Years' War was the worst man-made disaster to befall Europe before the world wars of our century; Adolf Hitler did exert a demonic influence upon our lime that continues to shape the world we live in. These are hard facts that cannot be wished away in games of wishful thinking. This much admitted, what makes Trevor-Roper's argument relevant for investigating the experience of nuclear danger is his liberal and liberating criteria for inclusion in the category "what has actually happened." He wants to include, indeed he wants to emphasize, the sense of what it must have been like actually to participate in the unfolding of what we now call history, but which was, in one lost moment after another, the contingent, confusing, largely shapeless and unmanageable present. He wishes, in other words, to include psychological facts in our telling and understanding of history, but not just as they have come down to us in ordinary documents. And this, of course, leads to a methodological conundrum: What has actually happened psychologically—the look and feel of the texture of a lived situation—is not available from the lifeless, dusty documents that make up the stock-in-trade of the working historian. Such psychological facts are not even available from a real-time, verbatim transcript like that of the October 27, 1962, excomm meetings. Such "facts," therefore, must be inferred from the most thickly descriptive data we can acquire. But even if we accept the necessity of including in any inquiry the sense of the forward movement of history, it is not at all obvious how to justify to professional colleagues, or perhaps even to oneself, the guesses and inferences that would constitute any attempt to turn the historian's past into the historian's subjects' future, and then make all this comprehensible to other historians who are far from inclined to join in the exercise. In announcing his intention to pursue this sort of inquiry, Trevor-Roper says he feels like he is standing at the open door of an airplane in flight, about to be sucked into the maelstrom. For what rules govern such an enterprise? Won't methodological chaos and anarchy set in? Despite this danger, he says, the alternative is worse, "which is keeping the corpse (of history unburied and refrigerated, on a cold mortuary slab, for anatomical demonstration."1 If we cannot recover the psychological life of the past, with its sense of forward movement, then our analyses, in his view, bear the same relation to the data they ostensibly describe as a corpse does to a healthy, vital, living human being. Instead of trying to become the caretakers of a living history, the professionals seem to Trevor-Roper to have become, by and large, its **undertakers**. Trevor-Roper could easily have been describing that intellectual's mortuary science that is the historiography of the Cuban missile crisis. **No episode of modern times can have suffered more inadvertent abuse from history's learned undertakers than the missile crisis**. It was our closest call to major nuclear war, to the end of life as we know it, and an event that is recorded in the memories of tens of millions of living people. Yet one could not deduce from the mountains of studies devoted to it that the event was managed by people who did not yet know that all would be well after thirteen days. There are exceptions. Robert Kennedy's memoir, for example, crackles with palpable fear and tension.4 But he was not an analyst, not a professional "undertaker" bent on explaining the event. In fact, the missile crisis provided perhaps the most significant "lost moment" of modern times, but in a sense that is exactly the opposite of Trevor-Roper's favorite lost moments. For during the missile crisis, events might have transpired to produce not peaceful resolution, but a catastrophe beyond imagination and with horrible, impossible-to-calculate consequences for subsequent history. It was the calamity of modern times that did not happen. As with all such lost historical moments, in Trevor-Roper's phrasing**, "it was** not **a historical necessity**, a consequence hanging in the stars, but the result... of particular human accidents or decisions or events that in themselves were not necessary: **it could have been otherwise.**"3 This, of course, is what I referred to previously as "McNamara's fear." How do we breathe some life into the refrigerated, intellectualized corpse that this event has become? **How might we reenter** some portion of **the** actual **Cuban missile crisis**, as it was lived, and in so doing recover some of the sense embedded in the home truth that it could have been otherwise, and thus next time, may be otherwise? **We need a different approach to the event**, a different point of departure, and I suggest that we take our cue from Kierkegaard. He well understood that the experience of moving forward through the perplexing maze of what will become history often bears little resemblance to the experience of what has **become history.** And as Kierkegaard emphasized so often and so eloquently, fear of an unknown and highly uncertain outcome is what is characteristically omitted from after-the-fact accounts. **Looking backward**, we know how the missile crisis turned out. From our vantage point, we can **never not know this.** But looking forward, as indeed its managers were required to do, this knowledge was unavailable. If we therefore seek a better understanding of the psychological requirements for peace in a nuclear crisis, we ought to try to recover the psychological lives of the managers of the missile crisis, as they were lived forward. Of course, we can never approach complete success in this endeavor. But what Trevor-Roper says about history in general is true in particular of the Cuban missile crisis: the alternative is riskier, and by remaining content to explain the event, we risk contributing **yet another dead body to the great morgue of scholarship on the crisis**.6 So let us begin with the common-sense assumption that life in the White House and Kremlin in October 1962 was lived forward, with its participants ignorant and fearful of its outcome. In my discussions of the missile crisis and nuclear policy with specialists over the past several years, I have found that the common-sense psychological approach I advocate is far from valid to them. I am often regarded as naive—naive to believe that the missile crisis is psychologically unique and that feared inadvertence is (or should have been) central to its resolution, and naive to think that the recovery of the psychological lives of leaders, as lived and experienced, is what the psychology of avoiding nuclear war should be about. These critics, I admit, are fundamentally correct about my theoretical "naivete." It is in fact cultivated. I do believe that theoretical and disciplinary naiveté is precisely what is required to move this field closer to a description of evolving, real-time psychological reality. Obviously, for analysts weaned on game theory, microeconomics, comparative political science and, more recently, on the psychologies of stress and decision-making, my mode of analysis is likely to seem foreign and rustic. It is. As I contend in Chapter 6, "psychology" is for our purposes best taken to indicate the actual, **living sense of a situation**— what are (or were) the objects of attention and what was it like, then and there, to be so attentive. But as we shall see, in beginning our analysis here, where the person (not the psychologist or other analyst) begins, we come upon methodological issues as complex as the approach is conceptually simple.

#### Historical determinism is the enabling condition for technological determinism

Dutton ‘4

William, Director, Oxford Internet Institute, “Social Transformation in an Information Society: Rethinking Access to You and the World”

The growing centrality of ICTs to social and economic life is captured by the reconﬁguring access perspective, which offers a new way of looking at the role of ICTs in relation to fundamental processes of social transformation. This encompasses and moves forward many ideas encapsulated by previous notions like the information society, knowledge society, and network society since each focussed only on a speciﬁc outcome of these processes. Such grand, **macro-level social theories** can be relatively weak guides to policy and practice, as their sense of historical determinism can **lull individuals into accepting that social and technical change are driven by forces to which individuals must adapt.** A focus on reconﬁguring access, on the other hand, stresses the importance of both the general overall trends and the real-world contexts in which micro-level choices are made and constrained. This realism can **inform policy** by helping to focus attention on social issues tied to **patterns** of adoption and use, such as concerns over equity across socio-economic, political, and geographic divides. It also indicates how the communicative power of individuals, businesses, and whole societies is affected by **strategic choices** in everyday activities, such as obtaining access to the Internet or a particular package of television channels, as well as in higher-level, longer-term government, business, and media strategies. Of course, decisions taken by the most politically and economically powerful actors on the global stage are likely to have stronger and more immediate impacts than those of individuals in their household. But it should be remembered that the Internet grew to its current importance to a great extent through the contributions from numerous individuals who believed in the production and use of one-to-one, one-tomany, and other forms of communication other than the one-to-millions mass media.

#### The impact is nihilism and extinction.

Schmidt and Marratto 8

The End of Ethics in a Technological Society Lawrence E. Schmidt Professor of Philosophy Director of Hendrix Journeys Program, Scott Marratto Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Michigan Tech Pg. 171-173

The deeper ethical problem is, however, that the risk society makes the globe the laboratory for its technological experiments and the object of the experimentation. The crisis that emerged when Oppenheimer's team decided to go ahead with the splitting of the atom in the Now Mexico desert (when some said there were three chances in a million that it would give rise to a runaway explosion in the atmosphere) has now become paradigmatic. In a wide range of experimentation, wc still lack an understanding of the criteria by which to judge whether to proceed. We have incredibly sophisticated computer programs that enable us to model the changes introduced by new techniques to the environment, to human society, or to the human body. We have to decide which techniques wc will apply to deal with the effects of techniques already implemented, but the question of limit has still not surfaced. And models are only models. The real experiment, as Ulrich Beck explains, takes place in (and with) the real world. Theories of nuclear reactor safety are testable only after they are built, not beforehand. The expedient of testing partial systems [what, in our discussion of nuclear energy, we have called risk or fault-tree analysis] amplifies the contingencies of their interaction, and thus contains tin-sources of error which cannot themselves be controlled experimentally. If one compares this with the logic of research that was originally agreed upon, this amounts to its sheer reversal. We no longer find the progression, first laboratory, then application. Instead, testing conies after application and production precedes research. The dilemma into which the mega-hazards have plunged scientific logic applies across the board; that is for nuclear, chemical and genetic experiments science hovers blindlv above the boundary of threats. Test-tube babies must first be produced, genetically engineered artificial creatures released and reactors built, in order that their properties and safety can be studied.23 Hans Jonas has attempted to respond to the emergence of the risk society, the transformation of ethics, and the failure of both classical political theory and modern liberalism to deal with what is happening as technology provides us with unprecedented powers to (collectively) transform nature and human nature. Our ability to "act into nature" with serious consequences for those who live at great spatial distance from us on the planet now and great temporal distance from us in the future has changed the very nature of human action and the reality of ethics.\*\* Paradoxically, the quest for Utopia inherent in what we have called technological progressivism has introduced the real possibility of extinction or oblivion. It has brought us, as we have argued, closer and closer to the edge of the abyss along which we are forced to tread. "Now we shiver in the nakedness of a nihilism in which near-omnipotence is paired with near-emptiness, greatest capacity with knowing least for what ends to use it."2-r> What is required, Jonas argues, is an ethics of futurity that acknowledges the uncertainty of our scientific projects and their apocalyptic potential. Practically speaking, this means that "the prophecy of doom is to be given greater heed than the prophecy of bliss."86

#### The framing of technology as an inevitable, necessary progression disavows ethics for the sake of “sweet new tech” and culminates in arms races, dehumanization and eugenics

Rosales ‘9

Janna, thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Department and Centre for the Study of Religion University of Toronto, “WHEN THE “TWILIGHT OF JUSTICE” MEETS THE “DAWN OF NANOTECHNOLOGY”: A CRITIQUE OF TRANSHUMANISM AND THE TECHNOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE IN THE LIGHT OF GEORGE GRANT’S MORAL PHILOSOPHY”

My thesis posits that there is a bias among many Western, and specifically North American, commentators when they formulate questions about and make judgements on the ethical issues raised by “human enhancement” technology. That bias is towards implicitly assuming, and sometimes overtly assenting, that technological development is key to improving the human condition. In other words, the ways in which modern liberal society deliberates over what is good to make and to strive for in terms of human progress is informed by a particular assumption that can be called the “technological imperative.” I refer to the reasoning that says the only way to determine what is good to do is to first determine what is possible for science and technology, or more aptly “technoscience,” to create. This means that it is necessary to find out through experimentation whether something can technically be done before any judgement can be made about whether it ought to be done, at least within experimental confines. This thesis does not oppose experimental science outright; rather it focuses on the challenges posed to ethical deliberation when experimental technoscience is guided by the technological imperative. As Ulrich Beck (1992; see also Cayley 2007b) observes, society itself has become the laboratory for modern technoscience because technoscience often creates phenomena that it is not able to predict or control; for example, the effect of nuclear weapons on human beings could not really be known until they were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Indeed, Robert Oppenheimer is often cited as the one who expresses the technological imperative most eloquently: “If something is technically sweet, then you must go ahead with it” (quoted in Grant, 1965/2005b, p. 258). Refusing to go ahead is tantamount to opposing progress. The consequence of the technological imperative on ethical judgement is this: rather than providing a standard that defines what should and should never be done, ethical deliberation risks becoming an instrument to rationalize what technoscience makes possible (Ramsey, 1970, p. 122-3). The technological imperative is most apparent in the ethical stances of the technoprogressive outlook known as transhumanism. Transhumanism is a movement that claims that we as a society have a moral obligation to develop technology intended to improve the human condition. This thesis will investigate and evaluate the nature and implications of that obligation. However, if transhumanism is the most obvious example of the way in which the technological imperative and advocacy for technological progress can be transformed into a moral imperative, my thesis further argues that the technological imperative extends beyond self-identified technoprogressive perspectives and pervades much of North American liberalism’s deliberations over the means and ends to improve the human condition through technology. To this end, I will examine both transhumanist and “mainstream” commentary on the promises and perils of the emerging technoscientific field known as nanotechnology. Nanotechnology promises thorough and inexpensive control over the very structure and composition of matter. For its proponents this means nothing less than a revolution in how we manufacture goods, cure disease, compute with increased power and complexity, and alleviate suffering. For its critics, nanotechnology harbours significant peril, including currently unknown toxic effects of nanoscale particles, the acceleration of a global arms race based on “smart” military technology, and the possible gradual dehumanization of human relationships resulting from a society that has become complacent about eugenic practices.

#### Our method is key to responding to every present non-linear crisis—the impact is extinction.

--link turns decision making—can’t understand the crisis

Wenzlhuemer ‘9

Roland, Cluster of Excellence ‘Asia and Europe in a Global Context’, University of Heidelberg, Karl Jaspers Centre, “Editorial: Unpredictability, Contingency and Counterfactuals”

Ours are unstable times. While historians will rightly hold that in the past we easily find any number of periods of unpredictability and instability, **this does not alter the current prevalence of a general feeling of insecurity** as to what the future might hold. At the time of writing in February 2009 the industrialized countries are experiencing (the early phase of) an economic depression unheard of for almost a century. Mistrust in the financial and economic system has reached a level that questions the **very foundations** of this system – which has been build on credit and, therefore, on trust. Very early in the crisis, observers have already heralded the end of capitalism as we know it. Should such prognoses come true this would mean nothing else but the collapse of the second allegedly infallible economic (and ideological) world order within twenty years – leaving the populace to a largely unpredictable future. Furthermore, the terrorist attacks in New York City, London and Madrid together with the prevailing chaos in Afghanistan and Iraq have been challenging established global power relations since the turn of the new millennium. The nation state, it seems, **has reached the limits of its power and lacks the means to successfully confront terrorism and piracy** (for instance around the horn of Africa). At the same time, representatives of nation states have frequently transgressed hitherto inviolable borders while trying to keep the upper hand. Democratic ideals and human rights have been spurned over and over again. Thereby, **established value systems have been called into question** and moral compasses disturbed. On top of this, rarely a day goes by without new alarming data on the speed and potential consequences of global warming – which, in essence, questions the future of mankind as we know it. Therefore, ours are unstable times, indeed. No doubt about it. Prognoses as to the future of the nation state, the capitalist system or the global climate are hard to make. Just as many former real estate owners, blue collar workers and bank employees find it hard to make any predictions regarding their own future. The **certainties of previous decades are things of the past**. Hardly anything seems predetermined anymore. And exactly in these unstable times, there seems to be renewed interest in a field that has existed at the very periphery of academic investigation for decades – counterfactual thinking. While present in many different disciplines and forms of research, this particular style of enquiry has mainly been discussed in the historical sciences as counterfactual, virtual or alternate history. In the 1960s and 1970s, forays into the field have mostly been unsystematic and without any theoretical backing. Criticism from “factual” colleagues in the discipline has, however, been all the more outspoken. The condemning comments of both E. H. Carr and E. P. Thompson are well-known and still summarize much of the traditional reservations against counterfactual history. Only in the 1980s, a German historian, Alexander Demandt, finally made a powerful argument in favour of counterfactual thinking in history. In his book Ungeschehene Geschichte, Demandt did not only make the case for counterfactual reasoning, he also took up the other side’s most powerful arguments and replied in a thoughtful but convincing way. To me, his thin treatise is still the best discussion of counterfactuals and their potential usefulness in historical enquiry that we have to date. Although widely read, Ungeschehene Geschichte did not trigger a substantial discussion of the issue. Only in the mid-1990s another well-known historian took up the cause and published an edited volume with an insightful introduction written by himself. Niall Ferguson’s Virtual History roused more interest – probably due both to the author’s growing reputation in Anglo-American academia as well as to the “juicier” case studies that the contributing authors discussed. While many of the contributions to Virtual History were well-researched and methodologically sound, the book triggered a wave of less academic publications in the field that tried to appeal to a wider readership. To critics of counterfactual enquiry, these volumes simply proved what was wrong with the approach. Many case studies were far-fetched, selected more on grounds of their dramatic promises than their historical relevance. Conclusions remained speculative. No traces of a sound methodology or structured historical enquiry could be found. Quod erat demonstrandum. In the field of history, not much of substance has been published on counterfactual thinking since Ferguson’s volume. But today, all of a sudden, we see a renewed interest in all things counterfactual. Together with the philosopher Rayk Meckel, the author gave an interdisciplinary seminar on counterfactual thinking at the University of Lucerne in the summer term of 2007. The seminar attracted a diverse but very dedicated crowd of students and – somewhat to the surprise of the lecturers – seemed to strike a long neglected chord. Motivated by the students’ positive feedback, we decided to try and bring together “counterfactualists” from different fields and countries at a workshop to be held at Humboldt-University in Berlin in September 2008. While we initially doubted that we would be able to mobilize a critical mass of attendees and contributors, we were surprised at the amount and quality of the feedback. Most contributors to this volume have attended the workshop, presented a paper and participated in the discussions. Therefore, the content of this special issue closely mirrors the structure of the workshop and reflects the key topics and results of our discussions. It is also the product of the attendees’ shared belief that a keen exchange between the different disciplines about the practical application of counterfactuals is essential, if the analytical potential of counterfactual thinking should be illustrated. The workshop has been a first attempt at collecting, juxtaposing, comparing and then eventually merging the very diverse definitions of counterfactuals or counterfactuality that are employed in the different disciplines. The contributions in this volume build on the workshop presentations but also consider and integrate the discussions held and the common ground identified at the workshop. While putting together the workshop and contacting potential attendees, we learned of a host of similar initiatives and interest groups. In October 2007, graduate students organized a conference on Goofy History discussing all sorts of unusual interpretations of the past – among them counterfactual histories. The Neue Zürcher Zeitung published a Folio special issue on “Was wäre, wenn…” in which writers, essayists and other public persons presented their very own “might-have-been” or “could-have-been” scenarios. At the newly established FRIAS School of Language & Literature at the University of Freiburg, an interdisciplinary workshop on counterfactual thinking to be hosted later this year is currently being organized. This gathering will broach the issue mainly from a literature and culture perspective. Eventually, days before our own workshop took place, we learned that at the University of Konstanz, a research focus on counterfactuality had just been granted and was soon to be implemented. So, after all these years of neglect and peripheral existence, where does all this renewed interest in counterfactual questions come from? Is there, indeed, some connection to the real and the perceived instability of our times? While I clearly see the danger of overestimating the power and appeal of counterfactuals, I would very much like to think that there is some connection. When future developments seem largely **unpredictable** and highly contingent, the degree of predetermination and unavoidability of the course of history **must be freshly assessed as well.** Both communism as well as capitalism (for a long time the opposites in a bipolar but reasonably stable/predictable world order) have traditionally been styled as the products of a largely preprogrammed process of evolution that could not but culminate either in communism or in capitalism respectively. The former has, from its very inception, been based on the Marxist version of historical determinism – the belief that history would inevitably lead to the idealized rule of the proletariat. In the case of the latter, the determinism was of a subtler breed. But publications such as Francis Fukuyama’s The End of History or the constant repetition of the formula “There Is No Alternative” clearly illustrate the deterministic element in capitalist self-reflection. But what now? As an economic system, communism has utterly collapsed. And while its fate is not entirely clear, it seems that capitalism **as we know it** might follow suit. Not only has the perceived stability of a bipolar world order long since come to an end – both economic systems (cum ideology) have failed **despite their self-styled terminal position** in the evolution. Predetermination, it seems, only goes so far. Is history, after all, more contingent than we liked to believe? And might it, therefore, be more relevant and illuminating to think about potential alternative historical courses than we previously thought? I would very much like to think so but can, of course, offer no substantial proof for the connection between our unstable times and the renewed interest in counterfactual thinking. It seems perfectly clear, however, that the work that psychologists have done on counterfactual thinking since the early 1990s has paved the way for the current revival of the issue in other disciplines. Researchers such as Tycocinski, Markman or Roese have successfully shown in hundreds of experimental studies that counterfactual thinking in everyday-life situations can – under certain circumstances – **be extremely useful for the thinker**. After all, there seems to be some use crying over spilt beans (or milk) – at least if the crying is followed by some serious thinking about possible but unrealized alternatives. Largely without knowing and certainly without intending to, these psychologist have provided a powerful argument supporting the analytical usefulness of counterfactuals and thereby countering the standard charge of many critics in history and other disciplines. It has been one of the goals of our workshop and of this volume to build on such psychological research and to show how the same or very similar analytical mechanisms can be employed in an academic context. This volume, therefore, opens with a contribution by the American psychologists Neal Roese and Mike Morrison on “The Psychology of Counterfactual Thinking”. The authors show how and in which situations we think counterfactually and which benefits can come from the practice. The article illustrates how counterfactual thinking can highlight causal relations (causal inference effect) or invoke contrasting scenarios (contrast effect). My own text on “Counterfactual Thinking as a Scientific Method” tries to follow up on this. It recapitulates how exactly such effects work in everyday-life situations and then seeks to translate them into an academic context. First, I do so from a general, interdisciplinary viewpoint. Later in the text I focus particularly on the usefulness of counterfactual thinking in the field of history. Towards the end, I also try to offer some words of caution when I highlight the potential pitfalls associated with historical counterfactuals. Again, most of these have a counterpart in everyday-life counterfactuals as well. Together with this editorial these two contributions form the introductory part of the special issue and seek to build a bridge between counterfactual thinking in everyday life, its potential uses in academic research in general and its application in history in particular. The following three texts are mainly concerned with counterfactual history, its status within the discipline and its potential uses. Working at the interface between history and political science, Richard Lebow uses “counterfactuals to probe the limits of theory and to develop better means of understanding causation in a largely open-ended, nonlinear highly contingent world.” In his contribution “Counterfactuals, History and Fiction” he, however, also refers to recent experiments that have shown how a protagonist’s beliefs and world view influence his/her attitude towards or choice of counterfactuals in history. In doing so, Lebow highlights how personal biases can produce different counterfactual alternatives and, thereby, different interpretations of the past. In a similar vein, Georg Schmid in “Counterfactuals and Futures Histories; Retrospective Imagining as an Auxiliary for the Scenarios of Expectance” illustrates how our expectations influence the nature of our counterfactuals. Schmid aptly puts forward that many different pasts compete with one allegedly correct or real past for Interpretationshoheit (the monopoly of interpretation) of history. While concerned mainly with historical counterfactuals, the contribution also manages to connect past, present and future counterfactuals via the “scenarios of expectance”. Ann Talbot’s article on “Chance and Necessity in History: E.H Carr and Leon Trotsky Compared” links up with Lebow’s experiments and shows how attitudes towards historical counterfactuals depend on someone’s general beliefs about the laws (if any) of history. Talbot uses the British historian E. H. Carr – an outspoken critic of counterfactual methods in historical research – as an example to show that a belief in historical determinism and an evolutionary course of history makes the serious contemplation of counterfactual alternatives very difficult. To further illustrate this point, the author contrasts Carr’s views with those of Isaiah Berlin and Leon Trotsky. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young leads over from the counterfactual history part of the special issue to the third section that explores how counterfactual thinking is – often as a matter of course – employed in disciplines or professions other than history. His article “Fallacies and Thresholds: Notes on the Early Evolution of Alternate History” reconstructs the founding decade of the Science Fiction subgenre Alternate History and traces the uses and functions that counterfactuals can have in a literary context. Helmut Weber then takes the reader into the allegedly dry and strictly fact-based realm of the law. In “The ‘But For’ Test and Other Devices –The Role of Hypothetical Events in the Law” he shows that many areas of modern jurisdiction are based on counterfactual enquiry which is a valid and, in fact, the only suitable means to re-construct an alternative reality against which a case’s reality has to be measured. The contributions of Jens Ennen and Ekaterina Svetlova then take us into the field of evaluation and forecasting in economics – another discipline in which counterfactuals are employed on a regular and rarely contested basis. In “The Evaluation of Welfare State Performance: Modelling a Counterfactual World” Ennen exemplifies how welfare state evaluation depends on counterfactual reasoning. In order to assess both their effectiveness and efficiency, welfare state reforms need to be tested against an unrealized alternative that can only be invoked with the help of counterfactuals. In Svetlova’s contribution “‘Do I See What the Market Does Not See?’: Counterfactual Thinking in Financial Markets”, portfolio managers resort to similar methods in order to perform better than the market in average. Apart from a worthwhile glimpse into the working environment of portfolio managers, Ekaterina Svetlova also offers a new and broader definition of counterfactual thinking that makes the term fit for explorations into the future. The fourth and final section of the special issue brings us back to counterfactual history. It offers four specific historical case studies that employ counterfactual thinking as a method of enquiry. The section opens with Juliane Schiel’s article “Crossing Paths between East and West. The Use of Counterfactual Thinking for the Concept of ‘Entangled History’”. Schiel aptly illustrates how counterfactuals can be particularly useful when trying to disentangle “entangled histories” – a field of history that emphasizes the mutual connections between seemingly unrelated or distant regions, protagonists or even time periods. “Entangled history” does not lend itself to deterministic interpretations of the past and rather enforces a chaotic view of history. By using the early encounters between Mongols and Mendicants as an example, Juliane Schiel shows that counterfactual thinking can help us to make such chaotic and “entangled histories” somewhat easier to handle. Elke Ohnacker stresses how much care must be devoted to selecting the right counterfactual questions in historical enquiry – counterfactuals that seemed possible, plausible or even probable at the time. In her case study “What If... Charlemagne’s Other Sons had Survived? Charlemagne’s Sons and the Problems of Royal Succession” she uses established knowledge about Charlemagne’s time to ask new, counterfactual questions. Thereby, she demonstrates that good counterfactuals are never completely speculative but rather build on known material and practices which they expand and reinterpret. In a similar vein, Sören Philipps re-interprets a much more current event with the help of counterfactuals. In “The birth of the European Union: Challenging the myth of the civilian power narrative” he picks a very probably point of bifurcation and explores what could have happened, had the European Defence Community been founded in 1954. Following Georg Schmid’s earlier lament about the inaccuracy of many metaphors used to describe alternative pasts and possible courses of history, Philipps suggests a new and somewhat less rigid metaphor – the cloud. Eventually, Tobias Winnerling sets out to explore “Invented Formosa, the Empire of the Great Khan and Lilliput: Can 18th century fiction be counterfactual?” Winnerling radically redefines the term counterfactuals and, thereby, questions the established way of thinking about counterfactuals. He proposes a new use for old travelogues and descriptions of the foreign that, from today’s point of view, cannot be considered sources of factual information anymore. Might they be usable as counterparts to empirical scenarios in historical comparisons, provided they can be qualified as counterfactual? All contributions share the common goal to highlight how counterfactual thinking – i.e. thinking about something that never came to happen – can have very fruitful and worthwhile results in an everyday-life or in an academic context. At best, **thinking counterfactually** about the current state of the world, about a real or perceived feeling of instability and insecurity, might provide a first handle on the situation.

## Counterfactuals

#### Contention three is counterfactuals—

#### Missile crisis key

Thorson ‘82

Stuart, Donald A. Sylvan, Ohio State University, “Counterfactuals and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 26, No. 4 (Dec., 1982), pp. 539-571

**The final outcome is familiar history**. A U.S. naval quarantine of Cuba coupled with negotiations with Soviet Politburo Chair- man Khrushchev led to assurances that the United States would not invade Cuba and a Soviet promise to remove certain missiles from Cuba. This incident is of considerable historical importance as one of the few known nuclear crises in world history. There are, however, some more subtle reasons for the event's importance. First among these is the growing evidence that decision makers **use significant "precedents"** in developing ways of dealing with new problems.2 U.S. decision making during the missile crisis is widely regarded as being of high quality.3 To a large extent, this positive evaluation may be related to the apparently benign ending of the crisis. If, however, the outcome could plausibly have been less desirable, then the status of the crisis as a positive precedent must be questioned. Many of the "revisionist" accounts of the U.S. handling of the missile crisis have raised serious objections to treating the case as a positive precedent. Thus, the missile crisis is an interesting case for policy analysis in that it can be used to examine "**what would have happened if?"** sorts of **questions**. Such counterfactual assertions are of im- portance both to the "science" of **foreign policy decision making** **and to the policy relevance of that science**. They are scientifically significant since it is through the analysis of counterfactuals that cause is distinguished from mere correlation. They are important to policy since most policy evaluations revolve around counter- factual questions of the sort "what would happen to q if p were true?" A discussion of both the overall utility of asking counter- factual questions and the role of such questions in policy analysis will appear later in this article.

#### Blockade key—it was a unique flashpoint for conflict.

Blight ‘89

James, PhD Psychology, HarvardCIGI Chair in Foreign Policy Development, Professor at BSIA, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis*

By October 22, excomm had decided on a middle course, a **quarantine** of Cuba. At 7:00 p.m. the President gave his speech, revealing to the nation and the world the presence of the missiles in Cuba and his strategy for removing them. We now believe, based on information derived from Soviet sources, that Khrushchev, having just returned from a long, well-publicized vacation designed in part to lull American intelligence agencies, was at least as shocked by Kennedy's speech as Kennedy was by Khrushchev's missiles. Khrushchev and the crisis exploded simultaneously. The unforgettable public phase of the Cuban missile/Caribbean crisis had now begun. Work at the missile sites in Cuba was **immediately speeded up** to become twenty-four hour activity. Soviet ships steaming toward Cuba approached the quarantine line very closely, then stopped dead in the water before reversing course and heading back to the Soviet Union. We now have reason to believe that the Soviet standstill at the quarantine line almost didn't happen. Only a furious, and still incompletely understood, round of activity in the Kremlin may have brought this about, for Khrushchev, furious with the blockade and with having had his scheme exposed, apparently had initially ordered the Soviet vessels to crash the line, located several hundred miles from Cuba. American standing orders were to sink any Soviet ship that tried to run the line, and there is no reason to doubt that they would have done so. Thus on the morning of Wednesday, October 24, war between the superpowers may have been less than an hour away when Khrushchev's order was rescinded and the Soviet ships and submarines turned back.

#### Counterfactuals key

Blight ‘87

James, Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, “Toward a Policy-Relevant Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War: Lessons for Psychologists From the Cuban Missile Crisis,” American Psychologist, Volume 42(1), January 1987, p 12–29

The Cuban missile crisis, to its most significant participants, was about competing national interests: the necessity to remove the missiles from Cuba and the necessity of avoiding a war, certainly a nuclear war, with the Soviet Union. **This does not mean stress was absent in the decision making** or that **the policies enacted were optimal.** It merely means that to every participant in the Cuban missile crisis, from the President down to ordinary American citizens, the crisis was about the conflict involved in trying to satisfy two conflicting, nonnegotiable interests. **That is the way it looked in 1962,** **that is the way policymakers** **today understand that event** and other crises, **and** that, for all we can tell, **will be the way the next deep crisis will appear to the policymakers who must try to manage it**. That is why **any** policy-relevant **psychology of nuclear crisis management** ought to start with the psychological reality of the policymakers—that is, with conflicting interests. We must, in other words, step into the policymakers' conceptual circle, not the other way around, if we are to aspire realistically to policy relevance in nuclear matters. What is to be done, generally speaking, by psychological researchers seeking to help reduce the risk of nuclear war? For the conceptual answer, I return to William James, via George Miller. Many years ago, Miller, addressing the convened members of the American Psychological Association for the first time as their president, startled his audience by telling them that, with regard to the pressing problems of our society—**poverty, racial discrimination, domestic violence, and matters of war and peace**—they ought to try to “give psychology away” (see Miller, 1969, pp. 1072–1074). In using this phrase, Miller not only meant that psychologists should turn their professional attention to these problems, he also implied something much more radical: that they (and we) should begin the process of giving psychology away by giving up claims to a priori expertise. In beginning to formulate questions whose answers might truly be helpful to society, psychologists, in Miller's view, should turn initially away from their research traditions and literatures and toward the worlds of raw experience shaped by society's pressing problems: what it really means to be poor, victimized by racism and street violence, or trapped in a tragic war (see Miller & Buckhout, 1972). Thus, Miller suggested, **it is the first duty of psychologists** (although hardly the last, of course!) to describe as accurately as possible the raw experience of the problems they wish to help solve. With Miller, I return to the fundamental proposition of William James with which I began: Avoid the psychologist's fallacy; avoid confusing the psychologist's reality with the psychological reality of the persons one wishes to understand; assume only, as James said in “The Stream of Thought,” that “the first fact for us…psychologists is that thinking of some sort goes on” (James, 1890, Vol. 1, p. 224). I would argue that this means that, no matter what our psychological pedigree may be, if we seek a policy-relevant psychology of avoiding nuclear war, **we must begin phenomenologically** (Blight, in press-a; in press-b). In those situations leading potentially to, and through, nuclear crises, **we need to begin by getting as close as possible to** the **experiential facts regarding what is feared by decision makers in nuclear crises** **and what it is like to have such concerns in those situations** (Wollheim, 1984). We want, as James might have said, detailed psychological descriptions of what decision makers in these situations have knowledge about and also what it is like to be directly acquainted with such knowledge (James, 1890, Vol. 1, pp. 221–223). This is where we psychologists ought to begin if we seek to reduce the risk of nuclear war: where actual nuclear policymakers have begun, and must begin, when they try to manage nuclear risks. For the empirical answer to the psychologists' question, What is to be done about risk of nuclear war?, we ought to return first to the Cuban missile crisis, the closest call ever to a major nuclear war, and try to get inside the thinking of its key participants. As an entry, we could hardly do better than to respond professionally to the invitation inadvertently issued to psychologists by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk. In a recent discussion, Rusk reflected on what he believes ought to be done to reduce the risk of nuclear war and, in so doing, he offers to psychologists the barest outline of a potentially very packed research agenda: To me, the overwhelming lesson to be drawn from the Cuban missile crisis is that governments, particularly the governments of the two nuclear superpowers, must do their best to avoid such crises because they are so utterly dangerous. I have never met a demigod or a superman. I have seen a lot of ordinary human beings carrying major responsibilities, grappling with the circumstances in which they find themselves. But [these were all] human beings with feet of clay. And now that such terrible destruction is operationally possible, we must find ways to back off and not let such crises appear. One small illustration of that: During the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy and his senior advisors were pretty cool and pretty calm throughout the entire exercise. But we sustained a crisis at a very high level of intensity for some thirteen days. **How long can human beings sustain a crisis at that level before sleeplessness, weariness, fear of the unknown, suspicion and accident** begin to **play a role?** So I hope both Washington and Moscow learned that we must back away from such crises and not let them develop. I think it is true that after the Cuban missile crisis, both Washington and Moscow were somewhat more prudent than they were before the crisis occurred. But is this a lesson that is **automatically transmitted from one generation of leaders to the next** generation who appear on the scene in our major countries? **I wish I could be sure of that.** (Rusk, 1983, pp. 1–2) As a significant participant in the terrifying events of October 1962, Rusk is acutely aware that it was, and is, **nowhere written** that such perilous encounters will always be resolved peacefully. The reasons why the missile crisis was resolved without a war, Rusk suggests, need looking into from a psychological perspective. Personality, perception, cognition, even psychophysiology, and especially learning—these all veritably leap from Rusk's retrospective analysis as potentially important dimensions of any psychological efforts to look into the problems of nuclear crises to which he alluded and that he experienced first-hand. If we seek a policy-relevant psychology of avoiding nuclear war, we ought therefore to begin by helping Rusk, and all of us, become surer than anyone presently is that we will never again come as close to nuclear catastrophe as we did in October 1962. Our aim should be to make a start toward the acquisition of this knowledge via the reconstruction of the 13 days of the missile crisis from inside the problem-solving perspective of the American President and his advisors, as they attempted to assess, balance, raise, and lower what they took to be their salient risks. Hour by hour, day by day, the President asked his advisors, and himself, “What are the sources of risk? How risky are they? What are the constituents of the risks? What are the options? What are the probable results to be expected from enacting the various options? How will the Soviets probably respond? What should we do in further response?” The relative psychopathology was not what the crisis was about. If we seek the construction of a policy-relevant psychology of avoiding nuclear war, we ought to try to get inside the evolving, relevant streams of thought of the President and his close associates as they thought, perceived, felt, and acted inside a crisis that most believed carried a substantial risk of nuclear war. The task we should set for ourselves might be represented by a single, simple, empty graph like that in Figure 1. The goal, in a nutshell, is to plot two figurative “curves”—one representing the evolving, estimated risk of not getting the Soviet missiles removed from Cuba, the other representing the estimated risk of an inadvertent nuclear war—and to suggest reasons why the “curves” are shaped and related as they are. How specific and informative will we be able to get in this endeavor and in similar exercises? What invariants or patterns will suggest themselves? What lessons, both positive and negative, ought to be drawn? We do not know yet. But because the question is how to contribute psychologically to lowering the risk of the most likely sort of catastrophic nuclear war, **and because the missile crisis is the capital case of this phenomenon**, I believe this is where and how we should begin.

#### We should understand the importance of fear—vote aff in spite of the negative’s impacts.

Blight ‘89

James, PhD Psychology, HarvardCIGI Chair in Foreign Policy Development, Professor at BSIA, *The Shattered Crystal Ball: Fear and Learning in the Cuban Missile Crisis*

All this fear about the crisis over the Soviet missiles in Cuba has been **discounted** by many serious students of nuclear policy as the understandable but hyperbolic enervations of the powerless and ignorant, fed by a sensationalist media. One might therefore regard these extreme reactions to the missile crisis as merely an epiphenomenal sidelight to the causally significant, coldly calculated, political-military drama being played out in Washington, Moscow, Havana, and on the high seas. In fact, this has been the dominant "**professional**" view of the missile crisis since its occurrence: it was conducted and resolved according to the complex calculations of power and bluff by men who acted much like cool, experienced high-stakes poker players. Lately, another "professional" view has gained favor among a growing number of students of nuclear crises: that the policymakers who managed the missile crisis acted exactly like ordinary citizens who provided a panicky, receptive audience for Ted Mack's pitch for Sominex. According to this view, the American policymakers close to President Kennedy entered needlessly into an escalatory spiral of threats and counter threats that nearly brought on a nuclear holocaust. According to these students of the crisis, we were lucky to have escaped without a catastrophic war, and lucky that Chairman Khrushchev agreed at the eleventh hour to the American demand that he withdraw his missiles. I argue throughout this book that both views contain some degree of truth, but that both are also highly misleading. There is no question that the calculation, central planning, and control during the missile crisis, at least on the American side, was unprecedented in any peacetime operation. Yet these calculations did not, as one would have predicted based on extravagant American conventional superiority in the Caribbean and overwhelming nuclear superiority at every level, lead the American government to attack and destroy the missile bases in Cuba. Moreover, there can also be no question that during the missile crisis, leaders on both sides were profoundly fearful. Even leaders not directly involved, far from Cuba but presumably within range of Soviet nuclear weapons, have recalled the crisis with recollected horror. British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, who spoke daily by telephone with President Kennedy during the pivotal week, was quite forthcoming about the way the week affected him. On Sunday, October 28, the same day as Collingwood's newscast, Macmillan reported having had "a sense of anticlimax, after days during which it was difficult to restrain yet necessary to conceal our emotions; on that Sunday afternoon my colleagues and I were able to share the feeling, if not of triumph, yet of relief and gratitude. We had been on the brink, almost over it."7 These feelings were echoed by the men who were most directly responsible for the outcome. Nikita Khrushchev, for example, recalled that week as a time when "the smell of burning hung in the air."8 Presidential Special Counsel Theodore Sorensen recalled with horror what it was like for John Kennedy to look directly down "the gun barrel of nuclear war."9 Yet despite an atmosphere of expectant foreboding, the policymakers did not crack; a way out was found, and war was avoided. Thus the key policymakers may have been neither rational actors nor irrational actors, as the commonest competing interpretations would have it. They were certainly fearful, but in spite of the magnitude of the fear they did not permit a failure of nuclear deterrence nor even a conventional war. This leads to the possibility that far from being an irrelevance or an impediment to a peaceful resolution, **fear may** instead **have been connected**, in some way, **to that great escape of October 1962.** My thesis is this: that fear in the missile crisis was not only connected to the outcome, but that it actually produced the learning required to escape the predicament without a war. 1 believe, therefore, that an appreciation of the role of fear in the missile crisis is an absolutely essential prerequisite to an accurate understanding of why it was resolved peacefully. The key to the puzzle, I argue, is to comprehend how fear in the leaders of the superpowers during the missile crisis was both **profound and adaptive**—that is, how the fear of the shattered crystal ball led not to psychological breakdown under stress, as one might have predicted, but to a peaceful resolution. To understand the connection between fear and learning in this nuclear crisis we must, I argue, gain an accurate understanding of the object of the fear: nuclear inadvertence. Leaders of both superpowers, who originally believed that their opposite numbers might be willing to risk nuclear war over Cuba, understood by October 26 to 28 that if war came, and if that led to nuclear war, it would occur despite, not because of, the wishes of both parties to the conflict. Once they realized that the real adversary was the uncontrollable situation they had created, they grappled with the perverse situation and reversed its trajectory. In the end, the fear of a shattered crystal ball may have been even more profound in the White House and Kremlin than it was in those living rooms within which sat the ordinary citizens who were horrified by the drama unfolding around them. Yet, as I will argue, the two types of fear were far from identical. Many citizens undoubtedly felt a visceral feeling of vulnerability to nuclear attack in a direct and immediate fashion. As was emphasized repeatedly in the media and in Congress, Soviet missiles were a mere 90 miles from the coast of Florida. Yet, as far as I can determine, American officials close to Kennedy felt little or none of this sort of fear. National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy put the distinction this way: It wasn't the fear of the foot soldier, afraid of being killed when his time comes to hit the beach or go over the top. It was rather the fear of the commanding officer who, having ordered his men to "charge," suddenly feels that he has given the wrong order, and that he may be leading those for whom he is responsible into disaster. It was the fear of being responsible, not of being a victim; and I can say that it was profound by that last weekend [of the crisis].10 This is precisely what we should seek to understand about this fearful nuclear crisis: **what the fear alluded to by Bundy was like**, **and what it was about.** If we can do so with reasonable accuracy we will, I think, **be approaching the** passionate **commitment to preventing its reoccurrence** that is **warranted by the probable catastrophic consequences of our failure to do so**. A few aspects of the crisis, while certainly relevant to its resolution, are not discussed in this book. The first is that while President Kennedy, all his closest advisers, and the majority of the members of the Executive Committee (excomm) (formed by Kennedy to advise him on the crisis) apparently harbored the dread of nuclear war, a small minority of excomm did not. These "hawks," dealt with at length in On the Brink," seemed to have misapplied to the missile crisis the lessons they learned in the era before the Soviets acquired nuclear capability. A second caveat has to do with the unavoidable asymmetry in this book between the attention given to American and Soviet sides of the crisis. What is available directly from the Soviet leadership is still derived almost completely from Khrushchev's memoirs.12 We are now beginning to learn more about the Soviet experience of the crisis. (The present state of our knowledge, or impressions, is contained in part three of On the Brink.) Yet everything we have learned suggests that the shattered crystal ball was as terrifyingly real to Khrushchev and his colleagues as it was to Kennedy and his advisers.

#### Thus, we advocate the following counterfactual plan: The United States federal government should increase its economic engagement toward Cuba by removing surface barriers to trade.