that Winnie Mandela has refused to join, an important
distinction in a country whose disfranchised blacks put a
premium on democratic process. When the United Demo-
cratic Front, the main anti-apartheid coalition, was formed
in 1983, it elected Sisulu as its co-president, not Mandela.
When young radicals lost their heads, Sisulu tried to hold
them back while Mandela egged them on. When the town-
ship of Soweto selected delegates to negotiate an end to the
two-and-a-half-year rent boycott, Sisulu was one of the
candidates; Mandela at one point had been paying her rent
in order to get construction permits for her half-completed
mansion. While Mandela has surrounded herself with
thuggish bodyguards, Sisulu usually walks to work by
herself. The most powerful woman in South Africa can be
seen trudging alone past shacks and through garbage to a
clinic where she works as a nurse. To black South Africans,
it was no surprise that in February 1988 the government
placed restrictions on Sisulu while leaving Mandela free. In
fact, were it not for Mandela's telegenic beauty, Sisulu
would have been at the forefront in black politics.

But the stout and unglamorous Sisulu remains an obscure
figure to most Americans.

Many U.S. commentators say that "the Winnie affair"
harms the anti-apartheid movement. But if any-
thing, the response of anti-apartheid groups has revealed
the strengths of the South African opposition. Unlike Afri-
can countries that have clung to corrupt and power-crazed
leaders, unlike Western countries that have covered up the
improprieties of their leaders, the "mass democratic move-
ment" has made a clear declaration of its principles by ex-
posing and disavowing Mandela's actions.

In 1988, when two youths testified to being beaten by
the Mandela Football Club—a.k.a. Winnie Mandela's
bodyguards—a committee of Soweto community leaders
launched an elaborate backstage effort to save Mandela
from herself. But she failed to disband her bodyguards,
who then kidnapped four more youths and brought them
back to Mandela's house, killing the youngest. The only
outsider to see the youths while they were at the house was
the respected Indian physician Abubaker Asvat. But the
next day Asvat—who worked with Albertina Sisulu—was
himself gunned down in his office by two assailants. Fed
up, the leaders of the anti-apartheid movement went public
with their dispute. While acknowledging Mandela's own
suffering, the statement they issued also said, "The demo-
ocratic movement has uncompromisingly fought against vi-
olations of human rights from whatever quarters. We are
not prepared to remain silent when those who are violating
human rights claim to be doing so in the name of the strug-
gle against apartheid.... We are of the view that Mrs.
Mandela has abused the trust and confidence which she has
enjoyed over the years.... Often her practices have vi-
olated the spirit and ethos of the democratic movement."

There was no split inside South African black politics
over this statement. It was written after consultation with
the past and current heads of the South African Council of
Churches, the spokesman and co-president of the United
Democratic Front, the head of the Release Mandela Cam-
aign, leaders of the country's biggest black trade union
federation, the general secretary of the mineworkers' union,
and assorted others—black leaders from every walk of
life, every generation of protest, every province.

The difficulties that these leaders overcame in casting
out Winnie Mandela should not go unappreciated. Many
blacks feel that protecting Nelson Mandela's wife is part of
their responsibility to him. But Nelson Mandela has made
things easier for them by placing political considerations
above personal ones. Despite his dependence upon his
wife as his link with the outside world, he has not taken
her side against fellow blacks. When he learned of her
mansion, he ordered construction halted. When she tried
to profit by giving American businessmen of dubious re-
pute power to market the Mandela name, he repudiated
the deal. Similarly, he endorsed the censure of his wife and
urged her to disband her "soccer team." Only after she
complied did the anti-apartheid movement re-establish
contacts with her, and even then only at arm's length. "She
wanted to have her little kingdom," said Mazibuko, for-
merly one of Mandela's most ardent admirers. "And now
that kingdom is exploding."

At a meeting at Duke University in February, ANC
information director Thabo Mbeki tried to put the best
face on the Winnie Mandela scandal. "She's lived without
her husband for 27 years now. During that 27 years she has
been in and out of prison. She has been banished from her
house in Johannesburg and had her houses burned down.
She has been an outstanding participant in the liberation
struggle." (A member of the audience noted that he used
the word participant, instead of leader.) Mbeki added, "We
shall have to be very careful now. The same government
that banished her and imprisoned her husband cannot be
expected to do anything but seek the destruction of this
outstanding opponent of apartheid." If the South African
authorities are truly bent on her destruction, the most
effective strategy might be to leave her alone.

STEVEN MUFSON

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Where were you in '62?

CUBAN GRAFFITI

AFTER THE outbreak of the First World War, Prince von
Bulow, the ex-chancellor of Germany, asked his suc-
cessor, Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, how things had
slipped out of control. Bethmann-Hollweg replied, "Ah, if
only I knew." Because the 1962 Cuban missile crisis is the
closest the cold war came to World War III, Western schol-
ars have studied it intensively. But they have been hin-
dered by a lack of access to the Soviet side of the story. Aside from Khrushchev's memoirs, sometimes treated as suspect, the only Soviet studies available have been turgid tracts devoid of fact and full of blame for the West.

Glasnost has changed that. In January top-level Soviet participants in the crisis met with their American counterparts in Moscow. Around the table sat Kennedy administration alumni McGeorge Bundy, Robert McNamara, Theodore Sorensen, and Pierre Salinger; former Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko; Ambassadors Anatoly Dobrynin and Alexander Alekseev; and the sons of Khrushchev and Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan. Also present were Cuban participants in the crisis and assorted scholars. Much new information came to light, and some of it, as hoped, holds lessons for the future. In particular, current questions about modernizing the U.S. ground-based nuclear missile force came into sharper focus.

Western scholars have long wondered why the Soviets placed the missiles in Cuba. Speculations ranged from a desire to put pressure on the United States for a settlement of the Berlin question to an attempt to solidify Soviet leadership in the emerging rivalry with China. The answer seems closer to the twin motives mentioned in Khrushchev's memoirs: to deter an American invasion of Cuba, and to redress the nuclear imbalance.

Both Cubans and Soviets expected a full-scale American invasion after the failure of the American-supported invasion by Cuban exiles at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Recently declassified American documents indicate that the United States did move troops and pre-position ammunition in keeping with contingency plans for an invasion. And infiltration teams sent to Cuba under Operation "Mongoose" fueled Cuban and Soviet suspicions that an invasion was imminent. McNamara and Bundy denied that Kennedy would have actually launched an invasion, but McNamara admitted that had he been a Cuban or Soviet analyst in 1962, he would have expected one.

Khrushchev, a believer in proletarian revolution, felt frustrated when his top military adviser, Marshal Malinovsky, warned him that Soviet conventional forces could not protect Castro's regime. In addition, Khrushchev felt pinched by the American bases surrounding the U.S.S.R. and wanted Kennedy to feel the same anxiety. In the words of one Soviet participant, he wanted "to put a hedgehog in the Americans' pants."

Soviet strategic inferiority added to Khrushchev's anxiety. The Soviets disclosed in Moscow that they had only 20 intercontinental ballistic missiles at the time of the crisis, rather than the 75 attributed to them by the United States. Meanwhile, the United States had more than 229 ground-based missiles, as well as sea-based and air-based nuclear arsenals far superior to the Soviets'. The placing of 66 medium- and intermediate-range missiles in Cuba wouldn't have substantially narrowed this gap, but it would have more than tripled the Soviets' ability to threaten the United States directly—as opposed to threatening U.S. forces and allies in Europe—with a nuclear strike.

The outcome of the crisis, it turns out, was a less clear-cut victory for the United States than some earlier accounts indicated. There were three ways to remove the missiles—"shoot 'em out, squeeze 'em out [by blockade], or buy 'em out," and Kennedy apparently relied in part on the last option. The threat of force was undoubtedly important, but there was also a deal—a much more explicit promise to remove obsolete American missiles in Turkey than Robert Kennedy's book, Thirteen Days, describes. Why did the Soviets collude for so long in keeping this secret, and thus protect the United States from the wrath of its NATO allies? In part because that was the deal, but also because they would have offended Castro if they had admitted to using Cuban missiles as a bargaining chip.

Traditionally, some Western analysts have argued that the American victory was Pyrrhic because it led to a massive Soviet nuclear buildup in the 1960s and early '70s. They cite Ambassador Vasily Kuznetsov's comment to John McCloy after the crisis that "you will never be able to do this to us again." However, in a side conversation at the Moscow conference, a Soviet general revealed that the Soviets had laid out a 15-year nuclear program in 1960, and that the buildup would have progressed with or without the crisis. Like Eisenhower in the 1950s, Khrushchev had decided that nuclear forces are cheaper than conventional forces and was trying to get "more bang for the ruble."

Both Kennedy and Khrushchev have been criticized for underplaying their hands. Some Soviet and Cuban participants felt their side could have gotten more in the settlement, just as some Americans have argued that Kennedy should have insisted on the removal of Castro as well as the missiles. Using a memorable mixed metaphor, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1962, said we had the Soviets "on the run," but we "offered them a piece of cake." But these arguments from both sides, though easy to make in retrospect, discount the frame of mind of both Kennedy and Khrushchev in October 1962: both leaders sensed that matters could slip out of their control.

On October 27 an American U-2 reconnaissance plane strayed into Soviet airspace in what could have been interpreted as preparation for a pre-emptive strike. On the same day Soviet forces shot down another U-2 over Cuba, leading to strong pressure on Kennedy for military retaliation. According to Soviet participants, the shutdown was not authorized by Moscow, which had given orders not to fire unless attacked. Soviet generals, given only two minutes to respond to the intruder, had exceeded their authority.

All Khrushchev knew was that an American had been killed without Moscow giving the command. When Bobby Kennedy told Dobrynin on October 27 that it was essential to come to an agreement by the next day, both sides saw it less as an ultimatum than as a statement of fact. On the next day, a Sunday morning, Khrushchev took the extraordinary step of openly broadcasting his agreement to remove the missiles because he did not.
trust the slow diplomatic communications of that time.

Certainly one of the lessons of the Cuban crisis is to be wary about drawing simple lessons. Times change. New crises would involve different ratios of nuclear and conventional forces. New military technologies promise greater prospects of control in some ways, but leave less time to react. The domestic political configuration is also different (again, in part because of new technologies). It is hard to imagine a president today enjoying a week’s immunity from press and congressional pressure while he formulated his responses privately. If that week had not existed, the first, more bellicose responses discussed in October 1962—such as an air strike—might have become policy.

Still, there are some enduring lessons here, particularly in the realm of nuclear deterrence. Deterrence theory has become somewhat like a theology, with simple statements of faith often bolstered by elaborate, obscure, and sometimes irrelevant arguments. There are complex game theory models and intricate counts of draw-down curves. Fine calculations warn about marginal advantages and dangerous windows of vulnerability.

Such analyses usually recommend expensive new acquisitions. In 1981, for example, the public was told that the Soviets had superiority because of their hypothetical ability to carry out a first strike against the 20 percent of the American nuclear force in land-based silos. It was not that the Soviets would actually strike (we still had enormous capability for retaliation), but that the marginal differences in ICBMs would give the Soviets coercive political power. We would be pushed around in Europe or the Persian Gulf unless we closed the window quickly. The decision as to how to cut the Soviet advantage is now being made in the Bush administration, and the current favorites for the job are mobile Midgetman missiles and mobile MX missiles.

The Cuban crisis provides a rare glimpse into how real leaders behave when faced with the unprecedented destructive power of nuclear weapons. And it shows that deterrence is both more fragile and more robust than some theorists have considered.

Deterrence is fragile in the sense that even clear-cut nuclear superiority appears not to be a reliable deterrent against adventurism on the part of an adversary. Before the crisis, Khrushchev was at a massive strategic nuclear disadvantage, and Kennedy openly warned him not to put missiles in Cuba. According to window of vulnerability enthusiasts, Khrushchev should have been intimidated into inaction. Instead he took the largest gamble in postwar Soviet foreign policy. Nor do more recent events bear out the idea that a nuclear advantage translates into commensurate political advantage. During the 1980s the Soviet Union added more warheads than did the United States, and American ICBMs became more vulnerable. Yet the political victories of the 1980s went more to the United States—in Afghanistan and Angola, for example—than to the Soviet Union. In scientific terms, one might say that the window of vulnerability hypothesis was falsified. But in politics, conclusions are never simple.

Nuclear deterrence is robust in the sense that, as the threat of a nuclear war grows, national leaders can become rapidly less aggressive. After the U-2 shootdown, when he sensed a loss of control, Khrushchev quickly settled even though he might have gotten more out of Kennedy by holding out. Kennedy, too, might have gotten a better deal by delaying. But the thought of even a few nuclear weapons landing on American cities induced great caution among American policy-makers, despite both nuclear and conventional superiority.

In short, before a crisis, conventional capabilities are more important to deterrence than nuclear superiority. But during a crisis, a little nuclear fear goes a long way. Robust deterrence rests on strong conventional forces with an adequate nuclear arsenal in the background.

Translated into contemporary terms, the moral of the story is that, though modernization of our ground-based missiles is in order, it needn’t be a crash program. The reason we need to modernize is to ensure against the possibility that Soviet technological innovation could someday render our air-based and sea-based missiles vulnerable. The reason there is no great hurry is that those two legs of our triad are not going to become vulnerable in the next few years—and, as we’ve seen, there is no other urgent reason to modernize; reducing a marginal Soviet nuclear advantage won’t necessarily pay any geopolitical dividends. Though it is time to start a land-based missile modernization program, the program needn’t be so dramatic as to divert great resources from the conventional arms budget, where incremental modernization can have commensurate power payoffs.

Perhaps the best lesson from the Cuban case is to be wary about the myth of control and about too rationalistic a view of history. Even with careful planning, history always has its accidents. For example, Colonel Penkovsky, a U.S. spy, was arrested soon after Kennedy announced the blockade on October 22. Penkovsky had two special codes he could send the Americans in the event of emergency: one regarding his arrest, and one warning of a surprise nuclear attack. He sent the latter. Fortunately, when it was received in the CIA, it was regarded by working-level officials as unreliable and not sent up the line.

When Bethmann-Hollweg and the kaiser of Germany indulged in brinkmanship in August 1914, they expected to repeat the success Germany had enjoyed when it forced Russia to back down in the Bosnian crisis that von Bülow had managed in 1908. But von Bülow later noted that he had warned Bethmann not to try to emulate him. The most unambiguous lesson to be drawn from reconsidering the Cuban missile crisis is that political leaders should not try to repeat it.

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