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The Cultural Production of Crises: U.S. Identity and Missiles in Cuba

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"On Tuesday morning, October 16, shortly after 9:00 o'clock, President Kennedy called and asked me to come to the White House. He said only that we were facing great trouble. Shortly afterward, in his office, he told me that a U-2 had just finished a photographic mission and that the Intelligence Community had become convinced that Russia was placing missiles and atomic weapons in Cuba" (R. F. Kennedy, 1971: 1). So began the "Cuban missile crisis."

The discovery of Soviet nuclear-capable missiles in Cuba was understood by U.S. state officials to signal the onset of a serious international crisis: the threat these missiles posed to U.S. security, and the concomitant existence of a crisis, were just plain obvious. Because of their offensive capabilities, the missiles were a grave "threat to peace" (J. F. Kennedy, in "October 27, 1962," 1987–88: 49) and their deployment was "intolerable and unacceptable" (Rusk, in "White House Tapes and Minutes," 1985: 172). As General Maxwell Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the crisis, has since explained, "there was no question about the problem. The President announced his objective within an hour of seeing the photographs of the missiles: it was to get the missiles out of Cuba" (in Blight and Welch, 1990: 77). And, according to Douglas Dillon, then-Secretary of the Treasury:

> While everyone at our first ExComm [Executive Committee of the National Security Council] meeting, specifically including the President, agreed that the emplacement of Soviet MRBMs and IRBMs in

> Cuba was totally unacceptable and that they had to be gotten out one way or the other, I do not recall any specific discussion then or at later meetings of the ExComm as to just why they were unacceptable. *It just seemed obvious to all of us.* (In ibid., 49; emphasis added)

The essential character of the Cuban missile crisis *as* a crisis has been no more in doubt among (U.S.) scholars than among U.S. policymakers. The representation of the Soviet missile deployment and its immediate aftermath as a shocking foreign-policy crisis has been accepted and reproduced by most scholars, who have routinely taken U.S. decision makers' understandings of the events of October 1962 as the baseline from which to conduct their analyses (e.g., Abel, 1966; Allison, 1971). Although scholars have asked many questions about the events of October 1962, they have rarely asked whether or not these events actually had to be or should have been understood as a crisis. For example, Graham Allison's famous study of the missile crisis begins with four questions: (1) Why did the Soviet Union place strategic offensive missiles in Cuba? (2) Why did the United States respond with a naval quarantine of Soviet shipments to Cuba? (3) Why were the missiles withdrawn? and (4) What are the lessons of the missile crisis? (1971: 1–2). Rather than asking how these events came to be constituted as a "crisis," their status as a crisis requiring immediate action is assumed. Similarly, Ronald Pope argued in 1982 that the analysis of newly available Soviet materials could shed light on several important issues concerning the Cuban missile crisis, among them "why the missiles were sent to Cuba; what the significance of their deployment was; who, in the Soviet view, was responsible for the subsequent crisis; why the missiles were removed; who was responsible for ending the crisis; what the immediate results of the crisis were; and, finally, what lessons the Soviets seem to have drawn from this confrontation" (1982: 3). Again, the existence of a crisis, rather than being questioned or explained, is taken for granted from the outset.

But asking whether or not these events could have been understood otherwise than as a crisis is neither silly nor insignificant. After all, the Soviet Union lived with U.S. missiles in Turkey without insisting on a "Turkish missile crisis," so, crises are not inherent in the presence of enemy missiles, even nuclear ones, near one's borders. Furthermore, as demonstrated later in this chapter, alternative

understandings of these events are not only plausible, but were available both to U.S. state officials and to subsequent commentators and analysts. That the Cuban missile crisis was a "crisis," then, is not in fact obvious; rather, the unquestioned status of these events as a crisis is a puzzle to be explained. In this chapter, I therefore ask: how did the events of October 1962 come to be understood as a crisis? In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that the Cuban missile crisis in particular, and crises more generally, are social, and specifically cultural, constructions.

The Cuban missile crisis is a useful exemplar because it has "assumed genuinely mythic significance" (Blight, Nye, and Welch, 1987: 170)—it has come to be treated, at least in the United States, as the paradigmatic Cold War crisis. It was "one of a few known nuclear crises in world history" (Thorson and Sylvan, 1982: 540) and one that exposed starkly the dangers of nuclear confrontation. During this "crisis," "the American people lived under the threat of disaster" (Divine, 1971: 3), as, of course, did many other people. Of equal importance is the canonical status achieved by the Cuban missile crisis as a masterpiece of "crisis management" (e.g., Richardson, 1988: 14). According to the orthodox U.S. narrative of these events, President Kennedy's "combination of toughness and restraint, of will, nerve and wisdom, so brilliantly controlled, so matchlessly calibrated . . . dazzled the world" (Schlesinger, 1965: 81).[1] Finally, in the fields of security and crisis studies, the Cuban missile crisis has received as much attention as any other crisis. In fact, it was this particular crisis that "spurred on" the development of the field of crisis studies in the 1960s and 1970s (Seeger, 1995: 17). Thus, if it can be shown that the Cuban missile crisis, this paragon of crises, was a cultural construction, then the case for the construction of all crises is rendered that much more plausible.

WHAT CRISIS?

Against the assumption that crises present themselves as objective facts, I argue that crises are social constructions that are forged by state officials in the course of producing and reproducing state identity. If crises are constructed in relation to particular state identities, events that are ostensibly the same will in fact be constituted as different crises, or not as a crisis at all, by and for states with different identities. The diverse ways in which the events of October 1962

were represented in the foreign-policy discourses of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba offer a striking example.

For the United States, these events became known as the "Cuban missile crisis." The crisis was relatively short, spanning a mere thirteen days from October 16, when the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba was confirmed and reported to the ExComm, to October 28, when the Soviets agreed to withdraw the missiles.[2] At issue in this crisis were Soviet missiles—it started with their discovery and ended with their withdrawal. The cause of the crisis was the Soviet missile deployment; responsibility for the crisis thus rested with the Soviet leadership. This missile deployment was a *crisis*, rather than, say, a mere nuisance, because the deployment of the missiles in Cuba by the Soviet other challenged the very identity of the United States, not only as the leader of the "free world" but also as the guarantor of freedom in the Western Hemisphere. At the same time, it provided an opportunity—realized through the successful U.S. quarantine—for the United States to reassert its leadership identity.

For the Soviets, in contrast, these events were the "Caribbean crisis" (e.g., Khrushchev, 1970; Gromyko, 1971). The situation was one of imminent U.S. aggression against Cuba. The time frame is much longer and includes not only the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion but a prolonged history of U.S. aggression against Cuba. The issue was U.S. imperialism and the threat that it presented to socialism in general and to the socialist experiment in Cuba in particular. The cause of the crisis was, broadly, the threat of further U.S. aggression against Cuba and, more immediately, its unreasonable response to the defensive Soviet missile deployment. The identity for which these events were the "Caribbean crisis" is a subject—the Soviet Union—defined as the leader of the socialist bloc pledged to support socialist states and surrounded by a hostile other—the aggressive, nuclear-armed, global capitalist alliance led by the United States. The "crisis" for this subject, the urgent problem to be solved, was the threat to Soviet identity as the leader of the socialist world posed both by an imminent U.S. invasion of Cuba and the feared overthrow of Cuban socialism and by the U.S. insistence that the missiles be removed. This crisis also provided the Soviet Union with the opportunity—ostensibly realized in the U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba—to reaffirm its identity as the leader of the global socialist movement.

For the Cubans, what has come to be called the "October crisis"

(e.g., Castro, 1992; Dorticós, 1962) is, yet again, substantially different. The situation was one in which the Cubans were attempting, with military assistance from the Soviet Union, to protect themselves against renewed aggression from their U.S. other. The time frame, unlike that of the "Caribbean crisis," is somewhat vaguely limited to October and November 1962 but, unlike the "Cuban missile crisis," it is understood to be embedded in the almost overwhelming insecurity brought on by relentless U.S. aggression (e.g., the Bay of Pigs invasion) and intervention (e.g., Operation Mongoose). The issue was fundamentally one of sovereignty: Cuba's right as an independent state to protect itself—its independence and its revolution—from imperialist aggression. The cause of the crisis was, again, the threat of renewed U.S. aggression and, more immediately, the act of war (i.e., the blockade) with which the United States responded to the Soviet missiles. The identity for which these events were a crisis was a small and vulnerable, yet sovereign, state attempting to protect and maintain its fledgling socialist revolution. The "crisis," the urgent problem to be solved, was the threat to this Cuban revolutionary identity posed by a hegemonic counterrevolutionary U.S. other poised, as the Cubans thought, for an imminent invasion and for the overthrow of the Cuban Revolution. Simultaneously, this crisis provided an opportunity—only partially realized in the U.S. no-invasion pledge—for Cuba to reassert its identity both as a sovereign state and as a successful socialist revolution.

As these contesting narratives indicate, the events of October 1962 have been constructed quite differently. The nature of this crisis, then, is not obvious. Although all three narratives represent these events as a crisis of some kind, albeit with notably different causes and issues at stake, it is worth pointing out that it was not inevitable—it was not given by any objective facts—that these events be read as a crisis. For example, had U.S. state officials represented the Soviet missile deployment as irrelevant to U.S. identity, the events of October 1962 would not have constituted a crisis for anyone. Such a representation is not unthinkable. Indeed, drawing on some of the arguments made by U.S. state officials, in particular those of then-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, one can quite easily generate a narrative in which these events were not a crisis at all (e.g., Weldes, 1996: 293–95).

On such a hypothetical account, the salient situation prior to

October 1962 was one in which the nuclear balance was strongly tipped in favor of the United States. Because the much-touted "missile gap" had been exposed as a fraud in February 1961, Soviet strategic pretensions had been deflated and its Cold War credibility undermined. The issue in October 1962 thus revolved around the nuclear strategic imbalance. Although Khrushchev deployed the missiles in Cuba in order to help the Soviet Union to "equalize what the West likes to call 'the balance of power'" (Khrushchev, 1970: 547), the United States nonetheless retained overwhelming strategic superiority. The Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba, as McNamara more recently argued, simply "made no difference." As he explained,

> What difference would the extra 40 [Soviet missiles] have made to the overall balance? If my memory serves me correctly, we had some five thousand nuclear warheads as against their three hundred. Can anyone seriously tell me that their having 340 would have made any difference? The military balance wasn't changed. I didn't believe it then, and I don't believe it now. (In Blight and Welch, 1990: 23)

According to this representation, the Soviet missile deployment might have been understood as irrelevant to U.S. identity—whether as the leader of the Free World, as the leader of the Western hemisphere, or as the global nuclear superpower—and so need not have triggered any crisis at all. And if it had not been constructed as a crisis for the United States, then, of course, it would not have been a crisis for the Soviet Union or Cuba either. As these divergent narratives indicate, there are no objective crises out there waiting to be discovered or observed by state officials or analysts. Instead, events are differently constructed *as* crises, or not constructed as crises at all, in different cultural contexts and in relation to the discursively constituted identities of states.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

The Cuban missile crisis was produced in representations of the Soviet missile deployment in Cuba as a serious threat to, or the production of insecurity for, the deeply entrenched Cold War identity of the United States as the global leader in the battle with communism and as the regional leader of the Western Hemisphere. At the same time it provided the United States with the opportunity to reassert that identity, to attempt, yet again, to secure its always precarious self. At

the heart of the Cuban missile crisis, then, resides a culturally constituted subject—the United States—with a particular, discursively constituted identity.

A by now classic anecdote nicely illustrates the importance of the identity of the United States to the production of the missile crisis. During an ExComm debate over the advisability of launching an unannounced air strike against the new-sprung missile bases in Cuba, Robert Kennedy is reported to have written in a note: "I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor" (in Schlesinger, 1965: 803). Later in the discussion, according to Schlesinger, Kennedy insisted that

> he did not believe that, with all the memory of Pearl Harbor and all the responsibility we would have to bear in the world afterward, the President of the United States could possibly order such an operation. For 175 years *we had not been that kind of country.* Sunday-morning surprise blows on small nations were not in our tradition. Thousands of Cubans would be killed without warning, and hundreds of Russians too. We were fighting for something more than survival, and a sneak attack would constitute a betrayal of our heritage and our ideals. (Ibid., 806–7; emphasis added)

The use of the Pearl Harbor analogy thus served to underscore for U.S. decision makers what kind of subject the United States was *not*—it was not a country whose traditions would countenance a "sneak attack," at least not against a small country on a Sunday morning. As a result, certain policy options were effectively foreclosed, at least in the short term, and the proposal to launch surprise air strikes against Cuba was temporarily shelved. But the identity of the United States, and specific arguments about what sort of subject the United States was or was not, did not simply serve to score debating points among decision makers. Instead, U.S. state identity was the linchpin around which the events of October 1962 were constructed *as* a crisis. To demonstrate this, I highlight four central and interconnected facets of the Cold War representation of "the United States"—as global and hemispheric leader, as the bastion and defender of freedom, as strong and resolute, and as credible—and then show how the Soviet missile deployment was represented as an acute and formidable threat—that is, as "a crisis"—in relation to this discursively constituted identity.

U.S. COLD WAR IDENTITY

During the Cold War, "leadership" anchored the logic of an emphatically masculinist U.S. state identity. The United States was the "leader" of "the West" or the "free world" and the global champion of "freedom" and "democracy."[3] This leadership role was forcefully asserted in 1950 in NSC 68, a pivotal National Security Council policy planning document: "the absence of order among nations," its authors argued, "is becoming less and less tolerable" and "this fact imposes upon us [the United States], in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership" (U.S. National Security Council, 1950: 390). Two assumptions were typically adduced to support the claim to U.S. leadership. First, it was treated as axiomatic that the United States won World War II and that this victory imposed on it the awesome responsibility of creating "half a world, the free half" in its own image (Acheson, 1969: "Apologia Pro Libre Hoc"). Already in 1945 President Truman had announced that "Whether we like it or not, we must all recognize that the victory which we have won has placed upon the American people the continued burden of responsibility for world leadership" (1945: 549). The successful outcome of World War II, that is, forced the United States, however reluctantly, to shoulder the burden of global leadership. After all, the United States was now "the only source of power capable of mobilizing successful opposition to the Communist goal of world conquest" (NSC 7) (U.S. National Security Council, 1948: 165).

Second, the United States was saddled with this "burden" as a result of its exceptional character. U.S. uniqueness resided in its "free society," which provided for the rest of the world an outstanding model of the way in which the "free way of life" and "free institutions"—in particular, representative or liberal democracy and a liberal market economy—could develop and flourish. As John F. Kennedy explained, "We [the United States] stand for freedom" (1961d: 396) because "our nation is on the side of man's desire to be free, and the desire of nations to be independent" (1961c: 369). This uniqueness, in turn, conferred upon the United States the "right to the moral leadership of the planet" (John F. Kennedy, quoted in Lundestad, 1989: 527). And the United States was not only the model but also the patron of freedom. Indeed, as the authors of NSC 68 argued, the United States had the obligation to "demonstrate

power, confidence and a sense of moral and political direction" so that these same qualities could blossom elsewhere (U.S. National Security Council, 1950: 404).

Moreover, for the United States both to preserve its own unique freedoms and successfully to serve as a guide to others, it had to "foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish" (ibid., 401). This need stemmed from the established Cold War axiom that freedom is indivisible: a threat to freedom anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere. Truman, for example, justified U.S. participation in the Korean War on these grounds: "We cannot hope to maintain our own freedom," he argued, "if freedom elsewhere is wiped out" (1950: 610). In 1959, during the Berlin crisis, Eisenhower assured West Berliners that "We recognize that freedom is indivisible. Wherever in the world freedom is destroyed, by that much is every free nation hurt" (1959a: 30). As a result, as Kennedy asserted in 1961, "every time a country, regardless of how far away it may be from our own borders, every time that country passes behind the Iron Curtain, the security of the United States is thereby endangered" (1961b: 624). The indivisibility of freedom obligated the United States to "promote a world order" (George F. Kennan, in Gaddis, 1982: 27) in which freedom could prosper.

The indivisibility of freedom was particularly salient in the "Western Hemisphere" over which the United States, through the Monroe Doctrine and its successors and extensions, had established protective custody.[4] Although Khrushchev had announced in 1961 that the Monroe Doctrine was "dead" (Khrushchev, 1961: 6), the U.S. State Department made it clear at the time of the missile crisis that the principle embodied in the Monroe Doctrine "is just as valid in 1962 as it was in 1823, though the old imperialism of Western Europe has been replaced by the new and far more menacing political and ideological imperialism of international communism" (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1962: 6). According to the Caracas Resolution of 1954, "The domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international communist movement extending to this hemisphere the political system of an extracontinental power would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and independence of the American states, endangering the peace of America" (in Atkins, 1989: 223). Kennedy drew on the logic of freedom's

indivisibility in addressing the continued danger presented by the Castro regime in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs disaster: "We intend to profit from this lesson," he argued, "We intend to intensify our efforts for a struggle in many ways more difficult than war. . . . I am determined upon our system's survival and success, regardless of the cost and regardless of the peril!" (1961a: 306). Communism in Cuba posed a threat to the "survival and success" of the U.S. system not, as Kennedy himself admitted, because "a nation of Cuba's size" was a direct threat to the United States, but because Cuba served as "a base for subverting the survival of other free nations throughout the hemisphere." As a result, Kennedy argued, "the real issue" in Cuba was "the survival of freedom in this hemisphere itself" (ibid., 305).

The pervasive rhetoric of "*burdens* of responsibility" implied that the obligations attendant upon U.S. leadership were at least in part an encumbrance. In fulfilling its leadership role, then, the United States was acting altruistically rather than strictly for its own gain. This altruism is captured in the notion of U.S. "commitments": commitments are pledges or promises that the United States is bound to honor, even though they may entail significant costs. The public-spiritedness of U.S. leadership implied by the term *commitments* was routinely opposed to the self-interested aggressiveness of the Soviets and of communists in general. In discussing the global struggle with "international Communism," for instance, Theodore Sorenson distinguished "U.S. commitment" from "Communist power involvement" in places such as the Congo, Laos, and South Vietnam (1965: 634).[5] Attributing "power involvements" to communists and "commitments" to the United States implied that "Communists" were engaged in aggression for the sake of private, self-interested gain (e.g., imperial expansion and ultimately world domination), whereas the United States was merely discharging, in other-regarding fashion, the responsibilities of a leader. The implication is clear: commitments made by leaders such as the United States are legitimate; the activities they warrant are worthy. The power involvements of communists, on the other hand, are illegitimate and their activities nefarious. The rhetoric of burdens of leadership, in part by differentiating the United States from the aggressive other it was charged with combating, thus constituted a U.S. identity that acts altruistically in the pursuit of admirable goals such as freedom and democracy.

A related contrast, between the "openness" of U.S. commitments

and "the atmosphere of oriental secretiveness and conspiracy" (Kennan, 1946: 55) that marked Soviet aggression, helped to flesh out this U.S. identity. As Wymberley Coerr (then Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs) asserted in 1961:

> Our objective toward the nations of Latin America is simple: We want the friendship of their governments and peoples. . . . We seek no satellites. We control no fifth columns or traitorous domestic parties with which to convert independent nations into satellites. We cherish the independence of the nations in this hemisphere as the key to their friendship for us, recognizing that it would suffer from undue exertions of our influence and that under Soviet domination it would die. (U.S. Department of State, 1961: 1)

On this account, the United States sought friendship and promoted independence while its Soviet adversary sought satellites, controlled fifth columns and traitorous domestic parties, and exercised domination. On the model of "Red Fascism" (Paterson, 1989), despotic "totalitarian" regimes were endowed with a penchant for secrecy and duplicity. "Our adversaries," Kennedy argued in 1961,

> use the *secrecy* of the *totalitarian* state and the discipline *to mask* the effective use of guerilla forces *secretly* undermining independent states, and *to hide* a wide international network of agents and activities which threaten the fabric of democratic government everywhere in the world. And their single-minded effort to destroy freedom is strengthened by the discipline, *the secrecy*, and the swiftness with which an efficient *despotism* can move. (1961c: 367; emphasis added)

The United States, in contrast, engaged in open rather than secret diplomacy, was forthright and trustworthy rather than treacherous, and used force only defensively, not for purposes of domination. As Adlai Stevenson explained in 1962, intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) had been placed by the United States onto the territory of various NATO members "without concealment or deceit, as a consequence of agreements freely negotiated and publicly declared" (1962: 729). Thus, U.S. missiles were deployed overseas "under open and announced agreements with sovereign states. They serve to strengthen the independence of those countries" (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1962: 7).

Since creating a world, or at least half a world, in its own image demanded considerable effort, it is not surprising that this U.S.

identity narrative was preoccupied with the twin virtues of strength and will. Strength and will were essential in part because of the indivisibility of freedom. If an attack on freedom anywhere is an attack on freedom everywhere, then the United States, as the state bearing leadership responsibilities for promoting global freedom, required compelling strength as well as the courage to bring that strength to bear against aggressors. Strength and resolve were also necessitated by the specific character of the "totalitarian aggressor." The totalitarian penchant for "salami-slicing" tactics—for pursuing a series of "little encroachments not easily resisted . . . because one in itself seems trivial" (Bundy, 1988: 364)—and the related danger of "appeasement" required resolute displays of strength. Weakness would only invite further aggression. As Kennedy argued in 1961,

> The message of Cuba, of Laos, of the rising din of Communist voices in Asia and Latin America—these messages are all the same. The complacent, the self-indulgent, the soft societies are about to be swept away with the debris of history. Only the strong, only the industrious, only the determined, only the courageous, only the visionary who determine the real nature of our struggle can possibly survive. (1961a: 306)

U.S. identity, in short, was not only masculinist but aggressively macho. The fear of appearing weak—whether of arms or of will—loomed large because such a feminine characteristic would excite not the desired respect, but only contempt. "A weakling, particularly a rich and opulent weakling, seeking a peaceable solution to a difficulty, is likely to invite contempt," General Eisenhower explained in 1945, "but the same plea from the strong is listened to more respectfully" (1945: 109). U.S. identity was thus constructed not only in opposition to the external other of secretive and aggressive totalitarians but in opposition as well to an internal feminine other defined as weak, soft, complacent, and self-indulgent.

All three of these defining characteristics of the masculinized U.S. identity produced for the United States a pervasive and inescapable credibility problem. Claims to U.S. leadership, assertions to its guardianship of global freedom, and avowals of its strength and courage all involved a combination of promises and threats. To be of any use, these commitments had to be believed. But their very nature and extensiveness rendered suspect the claim that the United States could

and would live up to them. Each of these aspects of the U.S. identity, then, simultaneously generated both a need for the United States to be credible and grave doubts about its credibility. As a result, the problem of credibility became central to U.S. identity.

The U.S. credibility problem was inextricably connected to the putative indivisibility of freedom. Because "a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere" (U.S. National Security Council, 1950: 389), the free society so painstakingly nurtured by the United States both at home and abroad was always in danger. U.S. leadership thus demanded continual demonstration of its ability both to guide its allies and followers and to counter threats by actual and potential opponents; that is, the confidence of its allies (i.e., its leadership) and the reliability of its threats against its adversaries (i.e., its strength and will) had constantly to be (re)affirmed. This led the United States into ever-expanding commitments. As Gabriel Kolko has argued concerning the U.S. commitment to the Diem regime in South Vietnam: "the essentially open-ended undertakings inherent in this desire to sustain the confidence of its allies and the fear of its putative enemies had caused the United States to stake its role in the world on controlling events in relatively minor places" (1980: 293). But such expanded commitments created fresh areas in which U.S. credibility could be challenged.

The logic of credibility, of course, is ultimately self-defeating. For the United States to demonstrate its credibility as the "tough" leader in the fight for freedom, extensive commitments were required. But these commitments immediately became additional sources of insecurity because they became targets at which threats could be launched by an adversary, or even by an ally. A failure to respond to such threats then again challenged U.S. credibility. This Cold War narrative of U.S. identity thus embroiled the United States in a continuous and ultimately futile search for absolute credibility. Although all identities are, by definition, potentially unstable and insecure (as I argue later), the specific, discursively constituted Cold War identity of the United States was overtly and pervasively precarious. U.S. identity thus became a potent and persistent source and locus of crises that, while hazardous to U.S. identity, at the same time provided U.S. state officials with opportunities to reproduce that identity. The Cuban missile crisis is a good example.

U.S. IDENTITY AND MISSILES IN CUBA

The Soviet missile deployment in Cuba was constituted *as* a crisis, and that crisis rendered just plain obvious, in relation to this well-established masculinist U.S. identity. U.S. state officials staked U.S. identity on Cuba and in so doing created a locus of possible (one might even say probable) crisis. The representation of these events as a threat to U.S. identity both transformed the events themselves into a crisis and marginalized alternative narratives. U.S. identity thus enabled the production of the "Cuban missile crisis." Conversely, the cultural construction of the missile crisis enabled the (re)production of U.S. state identity; that is, constructing the Soviet missile deployment *as* a crisis offered U.S. state officials the opportunity to (re)assert the already precarious identity of the United States. At the same time, it enabled the (re)construction of a broader "we" around the identity of the U.S. state. The representational practices of the U.S. state surrounding the events of October 1962 thus had four significant consequences: they enabled the construction of a crisis; they marginalized other narratives; they made possible the reassertion of U.S. state identity; and they permitted the reproduction of a broader "we."

The Soviet installation of missiles in Cuba was constituted as a crisis by representing it as a serious threat to all four components of U.S. state identity. U.S. leadership, as well as the credibility of its claims to leadership, were at stake because the United States was pledged to promote freedom in and to prevent "Communist" incursions into the "Western hemisphere," to overturn or at least to contain the Castro revolution, and, more narrowly, to prevent the introduction of offensive Soviet weapons into Cuba (e.g., Kennedy, 1962a, 1962b). The basic elements of this crisis and its relationship to U.S. state identity are captured in Adlai Stevenson's depiction, in the UN on October 23, of the Soviet missile deployment: the "crucial fact" to be faced, he maintained, was that "Cuba has given the Soviet Union a bridgehead and staging area in this hemisphere, that it has invited an extra-continental, anti-democratic and expansionist power into the bosom of the American family, that it has made itself an accomplice in the Communist enterprise of world domination" (1962: 731). The threat to the United States posed by the Soviet missiles thus revolved around both global and hemispheric U.S. leadership. As Hans Morgenthau argued in November 1962, "the

transformation of Cuba into a Soviet military base" was "detrimental to the political position of the United States in the Western Hemisphere in that it challenged American influence in an area which had traditionally been regarded as an American sphere of influence." As a result, he continued, "The Soviet presence in Cuba . . . affects the prestige of the United States as a great power" (1962: 9). Similarly, Zbigniew Brzezinski placed U.S. leadership and its credibility at the center of his depiction of the crisis: "the presence of Communism in Cuba," he asserted, "undermines the American claim that the Western Hemisphere is immune to Communist penetration and that the United States has the capacity to exclude Communism from this hemisphere. It thus forces the United States to back down from a traditionally proclaimed position and *imposes upon it a humiliation* which is bound to have international implications" (1962: 7; emphasis added). What was crucial to the United States during the missile crisis was living up to the masculinist identity constructed for it within the Cold War discourse of U.S. foreign policy: an identity built around leadership, freedom, strength and will, and credibility.

The missile deployment challenged U.S. leadership in that it was "aggressive intervention" into the Western Hemisphere (Rusk, 1962: 721); it was an "invasion of the hemisphere by a foreign power" (Douglas Dillon, in Abel, 1966: 117). This "provocation" and "attempted nuclear blackmail" (Sorenson, 1965: 700, 706), because it "was something that they [the Soviet Union] started in our own backyard" (Dillon, in Blight and Welch, 1990: 100), issued a direct challenge to U.S. leadership in the hemisphere that the United States was pledged, through the Monroe Doctrine and its successors, to defend. As a result, as Rusk argued in the ExComm on October 16, the United States had an "obligation to do what had to be done" ("White House Tapes and Minutes," 1985: 173).

The missiles posed a challenge to the U.S. status as freedom's defender as well. Because freedom is indivisible, a threat to freedom anywhere, even in a small island state such as Cuba, was a threat to freedom everywhere, including the entire Western Hemisphere and the United States itself. First of all, as Rusk explained to the OAS during the missile crisis, "this new Soviet intervention means a further tightening of the enslavement of the Cuban people by the Soviet power to which the Castro regime has surrendered the Cuban national heritage" (1962: 721). But more than Cuban freedom was at stake. This

"Soviet intervention" challenged freedom in the entire hemisphere because, as Stevenson argued in the UN, "an extra-continental, anti-democratic power" had, in the service of the "Communist enterprise of world domination," intruded into "the bosom of the American family" (1962: 731). "The most urgent problem confronting the hemisphere" in October 1962, Rusk explained to the OAS Council, was "the efforts of the Sino-Soviet bloc to convert the island of Cuba into an armed base for the Communist penetration of the Americas" (1962: 720).

The most overtly masculinist elements of U.S. identity—its strength and will—were under attack in the missile crisis as well. As Kennedy said at the ExComm meeting of October 16, allowing the Soviet missiles to remain in Cuba "makes them [the Cubans] look like they're coequal with us [the United States] and that—" "and that," Dillon concluded for him, "we're scared of the Cubans" ("White House Tapes and Minutes," 1985: 186). Such a perception would be intolerable, of course, because the maintenance of U.S. leadership required the maintenance of U.S. strength and the projection of U.S. resolve. The missile crisis thus "illuminates a feature of the American character that came to be considered a requisite personality trait of the cold war," namely, "toughness" (Nathan, 1975: 267). Of particular concern, then, was that Khrushchev had set a "trap" for the United States:

> The objective of the trap was both political and strategic. If the trap had been successful, our missile warning system would have been bypassed and the whole strategic balance overturned. But the President and his advisors put the main emphasis on the political objective. "If they'd got away with this one," says one member of ExComm, "we'd have been a paper tiger, a second-class power." (Alsop and Bartlett, 1962: 18)

The Soviet missile deployment, that is, raised questions about U.S. strength, its toughness and its will, and thus challenged the U.S. leadership identity by threatening to reduce the United States to, or to expose it as, a paper tiger.

As these examples already indicate, the credibility problem endemic to this masculinist Cold War U.S. identity was central to the construction of the Cuban missile crisis. In his speech to the American public on October 22, Kennedy explicitly pointed to the importance of U.S. credibility. The Soviet missile deployment "cannot be

accepted by this country," he argued, because "the 1930s taught us a clear lesson: Aggressive conduct, if allowed to go unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war." As a result, the missiles could not be tolerated by the United States "if our courage and our commitments are ever to be trusted again by either friend or foe" (1962c: 5–6). Having said that the United States would not condone Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba (Kennedy, 1962a, 1962b), acquiescing in their deployment would have undercut U.S. credibility. This point was hammered home by Adlai Stevenson in the UN as well, in his insistence that

> If the United States and the other nations of the Western Hemisphere should accept this basic disturbance of the world's structure of power, we should invite a new surge of Communist aggression at every point along the frontier that divides the Communist world from the democratic world. If we do not stand firm here, our adversaries may think that we will stand firm nowhere—and we guarantee a heightening of the world civil war [i.e., the Cold War] to new levels of intensity and danger. (1962: 733)

This, in turn, would have threatened the identity of the United States *as* the legitimate leader of the free world. Had the United States allowed the missiles to remain in Cuba, the United States might have been perceived as a paper tiger, a second-class power, unable or unwilling to honor its promises or to make good on its threats.

The result was that the overarching U.S. interest in the missile crisis became precisely maintaining its credibility. Even a small slice off the salami required that the United States, bearing the burdens of leadership, enact its credibility. The pervasive problem of U.S. credibility central to the U.S. identity meant that the need to remove the missiles was obvious. The failure to do so would undermine the very identity of the United States *as* a leader, *as* the patron of freedom, and *as* the strongest and most resolute state in the free world. In other words, examining the discursively constituted U.S. state identity helps both to account for the way in which U.S. state officials constructed the Soviet missile deployment as the "Cuban missile crisis" and to explain why that U.S. construction seemed so obvious both to them and to subsequent commentators. It was this very identity that was at stake in the crisis and that helped to make the existence of a "crisis" self-evident to U.S. decision makers and U.S. observers alike.

This "crisis" was rendered self-evident as well by the success—that is, the persuasiveness—of this representation and its effective marginalization of alternative narratives. For example, the aggressive character of totalitarian states and of the "international Communist movement," and the contrasting obligation to defend freedom borne by the United States, marginalized any claims that the Soviet missile deployment was designed to defend Cuba against U.S. aggression. After all, aggressive totalitarian states do not defend the weak and small; rather, they dominate and enslave them. Conversely, the construction of the United States as the hemispheric and global leader with a moral obligation and formal commitments to defend freedom obscured what might otherwise have been considered U.S. intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign Cuba. The U.S. response to the crisis it had defined—that is, the "quarantine" of Cuba, the demand that the missiles and other weapons be removed from Cuba, and its arrogation of the right to keep Cuba under surveillance—could have been understood, and was overtly represented in the story of the "October crisis," both as an act of war and as illegitimate intervention in internal Cuban affairs, as an attempt to dictate to Cuba its defense and alliance policies (e.g., "Text of U.N.-Cuban Notes," 1962; Castro, 1992). It could, quite simply, have been understood as U.S. aggression. This alternative understanding was ruled out by rendering commonsensible the claim that U.S. history, "unlike that of the Soviets since the end of World War II, demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer any other nation or impose our system upon its people" (Kennedy, 1962c: 5). Because of the construction of the United States as a "leader," this claim made sense, even in the face of the many overt military and covert U.S. interventions around the world between 1945 and 1962. U.S. "leadership" identity, devoted to the protection and promotion of "freedom," thus helped to transform blatant intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign Cuba into, instead, an appropriate act of U.S. leadership "in freedom's cause." At the same time, it made common sense of the Cuban missile story by marginalizing the counterargument, offered in the stories of the Caribbean and October crises, that the Soviet weapons deployment was defensive, designed to deter renewed U.S. aggression against Cuba.

It also helped to render suspect any claim (as in the hypothetical strategic narrative offered earlier) that the weapons were irrelevant.

Because the Soviets had "power involvements" that were undertaken secretly and treacherously by a despotic totalitarian regime, the Soviet missiles were (necessarily) offensive and so by definition aggressive and illegitimate. In contrast, because the United States had "commitments" in which it engaged openly and without deceit, the extraterritorial missile deployments of the United States were (necessarily) defensive. U.S. missiles in Turkey, for instance, installed with the agreement of Turkey and NATO, were part of a U.S. "commitment" to defend its allies against communist, and specifically Soviet, aggression. As Kennedy reminded his audience on October 22, "our own [U.S.] strategic missiles have never been transferred to any other nation under a cloak of secrecy and deception" (1962c: 5). Their deployment was therefore legitimate and not offensive. Consequently, the U.S. missiles were not to be compared to the Soviet missiles in Cuba. The "symmetry" between the extraterritorial missile deployments of the United States and the USSR could thus be dismissed as "superficial" (Welch and Blight, 1987–88: 13) and any alternative narrative in which the Soviet missiles were irrelevant because of continued U.S. strategic superiority was successfully pushed beyond the "horizon of the taken-for-granted" (Hall, 1988: 44).

The particular way in which the narrative of the Cuban missile crisis was constructed around U.S. state identity, then, both rendered that crisis obvious and marginalized alternative understandings. In addition, this particular construction of the events of October 1962 enabled the reenactment of U.S. Cold War identity; that is, the Cuban missile crisis was not only enabled by a particular representation of the United States but simultaneously made it possible for that identity itself actively to be (re)produced. At the same time, this particular representation also contributed to the production of a larger "we" that, in its turn, legitimized the representation of these events as a crisis, reinforced the marginalization of alternative accounts, and normalized the reenacted U.S. identity.

Crucial to an understanding of the Cuban missile crisis, I want to suggest, is that it allowed U.S. state officials to reenact U.S. state identity, performatively reinscribing the four facets of that identity that had been challenged by the Soviet missile deployment. In creating an opportunity, and indeed the necessity, for U.S. action, the crisis allowed U.S. state officials to discharge U.S. leadership obligations, to defend freedom, to showcase its strength and resolve, and

to demonstrate its credibility; that is, having defined a crisis into existence, responding to that crisis enabled the performative reproduction of U.S. identity.

For example, having defined the missile deployment as unacceptable, U.S. state officials decided, first, that a policy response was required. As Kennedy put it, "The latest Soviet threat must and will be met with determination. Any hostile move anywhere in the world against the safety and freedom of peoples to whom we are committed . . . will be met by whatever action is needed" (1962c: 10). They also decided that a "quarantine" would, at least in the short run, be an adequate response, and carried out that policy by deploying U.S. military might. The presence of a crisis, because it required that the United States make decisions and act, helped to reproduce the U.S. leadership identity. U.S. leadership, in other words, was reauthorized in its execution. Similarly, U.S. strength and will were enacted in its military deployments in the Caribbean in the form of the blockade, in its large-scale mobilization and redeployment of military resources within the United States, and, perhaps most important, in its ostensible willingness to "go to the brink" to get its way. The United States showed, in its response to the Soviet missile deployment, that it would actually use its military forces to defend the Western Hemisphere from the introduction of "offensive" Soviet weapons. In deploying its military forces and in acting out its resolve, in short, the United States performatively reproduced its own masculinist identity. As Abram Chayes (then legal adviser to the president) has explained, "The primary elements of the confrontation in the last weeks have been the ability and the will of the United States to deploy the necessary force in the area to establish and enforce the quarantine, and the mobilization of friends and allies—in the hemisphere, in Europe, and elsewhere in the world—in support of our action" (1962: 763). Perhaps most important, U.S. credibility was (temporarily) reasserted and validated by U.S. policy and actions. The United States showed, forcefully and concretely, that it would not allow the Soviet Union or "international Communism" to take a slice off the American salami. When it announced that offensive Soviet weapons would not be tolerated, it meant it; and it proved its credibility by forcing their removal. As Rusk allegedly said to McGeorge Bundy, the United States went "eyeball to eyeball" with the Soviet Union, which finally "blinked" (reported in Abel, 1966: 153). Nonetheless,

the reproduction of U.S. identity in the Cuban missile crisis was not an unalloyed success because U.S. identity as the guarantor of freedom was only partially reproduced. By successfully forcing the removal of the Soviet missiles, the United States did demonstrate that its identity as global and hemispheric leader in the defense of freedom remained intact. But, because it had also been forced, if more or less secretly, to pledge not to invade Cuba, it did not fully reproduce its credibility as the guarantor of freedom.[6] In short, then, the U.S. triumph in resolving this crisis (created by U.S. state officials to begin with), reproduced, with significant although incomplete success, the four fundamental elements of Cold War U.S. state identity.

But it did more as well. Persistent invocations of U.S. state identity also created a broader "we" that, in turn, rendered this representation of "crisis" sensible and legitimate to most of the American public, reinforced the marginalization of alternative accounts of these events, and normalized the reenacted U.S. identity. Through processes of interpellation (Althusser, 1971; Weldes, 1996) or "implicit identification" (Burke, 1972: 28) of an audience with the U.S. identity, in other words, the Cold War U.S. foreign policy discourse produced a larger "we," an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) or, more generally, a "representation of belonging" (Tomlinson, 1991: 81). The production of crises, that is, is not solely about the production and reproduction of state identity; it is also about the construction of a broader identity—a "we"—that encompasses the state, its decision makers, and much of the public as well. In this "we," "the United States"—the anthropomorphized state subject of this discourse—became the identity of the individual speaker or hearer of statements made from within it. The typical response to such invitations was therefore one of recognition: "Yes, 'we' are like *this* (i.e., a tough leader, democratic, and in favor of freedom) and not like *that* (i.e., alien, despotic, and aggressive)." Once this identification had been produced, the description of the world provided, the logic of the arguments presented, and the warrants for action drawn from them all became quite persuasive. At the same time, alternative understandings were pushed beyond the boundaries of the intelligible. In conjunction with the characteristic representation of the Cuban missile crisis, then, the identity constructed for the United States and the interpellation of the audience into this subject-position helped to produce a persuasive logic that defined the Soviet

missile deployment in Cuba as a "crisis"—as an obviously unacceptable situation that required a forceful U.S. policy response.

THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF CRISES

The literature in international relations and security studies has conventionally identified crises in one of two ways. Either state officials' representations of situations as crises are taken as the starting point of analysis, as is the case in much of the literature on the Cuban missile crisis, or crises are defined in terms of "objective behavioral data about conflictual interaction among states within an international system" (Brecher, Wilkenfeld, and Moser, 1988: 3). In either case, this literature has preoccupied itself almost exclusively with what Cox (1986) has called "problem-solving" rather than critical analysis of international crises.

In other words, this literature has tended to take the world as it finds it, "with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action," and so has pursued the objective of "mak[ing] those relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble" (ibid., 208). This is clearly the case with security and crisis studies that focus on states' problems or insecurities as understood by state officials and attempt to solve those problems in ways that manage or minimize threats to state security. Walt thus argues for what he calls the "second norm" of security studies: "That even highly abstract lines of inquiry should be guided by the goal of solving real-world problems" (1991: 231). As a result of this problem-solving approach, exemplified in the literature on "crisis management," crisis studies crystallized around a specific and predictable set of questions. "The kind of knowledge that both policy makers and scholars might reasonably be expected to want about international crises," according to Hermann, includes answers to the following questions:

> When do crises lead to war or otherwise drastically alter the system in which they occur? As compared to non-crises do participants in a crisis behave more or less rationally—that is, behave so as to maximize their likelihood of obtaining desired goals? How can crises be averted? Can potential crises be detected in advance? Once a crisis occurs, how can it be managed? When can crises be used as opportunities to gain

> political, military, or economic advantage? Under what conditions can a crisis be settled peacefully? When, and with what degree of certainty, is one crisis likely to manifest the same features as some previous one? Can the concept of crisis be usefully incorporated into theories accounting for a broad range of human behavior? (1972: 4)

All such questions are expressly oriented toward solving the problems of state officials. What such a problem-solving approach to crises fails to ask, and what, symptomatically, does not appear on Hermann's list, is how any particular situation comes to be understood as a "crisis" to begin with. It is to this lacuna that my argument is addressed.

Against the assumption that crises present themselves to observers as objective facts, I have suggested that crises are social constructions that are forged by state officials in the course of producing and reproducing state identity. Crises are social constructions in that they are fundamentally the outcome of particular social practices, including, centrally, practices of representation. This means that crises are cultural artifacts. The representations that constitute a crisis are produced in and through cultural processes and out of cultural resources—that is, in and through the "codes of intelligibility" (Hall, 1985: 105)—that both construct the reality we know and endow it with meaning. This constructive process is unavoidable for the simple reason (as was argued in the Introduction) that in order for the state to act, state officials must produce representations. These representations fix in place one particular set of features (out of the many that might be grasped hold of) that come to constitute "a situation" to which the state must then respond. State officials, in short, necessarily make decisions and act on the basis of culturally grounded representations and it is in these representations that crises are produced.[7] As Murray Edelman has argued, a crisis "is a creation of the language used to depict it"—it is "a political act, not a recognition of a fact or of a rare situation" (1988: 31).

The construction of crises, as I have tried to show, occurs in tandem with the construction and reconstruction of state identity. Crises are typically understood to issue from outside of the state and to disrupt its normal functioning. I have suggested instead that crises are internal to the functioning of states because they are inextricably

intertwined with state identity in two complementary ways: first, state identity enables crises; second and conversely, crises enable state identity.

That state identity enables crises is the less problematic claim. After all, crises must be crises *for* some subject and, in the context of an international politics defined around states, that subject is typically, although not necessarily, the state.[8] The argument is quite straightforward. A crisis, in the most mundane sense of the term, can be understood as "an important situation" (Robinson, 1972: 20) and one characterized by a "critical or urgent problem" (Hermann, 1972: 4). But such a situation can only be recognized by asking: *For whom* is this situation a problem? *For whom* is this situation critical? *For whom* is this situation urgent? In the case of foreign-policy crises, the "whom" is generally a very particular subject—the anthropomorphized state subject produced in the foreign-policy discourses of institutional states (e.g., Campbell, 1992; Weldes, 1996). The "Cuban missile crisis," I have tried to show, was a crisis for the subject "the United States," while the "Caribbean crisis" was a crisis for the subject "the Soviet Union," and the "October crisis" was one for "Cuba." Defining a crisis thus depends on the discursively constituted identity of the state.

But crises also enable state identity. Crises are an important means, although certainly not the only one, for the production and reproduction of state identity. Paradoxically, although "crises" are, on the one hand, extraordinary events that threaten states and that state officials therefore want either to avoid altogether or to manage successfully, they are at the same time quite routine events that actually benefit states in two ways. First, they facilitate the internal consolidation of state power. As has been well established elsewhere, crises facilitate the building of state machineries (e.g., Barnett, 1992; Tilly, 1985), enhance the control exercised by a state over its population (e.g., Ayoob, 1983–84), and refine and elaborate the relations of power within the state itself (e.g., Bostdorff, 1994; Schlesinger, 1973). Second, and more central to the analysis I have presented here, crises allow for the (re)articulation of relations of identity/difference as a means of both constituting and securing state identity.[9]

This latter claim, of course, rests on a specific understanding of state identity. In particular, it rests on a conception of any identity, including the identity of the state, as always discursively produced in

a relationship with difference. As William Connolly has argued, identity is always "established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it [identity] would not exist in its distinctness and solidity" (1991: 64). Identity and difference are mutually constitutive. Furthermore, as was discussed in the Introduction to this volume, securing an identity—fixing, or establishing the certainty of, its truth and goodness—is often accomplished by transforming mere difference "into otherness, into evil, or into one of its numerous surrogates" (ibid.). Difference, that is, might come to be defined, for instance, as evil (e.g., the Soviet Union and "Communism"), as debased or backward (e.g., the "Third World" or the "feminine"), or as mad (e.g., "rogue dictators")—in short, as other and dangerous. As a result, identity is always potentially insecure "not merely" because of "actions that the other might take to injure or defeat the true identity" but because of "the very visibility of its mode of being as other" (ibid., 66). Difference and otherness both constitute identity and threaten it. State identities, like all identities, are thus always potentially precarious: difference constitutes identity (e.g., they, the Soviet Union, are not like us, the United States); in order to secure that identity, difference is often transformed into otherness (they, the Soviet Union, are secretive, duplicitous, and aggressive); but this very otherness, in its otherness, can come to threaten identity (their aggressiveness and duplicity necessarily threaten our freedom). It is for this reason that I argue that crises and state identity are mutually constituting. Because state identity is always potentially precarious, it needs constantly to be stabilized or (re)produced. Crises present important opportunities for that reproduction.

CONCLUSION

As Benedict Anderson said of the French Revolution, its apparently self-evident "it-ness" was in fact the product of an extended process of social construction (1991: 80–81). The same is true of the Cuban missile crisis. According to McGeorge Bundy, what "made it so clear to Kennedy and to Congress in September and October [of 1962] that they should take a firm and flat stand against Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba" was ultimately "*a visceral feeling* that it was intolerable for the United States to accept on nearby land of the Western

Hemisphere Soviet weapons that could wreak instant havoc on the American homeland." He has explained the self-evidently critical character of the Cuban missile crisis as the result of this "*strong national conviction*" (1988: 412, 413; emphasis added). What I have tried to demonstrate here is that this strong national conviction, this visceral feeling that the Soviet missiles in Cuba constituted a crisis for the United States, was a cultural construction. The events of October 1962 were not simply apprehended objectively by participants, by later analysts, or by other observers. Instead, the self-evident itness of this crisis was constructed, sometimes quite laboriously, out of the already existing elements of the discourse of Cold War U.S. foreign policy and in particular in relation to a discursively constituted and explicitly masculinist U.S. Cold War identity. And because this discourse was widely shared, the corresponding story of the Cuban missile crisis came as well to be accepted as the commonsense narrative of these events among a broader public, including many academic analysts. The constant, numbing repetition of the same stock phrases and descriptions—particularly the invocation of U.S. leadership, its freedom, its strength and will, its commitments, and its credibility—points to the tremendous ideological labor involved in eventually producing the thing that became known as the "Cuban missile crisis." This constant, numbing repetition constructed this crisis as a real object that could objectively be perceived as a self-evident threat to "the United States" and, in so doing, obscured the social conditions and processes of its own construction.

NOTES

1. The idea that the Cuban missile crisis was an outstanding example of crisis decision making and crisis management became virtual dogma in the study of crises (e.g., Sorensen, 1965; Abel, 1966; Allison, 1971: 39; R. F. Kennedy, 1971; and Janis, 1983). This positive evaluation of U.S. decision making resulted in large measure from "the apparently benign ending of the crisis" (Thorson and Sylvan, 1982: 540). If one questions either how benign that ending actually was, as do some revisionist historians (e.g., Nathan, 1975, 1992; Bernstein, 1979; Thompson, 1992), or the need for these events to have been understood as a crisis to begin with, as I do here, then the canonical status of this crisis as a precedent for dazzling decision making begins to be undermined. Other critiques of this ostensibly awesome display of

diplomacy can be found in Stone (1966), Steel (1969), Bernstein (1976, 1980), and Costigliola (1995).

2. This is the usual time span attributed to the missile crisis and its commonsense status has been reflected in and reproduced by the title of Robert F. Kennedy's *Thirteen Days* (1971).

3. The United States continues to be understood in this way, at least by Americans, but for reasons that, with the withering of the Cold War, are slowly being rearticulated (see Weldes and Saco, 1996).

4. The Monroe Doctrine, articulated in 1823, was extended in 1904 through the "Roosevelt Corollary" ("Monroe Doctrine Guards West," 1961: 3) and again extended, and made multilateral, in the Rio Pact (1947) and the Charter of Bogotá (1948), which created the Organization of American States (OAS).

5. This particular construction of identity and otherness was commonplace during the Cold War (see also U.S. National Security Council, 1950: 387).

6. The United States, however, "never issued any public or official statement of the commitment not to invade Cuba after the highly conditional statement by President Kennedy of November 20, 1962—the conditions of which (an international inspection in Cuba to verify the continuing absence of offensive arms) had not been met" (Garthoff, 1987: 94). Moreover, the no-invasion "understanding" reached between the United States and the Soviet Union during the missile crisis "was not really consummated until August of 1970, and not publicly confirmed until October of that year" (ibid., 97).

7. Crises between states are forged by officials of the state because these officials are both authorized and expected to determine if and when the state faces an emergency. But this does not mean either that official constructions always go unchallenged or that none save state officials can represent events as a crisis (as Pamela Ballinger's analysis in this volume of recent popular reimaginings of the "Trieste crisis" by various exile communities in Italy and the former Yugoslavia demonstrates). Because crises are political acts not facts, any particular crisis representation can be contested. In the case of the "Cuban missile crisis," the orthodox U.S. construction was immediately and forcefully disputed, although with little success in the United States, by the Soviet narrative of the "Caribbean crisis" and the Cuban narration of the "October crisis."

8. Sometimes the subject of a crisis is other than a state. For Robert McNamara, for instance, the missile crisis was less a crisis for the United States than for the Kennedy administration. As McNamara argued on October 16 in the ExComm, it was "a domestic, political problem" ("White House Tapes and Minutes," 1985: 192). At stake was the administration's

credibility with its domestic public in the face of its own repeated claims that it would not tolerate the stationing of Soviet offensive weapons in Cuba.

9. I am particularly grateful to Lisa Disch and Michael Shapiro for encouraging me to pursue this second aspect of the relationship between crisis and state identity.

2

The Politics of the Past: Redefining Insecurity along the "World's Most Open Border"

PAMELA BALLINGER

Tracking power requires a richer view of historical production than most theorists acknowledge. We cannot exclude in advance any of the actors who participate in the production of history or any of the sites where that production may occur. Next to professional historians we discover artisans of different kinds, unpaid or unrecognized field laborers who augment, deflect, or reorganize the work of the professionals as politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, and participating members of the public. In so doing, we gain a more complex view of academic history itself, since we do not consider professional historians the sole participants in its production.

MICHEL-ROLPH TROUILLOT, SILENCING THE PAST

This chapter examines the production of historical knowledge for a canonical case in security studies, that of the post–World War II "Trieste crisis." In contrast to Weldes's discussion elsewhere in this volume of state-centric narratives about the Cuban missile crisis, I consider the Trieste episode from the angle of those historical "artisans of different kinds" whose interpretations were left out or silenced by such dominant constructions. Between 1945 and 1954, the Italo-Yugoslav territorial dispute known variously as the "Trieste crisis" or the "Trieste question" played out in British and American newspapers and strategy rooms as one battle in the broader, global struggle between communism and democracy, East and West. The