

Senior Seminar in International Relations, Fall 2003
IR-180, Section 52, Meets "N" Hour (Wednesdays, 3:00 PM-5:20 PM)
Watson Institute, 111 Thayer St., Seminar Room 114

**THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS:
U.S., Russian and Cuban Viewpoints**

Instructors:

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1. SUMMARY.

The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 was the most dangerous crisis of the nuclear age. U.S., Russian and Cuban leaders at the time felt themselves close to the brink of catastrophic nuclear war. Recent findings from a multi-year research project on the crisis, headquartered at Brown's Watson Institute, suggest that the risk of nuclear war in October 1962 was even greater than those leaders--John F. Kennedy, Nikita Khrushchev and Fidel Castro--believed at the time. In this IR senior seminar, students will familiarize themselves with the results of the Watson Institute's Cuban missile crisis project, with attention both to the reexamination of the crisis itself, and to the implications of the crisis for several contemporary issues, such as efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, the danger of nuclear proliferation, prospects for crisis prevention and resolution, and the difficulties facing a great power such as the United States, in its relations with small countries that are keen to preserve their sovereignty and independence.

In this way, students will be asked to explore the connections between what is now being called "the first nuclear age" of the East-West Cold War, in which the missile crisis took place, on the one hand; and, on the other, "the second nuclear age" of the early 21st century, one in which the major powers wield much less control than formerly over smaller states, and in which the sources of potential nuclear danger arise from new sources, including non-state actors such as the al-Qaeda organization that carried out the attacks of 9/11. Students will be asked to examine the feasibility of drawing lessons from the most dangerous moment of "the first nuclear age," and applying such lessons as seem applicable to the difficult task of preventing another such crisis, or worse, in "the second nuclear age" of this new 21st century.

In addition to the readings, films and discussion associated with the class sessions themselves, students taking the seminar will also be encouraged to visit some of the many websites in existence containing extensive documentation and interpretation of events surrounding the Cuban missile crisis, as well as websites related to contemporary issues concerning nuclear

weapons and other weapons of mass destruction that will be considered in the seminar--issues upon which the missile crisis will be seen to bear uniquely and powerfully.

Evaluation will derive from an original research paper of not more than 25 double-spaced pages, including endnotes, for which students will be expected to use both declassified documents and oral testimony, and other secondary materials on the missile crisis, including declassified documents and oral testimony from conferences sponsored by Cuban missile crisis project at the Watson Institute (which will be made available to the students). The research papers may focus on either the historical findings regarding the missile crisis, or their contemporary implications, or both.

2. THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS PROJECT AT THE WATSON INSTITUTE.

The Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 was the most dangerous moment in modern history, probably in all of recorded history. President John F. Kennedy estimated that the chances of war during the crisis were as high as one in three, perhaps even one in two. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev said shortly after the crisis that during those thirteen days, "the smell of scorching hung in the air." And asked in 1993 how close the world had come to a nuclear catastrophe during the missile crisis, Cuban President Fidel Castro held up his forefinger and thumb until they almost touched and replied to an American reporter, "this close."

Research over the past sixteen years, centered at Brown's Watson Institute for International Studies, has proven all three assessments to be *under*-statements of the actual risk of nuclear disaster. A careful analysis of this research leads to the conclusion that the escape from nuclear oblivion was little short of miraculous, and that luck, not skilled crisis management, is the principal reason for the escape. We may never be that lucky again. Thus the emphasis in the missile crisis project, and the seminar based on its findings, is on preventing another such crisis from ever arising.

In October 2002, on the 40th anniversary of the crisis, Brown's Watson Institute was the U.S. co-sponsor (with the National Security Archive, of George Washington University), of a major international conference in Havana, Cuba on the crisis. The conference, which was held 11-13 October, was the sixth in a series of conferences, held over a period of a decade and a half, dedicated to learning the historical truth of what happened, what almost happened, and what might have happened in October 1962. As in all past conferences, the participants--from the U.S., Cuba and Russia--employed a method called "*critical oral history*," a method pioneered at the Watson Institute by the instructors of the senior seminar, James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang. Using this method, former high-level decision-makers, declassified documents regarding the events to be studied, and scholars specializing in these events, gather in a conference setting to examine the data and to cross-examine one another. The results are often very revealing, as those who were involved in the events begin to compare what they believed at the time about their adversaries, with what the new information before them suggests was actually the case.

The October 2002 conference in Havana was hosted by Cuban President Fidel Castro, who participated fully in the discussions. Also participating were such figures as former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Theodore C. Sorensen, from the Kennedy White House, and General Anatoly Gribkov, the former head of the Warsaw Pact forces

(the man who masterminded the emplacement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba during the summer and fall of 1962). The conference also involved a day trip to Cuba's western province of Pinar del Rio, for a visit to the former Soviet nuclear missile site at San Cristóbal. The findings of the October 2002 conference are already matters of public record, and will be discussed at length in the seminar.

The intellectual basis of the conference was provided in part by two books co-authored by the Watson Institute's James Blight: (1) an expanded second edition of a 1993 book, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis and the Soviet Collapse* (with David Welch of the University of Toronto); and (2) *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers After the Missile Crisis* (with Philip Brenner of American University). Both books were published in mid-September 2002 by Rowman & Littlefield, Publishers. Both books are required reading for the senior seminar.

The overriding purpose of all this historical investigation on the 40th anniversary was to focus the world once again on two propositions which are all too relevant to the human race as it enters the already bloody 21st century: (1) nuclear war is indeed possible in a crisis, even if none of those nations or leaders involved seek to initiate it at the outset of the crisis; and (2) just such a nuclear war nearly occurred in October 1962, due to misperception, misunderstanding, and misjudgment on the part of the officials in all three involved countries. To underscore the relevance of the events of October 1962 to nuclear danger in our present situation, one has only to think of the standoff between India and Pakistan (both of which are nuclear-armed); the Arab-Israeli conflict (Israel holding a substantial number of nuclear weapons); a probable showdown in the near future with North Korea (which has not only nuclear warheads, but intermediate-range ballistic missiles); the aspirations of Iran to possess not only nuclear warheads, but missiles on which to deliver them against its enemies; and a newly urgent problem, after the attacks of 9/11 on New York and Washington, preventing terrorist groups or nations from acquiring a nuclear capability. Each of these issues, and the possible light shed on solving them by an examination of the missile crisis, will be taken up in the course.

3. REQUIRED READINGS AND SOURCES.

(All except *A Quiet Revolution* are available in the Brown Bookstore.)

Wilson's Ghost: Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing and Catastrophe in the 21st Century, by Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight, expanded 2nd edition, paperback (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003).

A Quiet Revolution: An Introduction to the Critical Oral History of the Cuban Missile Crisis, ed. by Janet M. Lang (2003). (Note: this must be purchased at "Allegra" Copy Service, located at Thayer and Waterman (212 Thayer). Each student must go into "Allegra" and order a copy of *A Quiet Revolution*, and then return to "Allegra" the following day to pick up and pay for the copy. (Copies are also on reserve in the Rockefeller Library.)

Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle With the Superpowers After the Missile Crisis, by James G. Blight and Philip Brenner (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis and the Soviet Collapse, expanded paperback edition, by James G. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn and David A. Welch (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons, ed. by Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James G. Wirtz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

The Fate of the Earth and *The Abolition*, by Jonathan Schell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). (These two volumes, originally published in 1982 and 1984 by Knopf, are now contained in this single volume.)

The Ultimate Terrorists, by Jessica Stern (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

The Age of Terror: America and the World After September 11, ed. by Strobe Talbott and Nayan Chanda (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

The following materials will be distributed in class by the instructors:

"Burden of Nuclear Responsibility: Reflections on the Critical Oral History of the Cuban Missile Crisis," by James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang. *Peace and Conflict*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1995, pp. 225-264.

"Risking 'the Destruction of Nations': Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for New and Aspiring Nuclear States," by James G. Blight and David A. Welch. *Security Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1995, pp. 811-850.

"The Miracle of October: Lessons From the Cuban Missile Crisis," by Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight (background paper drafted for the BBC, in preparation for their documentary on the crisis, *The Other Side of Armageddon*).

(Additional readings will also be distributed in class by the instructors.)

In addition, students should consult the following websites, as needed:

- **On the missile crisis.**

The National Security Archive at GWU: www.gwu.edu/nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/ and The Watson Institute: www.watsoninstitute.org. The Archive has available online virtually every declassified document in existence on the missile crisis, translated into English, and cross-referenced for ease of locating documents of interest. The Watson Institute also has many declassified documents on its website (through fewer than the Archive), but also a good deal of information and oral testimony regarding the critical oral history of the crisis that the institute has carried out for over fifteen years.

- **On nuclear danger.**

There are literally hundreds of websites devoted entirely, or in part, to documenting the evolving nuclear situation. Here are some of the best, from our point of view. The Nuclear Threat Initiative: www.nti.org; The Federation of American Scientists: www.fas.org; The [Harvard] Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs: www.harvard.edu/csia; The Pugwash Group: www.pugwash.org; the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War: www.ippnw.org; and the Center for Defense Information: www.cfi.org.

4. THE RESEARCH PAPER.

During the first half of the semester, each student will, in consultation with the instructors, select a tentative topic for a research paper of not more than 25 double-spaced pages, including endnotes. The paper will evolve in three phases: (1) an initial discussion with the instructors of the student's interest and the available materials; (2) submission of a 5-page (or less!) precis, preferably via e-mail, to the instructors by 15 October, indicating the sources to be consulted, expected findings and principal questions to be addressed in the research paper; and (3) the final research and writing, culminating in the paper itself, in a hard copy, submitted to the instructors by noon on Wednesday 10 December. The instructors will be available for consultation at any point during the semester regarding the student's research paper. The final grade will be based on the quality of the research paper. Consideration will also be given to students who make exceptional contributions to the seminar discussions.

5. COURSE SCHEDULE.

3 September:

"Hard Rain":

The Lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis for the 21st Century.

At the first class, the instructors will, in addition to attending to the usual first-class bookkeeping chores, comment on some of the principal issues and arguments to be explored in the course. Chief among them are these: the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 represents the world's only close brush with nuclear oblivion; prior to the crisis, none of the major parties--the U.S., Soviet Union and Cuba--desired such a dangerous confrontation; despite heroic efforts of leaders in all three countries, the crisis came within a hair's breadth of exploding into a global nuclear catastrophe; that the missile crisis, by virtue of its surreal, uniquely dangerous nature yet peaceful outcome, is full of implications for us now, in the opening years of the 21st century.

Allusions will be made, in the first class and throughout the course, to the work of artists--including songwriters, poets, film-makers and visual artists--as they have tried to come to grips with the meaning of the missile crisis. In a song written during the missile crisis, the young Bob Dylan wrote that the outcome might well have been a "hard rain"--of missiles and bombers loaded with their deadly nuclear warheads--a hard rain that would have destroyed the world as we know it. The solution? Then, as now, we believe it is to rid the world of nuclear weapons. As we shall see, this objective in the 21st century is, if anything, more difficult to achieve now than it was just after the

missile crisis. While it may be in some ways more difficult, it seems to us more imperative than ever, as we settle into a new and ever more dangerous "second nuclear age."

- No readings for the first class.

10 and 17 September:

The Framework: Three Imperatives for the 21st Century.

We will begin with a brief outline of the events of the Cuban missile crisis (from *A Quiet Revolution*), and then proceed to develop a framework for examining the crisis, and its possible contemporary implications. The framework will come from one of the required readings for the course: Robert S. McNamara and James G. Blight, *Wilson's Ghost: Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing and Catastrophe in the 21st Century*, 2nd, expanded, paperback edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003).

Wilson's Ghost was published in June 2001. The authors argued throughout the book that the failure of the effort led by Woodrow Wilson following the First World War still haunts us in the first decade of the 21st century. They noted that Wilson struggled mightily, but unsuccessfully, in two ways: first, he failed to establish international relations on a moral foundation--dedicated to reducing the likelihood of another catastrophe like the one that had just concluded; second, he failed to establish his multilateral creation, the League of Nations, as the acknowledged arbiter of international disputes involving the use of force. His failure, it has been written, "broke the heart of the world," and he died in 1924 a bitter and broken man, remembered far more for his inability to implement his vision than for the loftiness of the vision and the necessity of establishing the world he envisioned.

The instructors in this seminar believe we should move with urgency and determination toward the approach to foreign and defense policy that lay at the heart of Wilson's vision. We note with retrospective horror the deaths in the twentieth century of some 160 million of our fellow human beings by violent conflict, and the probability that this number may double, or worse, if the vision Wilson put forward for the twentieth century failed to materialize for the 21st century. To emphasize the fact that Wilson's ghost still pursues us--still haunts us to this day--we formalize the core of our position in two imperatives, each of which runs counter to the received political wisdom of our own day, just as it did in Wilson's era. The imperatives are:

- *The Moral Imperative.* Establish as a major goal of U.S. foreign policy, and indeed of foreign policies across the globe, the avoidance in the 21st century of the carnage---160 million dead--caused by war in the 20th century.
- *The Multilateral Imperative.* Recognize that the United States must provide leadership to the world to achieve the objective of reduced carnage but, in doing so, it will not apply its superior economic, political or military power unilaterally, other than in defense of the continental United States, Hawaii and Alaska.

Wilson's Ghost was published in June 2001, before the events of 9/11. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001 constitute a tragic demonstration of the point made by Harvard political scientists Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison, in their analysis of the Cuban missile crisis. "No event demonstrates," they wrote more than thirty years ago, "more clearly than the missile crisis that with respect to nuclear war there is an awesome crack between *unlikelihood* and *impossibility*." The supposed unlikelihood of escalation to nuclear war in October 1962 provided no comfort whatever to those in Washington, Moscow and Havana charged with the responsibility for finding an exit from the crisis short of war. The key feature of this fear of a nuclear holocaust was the unspeakable totality of its *possible* destruction, not reassurance that such a catastrophe was just not *probable*, principally because it was thought to be plainly irrational to initiate a nuclear war. In the same way, the 9/11 attacks, unlikely or not, occurred. Of that fact we can be 100 percent certain. And it is with this tragic fact that the authors of *Wilson's Ghost* seek to grapple in the second edition of the book.

They do so by elevating the deployment of empathy to the status of a third imperative, of equal stature to the moral imperative and the multilateral imperative.

- *The Empathy Imperative*. The West, led by the United States, must seek by all possible means to increase its understanding of the history, culture, religion, motives and attitudes of those who have declared themselves to be its adversaries. This effort should begin by developing empathy toward the Islamic fundamentalists, specifically those groups allied with, or sympathetic to, the international terrorist network known as al-Qaeda. Empathy does *not* imply sympathy or agreement; it *does* imply curiosity, leading to deeper understanding of an adversary's mindset, as a prerequisite to resolving differences and eliminating threats to peace and security.

Why empathy? And why now? Because, like the Soviet missile deployment to Cuba in 1962, the 9/11 attacks were unanticipated, even unimaginable, to Americans before they occurred. They seemed to most Americans, in fact, to be unprovoked acts of "evil"--in other words, *they made no sense*. In 1962, many in the Kennedy administration worried that Nikita Khrushchev had lost his mind. And many assumed the 9/11 attacks must have been carried out by irrational zealots, or by brainwashed youth, or by people from desperate backgrounds--in any case, a group of certifiably crazy people willing to kill themselves in the act of killing others--and who therefore were *evil* people. But labeling actions and actors "evil" tells us nothing about why the actions were committed: whether it is threatening the U.S. with nuclear missiles from close range, as in October 1962; or destroying the World Trade Center in September 2001. In order to move beyond naming, blaming and stereotypes, *empathy* is required--the capacity to see the world as the adversary sees it, feel it as the adversary feels it. Both the missile crisis and the 9/11 attacks show, in retrospect, how difficult (but now necessary) empathy becomes in confronting adversaries.

- **10 September.**
Lang, *A Quiet Revolution*, Chapter 1, pp. 1.1-1.13
McNamara and Blight, *Wilson's Ghost*, pp. xi-229.

- **17 September.**
McNamara and Blight, *Wilson's Ghost*, pp. 230-276.

24 September and 1 October:

The Cuban Missile Crisis: A "Virtual Hiroshima."

In important respects, what is important about the missile crisis is what did *not* happen. There is no scorched earth, no path of hallowed land, such as Ground Zero in Hiroshima, where pilgrimages can be made, and where those making the journey can recite and internalize "never again." Thus a significant responsibility of those who study the missile crisis is to provide a *virtual Hiroshima* that somehow conveys the terror that any rational human being ought to feel when confronted with the enormity of what very nearly happened in October 1962. We escaped barely, and mostly by luck. Next time we may not be so lucky.

By 27 October, 1962, the momentum was powerful toward war in the Caribbean. The U.S. was prepared to attack Cuba with a massive air-strike, involving more than 1,000 sorties daily, and to invade and occupy the island with armed forces numbering nearly 200,000. When an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Cuba on 27 October, and the pilot confirmed dead, war seemed to many to have become almost inevitable. Others believed it had already broken out. But there was no war in October. And in November, a series of complex negotiations between the Russians and Cubans, and between the Russians and Americans, brought about a cessation of tension, the removal of Soviet nuclear weapons from Cuba, and the cancellation of U.S. plans to attack Cuba. We will ask ourselves, with the benefit of hindsight: how did this "miracle of October" occur?

We will also explore a range of counterfactual questions, regarding how close the world may have come to nuclear catastrophe: how close were the U.S., USSR and Cuba to war? If war had come, what kind of war would it have been? Which key pieces of accurate information were missing from the assessments of each of the three leaderships? What were the moments of maximum danger, and why did the three countries, and the world, escape without any kind of war, much less a nuclear war?

We will analyze new and recently available information regarding the consequences of the missile crisis in Cuban-Soviet relations in the 1960s, and after, as well as the impact the crisis had on U.S.-Cuban relations and U.S.-Soviet relations. In addition, we will consider the thorny problem of lessons of the crisis--those learned by the three leaderships involved directly in the crisis, and the lessons that we, in the 21st century, should derive from this epochal encounter of forty years ago. In particular, we will consider the radical view that the crisis proves that nuclear weapons must be eliminated, before they eliminate the human race; and the view, a bit of common-sense wisdom yet so difficult to implement, that the fundamental purpose of a national security establishment in any country is to develop *empathy*--to obtain an accurate understanding of the way its adversaries view the world.

Finally, we will consider the Cuban view of the crisis. Americans recall the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis--when the world came closer to Armageddon than ever before or since--with words such as "frightening" and "relieved." Cubans, in contrast, remember the crisis, in the words of Che Guevara, as "sad and luminous days." While the rest of the world breathed a sigh of relief, Cubans were deeply saddened (and also angered) by what they viewed as a Soviet betrayal and were emboldened to defy what looked to them like inescapable U.S. aggression. Cuba's stance illuminates two essential lessons the United States should have learned from the crisis: (1) small countries do matter, and (2) they perceive the world differently from the powerful states. Recent events indicate that the U.S. still has not learned these lessons.

- **24 September.**
Lang, *A Quiet Revolution*.
Blight and Lang, "Burden of Nuclear Responsibility."
McNamara and Blight, "The Miracle of October."
Blight, et al., *Cuba on the Brink*.
- **1 October.**
Blight and Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days*.

8 and 15 October:

The First Nuclear Age: "The Exhaustion of Empathy."

For undergraduate students in 2003, the first nuclear age is little more than a rumor, heard from parents and others from the "older generations" (such as your instructors in this course, for example). It was the time of the Cold War, of global confrontation between East and West, between the communist Soviet Union and China and their supposed "puppets," on the one hand; and, on the other, the United States, the countries of Western Europe, and their supposed Third World allies. At the core of the confrontation, never far from the surface for officials and ordinary citizens alike, was the abiding fear of nuclear holocaust. You may have heard that, as students, we were forced to crawl under our desks. Or to head into a doorway, if we encountered a sudden flash of light (presumably the initial sign of a Soviet attack with nuclear forces). Or maybe to head into an underground shelter, wait for the mushroom cloud to clear, then come back up to the surface and get back to business as usual.

Alas, it is all true. And the absurdity of these "preparations" is related to the absurdity of the situation created by what was called "the ultimate weapon"--thermonuclear bombs, especially those delivered by ballistic missiles, launched from ground locations or submarines. There being no meaningful defense against ballistic missiles--either then, or now--both sides in the first nuclear age chose a strategy of *deterrence*, because they found themselves, for the first time in history, without any means whatsoever to defend themselves--that is, to intercept the nuclear-laden missiles en route to their destinations. Thus each side built massive nuclear arsenals, substantial portions of which are still in tact, still ready for launch, that threatened lethal retaliation, should an attack occur. Functionally, as was pointed out by many, this linked the nuclear forces of East and West via a joint *doomsday machine*. Each threatened, in effect, to blow up the world, to destroy human civilization utterly, if it were attacked by the other side. It was absurd. And when you really thought about it, it

was also really, really scary. It was during the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 that the entire human race was forced to think about the potential implications of the doomsday machine that had been created.

One way to deal with this situation--perhaps the dominant strategy throughout the first nuclear age--was denial. Like holocausts in the past, the prospect of nuclear holocaust caused what one writer, Hannah Arendt, called "the exhaustion of empathy." One just carried on as if nuclear danger did not exist. It was just too weird, too absurd, to impossible to believe that leaders in their right minds would ever let events careen out of control to such an extent that the "unthinkable" actually occurred: a major nuclear war. But every so often, events would occur that made it difficult to deny the nuclear reality, the missile crisis being foremost among them.

In fact, in the early 1980s, something like nuclear panic gripped large portions of the populations of the West, and even of the Soviet Union and its East European empire. Once again, the governments of the U.S. and Soviet Union seemed to be rattling their nuclear sabers at each other, and calling each other "evil empires." To many, the two nuclear goliaths seemed on a collision course toward activating the global nuclear doomsday machine.

The most widely read books, and easily the most influential works on the subject in the early 1980s, were two books by the journalist Jonathan Schell: *The Fate of the Earth*, and *The Abolition*. In the former, Schell described the probable effects of a nuclear war, and did so in grim, believable detail, drawing out some of the implications of what was then called, rather clinically, a "nuclear exchange." In the latter book, Schell tried to answer critics who accused him of scaring people without offering them a plausible way out of the dilemma he so vividly described. His solution: abolish nuclear weapons. A fine idea, perhaps, in theory (though not everyone agreed with even this much), but this struck some people as totally unrealistic, and they said so loudly and clearly. Schell answered them, chiefly by asking this question: are you willing to continue to risk the future of the human race, just so you can claim to maintain nuclear "deterrence?" These two books, which capture so much of the mood and the issues of the first nuclear age, will provide the raw material for our discussion of the nuclear dimension of the Cold War you have heard about, but did not experience to any significant extent.

- **8 October.**
Schell, *The Fate of the Earth*.
- **15 October.**
Schell, *The Abolition*.
Albert Carnesale, et al., *Living With Nuclear Weapons*, chapters 1 and 11. (To be distributed by the instructors.)

Note: The five-page (or less!) precis of students' research papers must be submitted by 15 October, via e-mail, to the instructors. The instructors are not looking for anything like finished products from the students. The objective is, rather, to put some thoughts down in print, get some feedback from the instructors, and thus be better prepared to draft the final seminar paper. In addition, this process prevents the worst of all outcomes regarding a seminar paper--totally surprising the instructors with an inappropriate paper. There will be no surprises, so long as students

keep the instructors informed about what they are up to and how they are proceeding. The precis is an important feature of this process.

Note: On Thursday 9 October, the Watson Institute will host a public lecture by **Prof. Jorge I. Dominguez**, director of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University, and one of the world's great experts on U.S.-Cuban affairs. All students in the seminar are strongly urged to attend, and to meet with Prof. Dominguez following his talk.

22 and 29 October:

Nuclear Transition: The "Nuclear Dominoes" of the 21st Century

Shortly after the Cuban missile crisis, President John F. Kennedy predicted that by the end of the 1960s, dozens of states would have become nuclear powers. Yet this did not happen during the entire first nuclear age of the Cold War. In part this was due to efforts by the five declared nuclear powers (the U.S., Soviet Union, China, Britain and France) to prevent what was called the *proliferation* of nuclear weapons. In effect, these countries created a nuclear monopoly by the late 1960s, when the non-proliferation treaty went into effect. Not all countries signed the treaty, but most did. And most of those that did not were effectively prevented from obtaining fissionable material and other items needed to produce nuclear warheads. As dangerous and scary as was the first nuclear age, some comfort could be taken in the fact that Kennedy's prediction was very wide of the mark. At least the countries that were less stable, less experienced with weapons of mass destruction, and less likely (so it was thought) to manage nuclear weapons responsibly--at least *those guys* didn't have nuclear weapons.

Now, well into the second nuclear age, this is no longer the case. In 1998, two bitter enemies, India and Pakistan, tested nuclear devices, and the very next year they fought a small but exceedingly dangerous skirmish over the disputed territory along their northern borders called Jammu and Kashmir. Israel is believed to have dozens of tactical nuclear weapons ready to use if they deem it necessary in their perpetual conflict with the Arab world. North Korea has built, tested and exported intermediate range ballistic missiles and is believed to have built several nuclear bombs as well. Iran is openly seeking a nuclear capability, having declared an end to what they have called (as have others) the "nuclear apartheid regime" symbolized by the nuclear monopoly that is the foundation of the non-proliferation treaty. Others are known to be interested in following the Iranian example. Suddenly, a dozen years or so into the second nuclear age, the world seems poised once again, as it did just after the missile crisis, to become an exceedingly dangerous place, full of states seeking a nuclear capability, and apparently with the intention of using them if push comes to shove.

We will explore the attitudes that underlie the aspirations of states and leaders who see nuclear weapons as vital to their national security, and who seem to believe they are simply "big weapons," as useful as any other weapons, just bigger and more destructive. The role of the major nuclear powers is important, for an essential aspect of the non-proliferation treaty was the pledge by the major nuclear powers, especially the U.S. and Soviet Union (which together possess the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons) to move as quickly as feasible to a non-nuclear world. They did nothing of the kind and, in fact, they greatly increased the size and sophistication of their

arsenals. This has played a major role in what CIA Director George Tenet recently called the "the domino theory of the 21st century"--the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction throughout the world.

We will look especially at the case of India and Pakistan, particularly at the claim made often and loudly on both sides (to the instructors in this course, among others) that the two South Asian nuclear powers need no near miss--no "Cuban missile crisis"-- of their own to sober them up and instill in them the proper attitude toward the weapons. These South Asian adversaries have recently become much bolder in brandishing the nuclear threat at each other. Many believe that if there is to be a nuclear war in the early 21st century, South Asia is where it will take place. If it does, in one of the most densely populated areas on earth, the tragedy would be unprecedented, in the region, and might very well escalate to a wider and even more destructive disaster outside South Asia.

- **22 October.**

Bill Keller, "The Second Nuclear Age," *New York Times Magazine*, 4 May 2003, pp. 48-101.

Graham T. Allison, "Could Worse Be Yet to Come?" (manuscript).

Doug Gavel, "Brave New World," *Bulletin of the Kennedy School of Government*, Autumn 2002, pp. 42-48.

(The three pieces by Keller, Allison and Gavel will be distributed by the instructors.)

Blight and Welch, "Risking the Destruction of Nations."

Paul Bracken, "Re-thinking the Unthinkable: New Priorities for New National Security," in Talbott and Chanda, *The Age of Terror*.

- **29 October.**

Stephen P. Cohen, *India as a Nuclear Power*.

Richard D. Lamm, "Against Our Will Comes Wisdom."

DoD News Briefing at the Pentagon with Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers, 22 October 2002.

(The pieces by Cohen and Lamm, and briefing, will be distributed by the instructors.)

WPS Sidhu, "India's Nuclear Use Doctrine," in Lavoy, et al., *Planning the Unthinkable*.

ZI Cheema, "Pakistan's Nuclear Use Doctrine and Command and Control," in Lavoy, et al., *Planning the Unthinkable*.

5 and 12 November:

The Second Nuclear Age: "Fire in the East."

Two principal fears drive U.S. policy, and to a considerable extent the policies of the other original five declared nuclear powers in the second nuclear age. First, there is the fear of unstable, brutal, dictatorial and unscrupulous states and leaders acquiring a nuclear capability with which to threaten their neighbors, or even to settle scores with dissident groups within their own borders (as, for example, when Saddam Hussein's regime used chemical weapons against Kurds in northern Iraq in the 1980s). Second, and in some ways even more frightening, is the fear that non-state actors like the al-Qaeda organization that carried out the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., will acquire a nuclear capability, which they will use for blackmail, at a minimum, or even to wreak destruction as they

see fit, and with a comprehensiveness that is horrible to contemplate. To put the matter as it has been put by the U.S. administration of GW Bush, these key problems of the second nuclear age are: *rogue states* and *terrorists*.

In this section of the course, we will devote considerable attention to the nuclear stance of the current U.S. administration, which is controversial all over the world, even with allies of longstanding, like France and Germany. The administration's stance regarding rogue states is summarized in the phrase used by President Bush in his 2002 State of the Union Address: that Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Iran and North Korea constitute an *axis of evil*, whose governments (presumably) must be destroyed via some process of "regime change," such as the U.S. has carried out in its recent military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. President Bush has also promoted a *war on terror* worldwide, reserving for the U.S. the ultimate judgment on who is a terrorist, and the precise time and place of dealing with them militarily.

As Paul Bracken has written, this nuclear "fire in the east" to which the Bush administration has reacted, has already drawn verbal fire from nearly everywhere against what most perceive as the U.S. seeking to become a global policeman on nuclear, as well as other issues. Especially offensive to many is the so-called "Bush doctrine" of preemption, by which the administration explicitly claims the right to intervene anywhere in the world, at any time, for reasons of U.S. national security, as determined by Washington.

One result of the attitudes of the Bush administration has been the effort to dismantle most arms control treaties, a process that began as a direct outcome of the Cuban missile crisis, when President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty in the summer of 1963, which prohibited the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere. In effect, the approach of the GW Bush administration seeks to replace a diplomatic process, which the administration has declared a failure, with the threat of overwhelming U.S. military force.

We will examine the prospects for the Bush administration's approach in some of the key emerging areas of the second nuclear age: Israel and the Arab world; North Korea; Iran; and the efforts to counter the global terrorist threat. We will also look at the way the administration attempted last year, on the 40th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis, to claim that President Kennedy exhibited all the traits in that crisis that President Bush now claims for himself in this second nuclear age.

- **5 November.**
Lavoy, et al., *Planning the Unthinkable*" (chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 9.
- **12 November.**
Lavoy, et al., chapter 8
Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists*.
Talbot and Chanda, *The Age of Terror*, chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5.

19 November and 3 December
(no class 26 November, due to the Thanksgiving holiday):

"The Choice Between Survival and Annihilation."

As noted, there are important differences between the dangers of the first and second nuclear ages--of the Cold War and its Cuban missile crisis, on the one hand; and, on the other, of this second nuclear age, and its mixture of the prospect of nuclear devastation with ethnic strife, religious fundamentalism, failed states, and terrorist organizations with global reach. In retrospect, for all its Cold War dangers, and in spite of the close call in October 1962, the first nuclear age seems somehow less menacing than the one we are currently living through. We have the sense now that formerly, we knew who we were dealing with--principally the Soviet Union--and that the Soviets had no more interest than did the U.S. in actually using nuclear weapons. Of course the missile crisis proved that, alas, benign intentions are not an infallible safeguard against nuclear disaster. Now, many in the West have the feeling that we are on the verge of a much more chaotic situation, one in which those whom we do not understand, and who may even seem crazy to us, nevertheless might acquire nuclear weapons and threaten to use them against us.

We believe a central common issue connecting the first and second nuclear ages has been well put by journalist Jonathan Schell. We are confronted, he has written by "the choice between survival and annihilation." We do not know for certain now, any more than we did forty years ago, that the use of a single nuclear weapon, or several, will escalate to global catastrophe. The point is that it *could*. In fact, according to some estimates, the odds are more likely now of a nuclear conflict than at any time since the missile crisis, a conflict some believe will lead, at least, to rapid proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout many parts of the world; and at worst, a disaster of unprecedented proportions leading to the total breakdown of the international system, and possible re-entry into some kind of new dark age. Are we now, in the words of a popular song from 1965, on "The Eve of Destruction?" If we are, how do we work to avoid this? What is the right policy for preventing nuclear conflict?

Jonathan Schell has argued for more than two decades that the answer is simple in principal, but terribly difficult to implement: *rid the world of nuclear weapons*. We happen to agree with Schell, as do many knowledgeable students of the nuclear question. But how? How long will it take under the best of circumstances? Do we have that long before a nuclear holocaust occurs? Will another "Cuban missile crisis" suddenly occur somewhere in the world, but devoid of the overwhelming good luck of those who escaped the nuclear hangman's noose in October 1962? These are some of the questions--the ultimate questions in both the philosophical and policy senses--that we will revisit at the conclusion of the course. After reaching some conclusions, we will try to decide what the U.S. should do, as the world's only superpower, to lead the world in the direction of nuclear abolition.

- **19 November.**

Jonathan Schell, "No More into the Breach: Part I, Why War is Futile," *Harper's Magazine*, March 2003; and Part II (April), "The Unconquerable World."

Jonathan Schell, "One Last Time: The Case Against the War," *The Nation*, 3 March 2003.

- **3 December.**
McNamara and Blight, *Wilson's Ghost*, "Afterword."

The class on 3 December, the last meeting of the semester, will take place at the home of the instructors in Milton, Massachusetts. Class will meet at its regular time, 3:00 PM. Following the class discussion, dinner will be served. Directions to the home of James Blight and Janet Lang will be provided in advance. Any dietary constraints will also be solicited ahead of time.

10 December:

The senior seminar paper is due into the instructors, in a hard copy, by 12:00 Noon. Please note: the maximum length for the paper is 25 pages, including endnotes. The paper should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, and in a font not smaller than 12 point. Any attempt to squeeze more into those pages will not be appreciated!