THE KENNEDY EXPERIMENT

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The pattern of events between June 10 and November 22, 1963, provided a partial test of a theory of international relations. The essence of the theory is that psychological gestures initiated by one nation will be reciprocated by others with the effect of reducing international tensions. This tension reduction, in turn, will lessen the probability of international conflicts and wars.

Examining this theory in light of the 1963 experiment, I ask: (a) What are the main propositions of the theory? (b) What initiatives were actually taken by the United States in the experiment period, and how did the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics react? (c) What were the effects of these initiatives and responses on inter-bloc relations, and to what degree did these effects conform to the expectations of the theory? (d) What other factors, not accounted for by the theory, could have produced all or part of these effects? (e) What factors limited both the scope and the extent of the experiment, and under what conditions could it be replicated or extended?

A Psychological Theory of International Relations

The theory views the behavior of nations basically as that of persons who have strong drives that motivate their pursuit of goals, influence their choice of means, and distort the communications they send and receive. It suggests that nations, when in conflict, tend to be caught in a spiral. The hostility of one as perceived by the other invokes his hostility, which in turn is perceived by the first side, further increasing his hostility. Arms races, in which the participant countries increase the level of their armaments because the other countries are doing so, are viewed as an expression of such upward spiraling of hostile reactions.

Psychological analysis of international behavior has been so discredited that most political scientists and members of sister-disciplines might find their patience tried when asked to examine such a theory. It should therefore be stressed from the outset that the evidence provided below, although partial, provides some new support for some elements of the psychological approach. While the more extreme version of the theory remains unsupported, a moderate version is strengthened enough to stand among the major hypotheses on international behavior that are to

Note: This article grew out of my work at the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. I am grateful for the research assistance of Sarajane Heidt and Robert McGhee. Since this article was written two books have appeared which provide additional documentation for the points made but seem not to affect the conclusions reached: See Theodore G. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York, Harper and Row, 1965), esp. chap. XXV, and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1965), esp. pp. 888-923. Additional treatment of this subject will be included in my The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Process (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, forthcoming).

1 See, for example, Kenneth Waltz, Man, the State, and War (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1959), chap. III.
be explored further. After a brief recapitulation of the theory and its two versions, the evidence speaks for itself.

According to both versions of the theory, a high level of hostility generates psychological blocks that prevent the sides from facing international reality. Various defense mechanisms are activated: for one, a high level of tension tends to produce a rigid adherence to a policy chosen under earlier conditions, e.g., the sides increase armaments and hold to a hostile posture ("cold war"), though armaments have been procured beyond military needs, and hostile feelings are no longer justified in view of changes in the character and intentions of the opponent. These changes are denied, another mode of defensive behavior, to make the continuation of the earlier policy psychologically possible.

Further, fears of nuclear war, repressed since they are too threatening to be faced, express themselves in stereotyping and paranoia, indications of which advocates of the theory find in the conduct of nations locked in a state of international tensions. Stereotyping is represented by the divisions of the world into black and white, good and bad, nations, and the manipulation of information by selecting among and distorting the content of communications, so that positive information about one's adversary is ignored and negative information about one's own side disregarded. Blocked or distorted communication between the sides thus prevents "reality-testing" and correction of false images.

Stereotyping is often accompanied by paranoia. Whatever the adversary offers is interpreted as seeking to advance his own goals and as a trap for us. If the Soviets favor complete and general disarmament, this in itself brings Americans to point to disarmament as a Communist ruse. A possibility of a genuine give-and-take is ignored. The same repressed fear, the psychological analysis continues, causes even reasonable concessions to the other side, made as part of a give-and-take, to be seen as submission or, to use the political term, appeasement. The labeling of bargaining behavior as disloyal or treacherous impedes negotiations that require open-mindedness, flexibility, and willingness to make concessions even though not sacrificing basic positions and values.

What could a therapy be? How, the psychologists ask, can the vicious circle of hostile moves and counter-moves be broken? The answer is similar to psychoanalytic technique — increased and improved communication. Communication can be increased by visits of Americans to Russia and Russians to America, exchange of newspapers, publication of American columns in Soviet newspapers and vice versa, by summit conferences, and the like. Communication will become less distorted and tensions will be reduced if one of the sides begins to indicate a friendly state of mind.

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3 Urie Bronfenbrenner, a psychologist, found that when American school children were asked why the Russians planted trees alongside a road, they responded that the trees blocked vision and "made work for the prisoners," whereas American trees were planted "for shade." *Saturday Review*, January 5, 1963, p. 96.
5 These ideas are also held by non-psychologically oriented writers. For example, see C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War III* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1958), pp. 103ff.
While such indications will be initially mistrusted, if continued they will be reciprocated, reducing hostility which in turn will reduce the counter-hostility, thus reversing the cold war spiral. Once the level of tension is reduced, and more communication is received from the other side, there will be an increased ability to perceive the international reality as it is, which will further reduce tensions. Joint undertakings are also favored because psychological experiments with children have shown that the introduction of shared tasks helps to reduce hostility.\(^6\) International cooperative research, joint exploration of the stars, oceans, and poles, joint rather than competitive development aid, are hence favored.\(^7\)

There are significant differences in the extent to which this theory claims to explain international behavior. Strongly put, it suggests that “war starts in the minds of man” and “the situation is what we define it to be.” In this interpretation, the causes of war are psychological and can be fully explained in psychological terms. Arms are merely an expression of these attitudes of mind.\(^8\) If attitudes are modified, arms will either not be produced or have no threatening impact. The people of New Jersey, it is pointed out, do not fear nuclear arms held by New Yorkers.

More moderate versions of the theory view psychological factors as one aspect of a situation that contains economic, political, and military dimensions as well. Just as triggers without hostilities do not make a war, so hostilities without arms cannot trigger battles. Moreover, even if armaments were initially ordered to serve a psychological motive, once available they generate motives of their own to propel hostile postures and wars. Thus one can hold the psychological theory with varying degrees of strength.\(^9\) Osgood, in most of his writings on this subject, has advanced the stronger version,\(^10\) while this author subscribes to the more moderate one\(^11\).

A second line of variation centers on where the blame for triggering the spiral is placed. Some writers tend to view the sides as equally at fault with no “real” reason


\(^2\) In a statement typical of this line of argument, Erich Fromm points out: “This time the choice between violent-irrational, or anticipatory-rational behavior is a choice which will affect the human race and its cultural, if not its physical survival.

"Yet so far the chances that such rational-anticipatory action will occur are bleak. Not because there is no possibility for such an outcome in the realistic circumstances, but because on both sides there is a thought barrier built of clichés, ritualistic ideologies, and even a good deal of common craziness that prevents people — leaders and led — from seeing sanely and realistically what the facts are, from recognizing alternative solutions to violence. Such rational-anticipatory policy requires ... a serious examination of our own biases, and of certain semipathological forms of thinking which govern our behavior.” Erich Fromm, *May Man Prevail?* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 8.


for a cold war other than misunderstanding. For example, Stalin only wished to
establish weak friendly governments on his Western borders, a desire which the West
misperceived as expansionistic. Others tend to put more of the blame on the West
or on the East. All of these interpretations can be coupled with the psychological
analysis on the grounds that regardless of the initiator and whether the initial cause
was real or imagined, the same process of psychological escalation is at work. The
therapy, hence, remains the same. To insist that the side that triggered the process
be the one to take the initiative to reverse it, is viewed as immature behavior.

Next, there are important differences in the steps suggested to break the cycle.
It is generally agreed that measures which require multilateral negotiations are not
appropriate for the initiation of tension reduction. The high level of hostility and
mutual suspicions invariably disrupts the negotiations, and the mutual recrimina-
tions that follow increase rather than reduce the level of international tensions. Uni-
lateral steps are therefore needed. The important differences between the two ver-
sions of the theory concern the nature of these steps. Jerome Frank, for instance,
pressures that the initiatives must be clear, simple, and dramatic to overcome the
psychological barriers, for any minor concessions will be seen as a trap to encourage
the opponent to lower his guard. Actually, in Frank's judgment, unilateral renun-
ciation of nuclear weapons might well be the only sufficiently large step to break the
vicious cycle. More moderate interpretations call for significant reductions of arms
as initiatives; still more moderate interpretations seek to restrict the unilateral steps
to purely symbolic gestures not involving any weakening of the military strength of
the initiator even though some arms reduction, such as the cutting of arms surpluses,
might be recommended.

Finally, there are those who believe that the transition from a "cold war" to a
"stable peace" would be achieved by a chain of unilateral initiatives followed by
reciprocations by the other side, while others believe that such exchanges would open
the way to effective multilateral negotiations. The unilateral-reciprocal approach,
it is suggested, is needed to create the atmosphere in which important international
accommodations such as broad-based arms reduction schemes can be introduced, but
those in themselves cannot be introduced in this way because the unilateral-reciproc-
cation approach can carry only comparatively simple communications, and the sides
are unlikely to make major arms reductions unless those of the other side are made
simultaneously.

Jerome Frank, "Breaking the Thought Barrier: Psychological Challenges of the Nuclear

Ibid., pp. 263-65.

The Hard Way to Peace, op. cit., esp. chap. 7.

Ibid., pp. 95-98. Others view unilateral reciprocation as a much more encompassing measure.

Schelling points out another difference in the policy's use — as a communication method
(which can convey hostility as well as good will) and as a treatment of international
conflicts. His approach is that of a communication method. Thomas Schelling, "Signals
and Feedback in the Arms Dialogue," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, January 1965,
pp. 5-10.

Another major difference is among those who favor continuing unilateral conces-
sions if the other side does not reciprocate and those who would stop after awhile. Sibley
favors continuing, even if this would involve unilateral disarmament. See Mulford Sibley,
American Initiatives

The Kennedy experiment can be viewed as a test of a moderate version of the psychological theory that seeks to use symbolic gestures as unilateral initiatives to reduce tension to get at other factors, leading toward multilateral negotiations.

The first step was a speech by President John F. Kennedy at the American University on June 10, 1963, in which he outlined “A Strategy of Peace.” While it is not known to what degree the President or his advisors were moved by a psychological theory, the speech clearly met a condition of this theory — it set the context for the unilateral initiatives to follow. As any concrete measure can be interpreted in a variety of ways, it is necessary to spell out the general state of mind these steps attempt to communicate.16

The President called attention to the dangers of nuclear war and took a reconciliatory tone toward the Soviet Union in his address. He said that “constructive changes” in the Soviet Union “might bring within reach solutions which now seem beyond us.” He stated that “our problems are man-made... and can be solved by man.” Coming eight months after the 1962 Cuban crisis, when the United States and Russia stood “eyeball to eyeball,” such statements marked a decisive change in American attitudes. United States policies, the President added, must be so constructed “that it becomes in the Communist interest to agree to a genuine peace,” which was a long way from the prevailing sentiment that there was little the United States could do, so long as the Soviet Union did not change. Further, there was doubt that the Soviet Union was capable of a genuine interest in peace. Nor did the President imply that all the blame for the cold war rested with the other side; he called on Americans to “re-examine” their attitudes toward the cold war.

Beyond merely delivering a speech, the President announced the first unilateral initiative — the United States was stopping all nuclear tests in the atmosphere and would not resume them unless another country did. This, it should be noted, was basically a psychological gesture and not a unilateral arms limitation step. The United States at that time was believed to command about five times the means of delivery of the Soviet Union and to have them much better protected, and had conducted about twice as many nuclear tests including a recent large round of testing. American experts believed that it would take about one to two years before the information from these tests was finally digested, that in all likelihood little was to be gained from additional testing even after that date,17 and that if testing proved to be

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17 Such a speech had been advocated, in 1961. The Hard Way to Peace, op. cit., p. 96. The importance of the context is overlooked by Levine, op. cit., p. 327. Levine, belittling the role of gestures, argues that they have taken place “for years.” He refers, of course, to such isolated acts as the closing of a military base or reducing travel restrictions, which took place in a cold war context without the context provided by a “strategy for peace.”

necessary it could be conducted in other environments, particularly underground. Thus, in effect, the President used the termination of testing as a psychological gesture.

The steps that followed had much the same quality. Kennedy's speech, delivered on June 10, was published in full during the next few days in the Soviet government newspaper, Izvestia, as well as in Pravda with a combined circulation of 10,000,000, a degree of attention rarely accorded a Western leader. Radio jammers in Moscow were turned off to allow the Russian people to listen without interruption to the Voice of America's recording of the speech, a fact that was reported in the United States and, therefore, had some tension reduction effect on both sides. Premier Khrushchev followed on June 15 with a speech welcoming the Kennedy initiative. He stated that a world war was not inevitable and that the main danger of conflict stemmed from the arms race and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Khrushchev reciprocated on the psychological-military side by announcing he had ordered that the production of strategic bombers be halted. The psychological nature of this step is to be seen in that the bombers were probably about to be phased out anyway and that no verification was offered for cessation of production.

In the United Nations, the Soviet Union on June 11 removed its objection to a Western-backed proposal to send observers to war-torn Yemen. The United States reciprocated by removing, for the first time since 1956, its objection to the restoration of full status of the Hungarian delegation to the United Nations.

Although the United States had proposed a direct America-Russia communications link at Geneva in late 1962, the Soviets finally agreed to this measure on June 20, 1963. Next, attention focused on the test ban. Following the United States' example, Russia reciprocated by not testing in the atmosphere, so that until the treaty was signed, both sides refrained from such testing under an understanding achieved without negotiation but rather through unilateral-reciprocal moves. This development, in line with the moderate version of the theory, led in July to multilateral negotiations and a treaty, signed on August 5, 1963. The signing of the treaty was followed by a number of new proposals for East-West agreements. Foreign Minister Gromyko, on September 19, 1963, called for a "non-aggression pact between the members of the Warsaw Treaty [sic] and the members of the North Atlantic bloc" and asked for a peace treaty with Germany. President Kennedy came before the United Nations and dramatically suggested, on September 20, 1963, that the United States and the Soviet Union explore the stars together. Also mentioned repeatedly in the front-page news in those weeks were the possible exchange of observer posts at key points to reduce the danger of surprise attack; expansion of the test treaty to include underground testing; direct flights between Moscow and New York; and the opening of an American consulate in Leningrad and a Soviet one in Chicago.

The next step actually taken came in a different area — a symbolic reduction of the trade barriers between East and West. As part of the cold war, the United States and, following its guidance, other Western nations had sharply limited the trade

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between East and West. Not only was trading of a long list of strategic material forbidden, but trade in other materials required an export license that was difficult to obtain. Restrictions were also imposed on the credits Russia could obtain. There were occasional violations of these bans, especially by traders in Western countries other than the United States, but the total East-West trade remained very small.

On October 9, 1963, President Kennedy approved the sale of $250 million's worth of wheat to the Soviet Union. The almost purely psychological nature of this step is not always understood. As the test ban treaty had, for reasons mentioned above, a limited military significance, so the wheat deal had little commercial importance. The barriers to East-West trade were not removed; credit and license barriers were maintained. The President himself said that this decision did not initiate "a new Soviet-American trade policy," and such trade remained a small fraction of the total Soviet foreign trade. The total value of the wheat the United States actually sold was $65 million. The main values of the deal were, hence, as a gesture and in the educational effect of the public debate which preceded the Administration's approval of the deal.

October brought another transformation of a unilateral-reciprocal understanding into a binding, multilateral formal agreement. This time it concerned the orbiting of weapons of mass destruction and, once more, though it appeared to be a military measure, it was largely a psychological one. The United States had formerly decided, after considerable debate, that it was not interested in orbiting nuclear bombs. The Soviet Union, as far as could be determined, had reached a similar conclusion. Neither side orbited such weapons while it was watching the other side. On September 19 Gromyko suggested such a pact, and Kennedy indicated that the United States was willing. An agreement in principle was announced on October 3, and the final resolution was passed in the General Assembly on October 19, with the approval of both powers. Its immediate effect was to publicize and formalize an area of agreement that had in effect existed in the preceding years. Another measure, psychological in nature, was an exchange of released spies. While spies had been exchanged under a variety of circumstances in the past, the October 1963 exchange served the new policy.

In late October and in the first three weeks of November, there was a marked slow-down of American initiatives, and reciprocation to Soviet initiatives almost completely stopped. The reasons were many: the Administration felt that the psychological mood in the West was getting out of hand, with hopes and expectations for more Soviet-American measures running too high; allies, especially West Ger-

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* Max Frankel wrote on October 25, 1963, that "there is real concern here [in Washington] about the decay of the vigilance so carefully developed in the non-Communist world and about the erosion of barricades erected against the spread of Soviet influence." New York Times, October 25, 1963, p. 6.
many, objected more and more bitterly; and the pre-election year began, in which the Administration seemed not to desire additional accommodations. The present posture seemed best for domestic purposes. There had been some promising signs for those who favored disarmament, and no matters of grave enough importance were involved so that even if all went sour — if the Soviets resumed testing, orbited bombs, etc. — no credible "appeasement" charge could be made by Republicans. There was an expectation that moves would be renewed after the elections. For the election year, however, even such measures as air and consular treaties were delayed. (The experiment was actually resumed after the election; the factors that prevented its success merit a study in their own right.)

**Soviet Responses**

One of the prevalent criticisms against the unilateral initiatives theory is that the Soviets might not respond to such initiatives. The Soviets, it is said, are Marxists and quite aware of the difference between real and symbolic moves. A policy of symbolic gestures would appeal only to people who think in Madison Avenue terms and not in political, military, and economic ones. The evidence on this point is fairly clear. For each move that was made, the Soviets reciprocated. Kennedy's "Strategy for Peace" speech was matched by a conciliatory speech by Khrushchev; Kennedy's unilateral declaration of cessation of tests was followed by a cessation of the production of strategic bombers; spies were traded for spies, etc. The Russians showed no difficulties in understanding the gestures and in responding to psychological initiatives; and they participated in a "you move—I move" sequence rather than waiting for simultaneous, negotiated, agree-upon moves. Further, they shifted to multilateral-simultaneous arrangements once the appropriate mood was generated, as reflected in the test-ban treaty and outer space resolution.

Another "danger" critics of unilateral initiatives warned of was that the Soviets might reciprocate "below par" and thus accumulate an advantage. While these matters are not readily measurable, it seems that the Russian reciprocations were "proportional" to the American ones. Khrushchev's speech might have been somewhat less elegant than Kennedy's, but it would be difficult to defend the proposition that announcing a halt to the production of bombers is lower in value than the...

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24 On December 17, 1964, air and consular convention negotiations were reopened. Further, on January 3, 1965, the United States and the Soviet Union expanded their cultural exchange agreement. On February 2, 1965, the United States unilaterally announced a new cutback in production of enriched uranium for atomic weapons. On February 5, 1965, as a "symbolic step toward curbing the spread of atomic weapons," the United States placed one of its reactors under international inspection. Also on February 5, the liquidation of 129 missile sites was announced, following an earlier announcement of the closing of other bases. This sequence, however, was simultaneous with the American escalation of the war in Vietnam in early 1965.

declaration of cessation of tests, both basically psychological gestures. Spies were exchanged for spies; the test treaty and the space ban involved substantively identical, strategically similar, commitments. In short, neither side seemed to have made a disproportionate gain.

While the warnings of the critics were not realized, a danger that seems not to have been anticipated by the United States Government did materialize: the Russians responded not just by reciprocating American initiatives but by offering some initiatives of their own, in the spirit of the détente. Washington was put on the spot: it had to reciprocate if it were not to weaken the new spirit, but it could lose control of the experiment. The first test came at the very outset, when Russia took the initiative and suddenly removed its objection to the sending of United Nations observers to Yemen. The United States reciprocated, as previously mentioned, allowing the restoration of full status to the Hungarian delegation to the United Nations. The United States also responded handsomely to Russia's initiative on a space ban. It found it more difficult, however, to respond to the other Russian initiatives. The United States agreed to the wheat deal, but only after hesitation that was sufficient to reduce the gesture's value. It never quite succeeded in making a good case for its objection to a non-aggression pact between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. (The argument that this would involve a recognition of East Germany was a thin one, for several wordings were suggested that would circumvent this difficulty.) It was felt that a non-aggression pact between these two was already covered within the United Nations charter, which would be weakened if the message were rearticulated in another document. In other cases the United States was unconcerned about such duplication, for instance, between the Organization of American States and the United Nations. The United States hesitated in responding to the Soviet initiative on an air treaty, as well as on more encompassing moves regarding Germany and disarmament. Despite this reluctance, however, there were enough initiatives and reciprocations as well as multilateral measures within the three months to allow a partial testing of the theory. What was the effect of the gestures and counter-gestures?

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT**

The first steps in June 1963 did not produce what later became known as the Soviet-American détente, or the 1963–64 thaw in the cold war. In accord with the preceding psychological analysis, they were rather received with much ambivalence and suspicion. The New York Times seems to have reflected accurately the mood the author observed in Washington at the time, when it stated on June 16, 1963, that

... there was a new threat of international peace in the air this week, the kind of threat that leaves sophisticates smirking and the rest of us just dumbfounded. The "accommodators," as outraged Republicans call them, were simply delighted. The "cold warriors," as the accommodators call them, regarded conciliation as a shrewd new tactic.

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26 This could have been anticipated on the basis of previous Soviet conduct. The Hard Way to Peace, op. cit., p. 107. For Russian moves that were not reciprocated by the United States, see Stebbins, op. cit., pp. 76–77.

27 Monzales M. Minerva, Aspectos Políticos Del Sistema Inter-americano (Mexico City: National University, 1961).

Thus, even the initiating side was not convinced that there really was a new line, and, if we may assume that Russian authorities read the *New York Times*, they too could hardly have been immediately persuaded.

In line with the theory, Kennedy's initiation speech included recognition of Russia's achievements ("We can still hail the Russian people for their many achievements — in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture and in acts of courage") and suffering ("And no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in the course of the Second World War"). These statements seemed to have weakened the rigid image that was typical of the cold war period.

The impact of the speech was felt outside the seats of government. In the United States, "from around the country came a generous flow of messages echoing all these responses, but more approving than not. And from around the globe came new bursts of hope kept alive by quick signs of interest in Moscow." A *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow reported that "the ready approval of its contents by ordinary Russians was evident in the reactions of Muscovites who lined up at kiosks to buy newspapers." But the main turning point came when the test treaty — considered an important "breakthrough" — was successfully negotiated. That at first hopes for a treaty ran low, and that it took great effort to obtain it only increased the significance of its ratification.

The treaty to partially ban thermonuclear tests was the central gesture of the Kennedy experiment. Until it was reached, gestures and counter-gestures were met with caution, if not skepticism. When in early July Khrushchev offered a ban on tests in sea, air, and space (as was ultimately agreed), but coupled this offer with a suggestion of a non-aggression pact between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, the *New York Times* referred to the offer as "Another Booby Trap?" A week later, discussing the test treaty negotiations, the same source reflected the mood in the capital: "If these talks are successful, it is generally believed that a new chapter in East-West relations will open. But there are grave doubts on all sides that such a new chapter is indeed at hand." Thus, a test ban was viewed as having major tension-reduction potential, but there was much doubt whether it would be achieved. A Washington reporter still refers to the détente at this point with a question mark and explores at length the possibility "that the Soviet Union did not really want an agreement" (i.e., was negotiating in bad faith). An American report from Moscow indicated that "Mr. Khrushchev would also hope that conclusion of a partial test-ban treaty would create an atmosphere in which he could negotiate other advantageous agreements, especially on Germany.

The treaty was negotiated in July, signed in August, and ratified in September. Thus, for more than two months, it served as the focus for discussions about Soviet intentions, the possibility of peaceful co-existence, and the dangers of nuclear war;

"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Ibid., July 7, 1963, p. 1E.
"Ibid., July 14, 1963, p. 1E.
"Ibid., p. 5E.
"Ibid.
and the Senate hearing helped to keep the debate alive. Its ratification was therefore not merely one more gesture in an international sequence of pseudo-events, but a major educational act. The American public that entered the period with ambivalent attitudes toward a test-ban treaty, remembering the arbitrary resumption of testing by the Soviet Union in 1961, after three years of voluntary moratorium, as well as the 1962 Cuban crisis, was now strongly in favor of the agreement. Louis Harris reports that a national poll taken in July, before the negotiations on the treaty had begun, found that 52 per cent of the population strongly supported a treaty. This percentage had risen to 81 by September when the treaty was ratified. The tone of the press also changed; there was now an "official amity" between the United States and the Soviet Union. While some newspapermen, accustomed to sudden shifts in international winds, continued to be cautious, a report from Moscow stated:

As Secretary of State Rusk left the Soviet Union today, after six days of discussions with Soviet leaders, it appeared almost certain to Western observers here that a surface of calm would descend on East-West relations. . . . The prospect, it is believed, is for a long period of manifold negotiations at all levels and in many cities and countries on all sorts of issues. . . . The feeling is that the Russians are generally interested in maintaining the current state of improved relations with the West. They are believed to be hoping for a minimum of friction.

The correspondent who had reported smirking and dumbfoundedness over any possible thaw in June now stated that "we have cleared the air and cleared the atmospheres and warmed the climate and calmed the winds." The test-ban treaty had allayed many of the doubts about Russian intentions.

Following the signing of the treaty came a number of new proposals to improve East-West relations and further extend the détente. While none of these materialized in this period, the repeated and frequent offering of various tension-reduction measures had some effect in itself. Actually, hopes rose so quickly that late in August, Secretary of Defense McNamara warned that it was perilous to relax in a "euphoria," and Kennedy cautioned in September that the test ban was "not the millennium."

By late October, almost no new American initiatives were taken, and those of the Soviet Union were not reciprocated. The press referred to a "pause in the thaw"; there was a marked slow-down in tension reduction though efforts continued, as we shall see, to preserve the measure of détente that had been achieved. The assassination of President Kennedy and the beginning of the election year ushered in a year of more or less stable semi-détente.

What are the conclusions from this brief and incomplete test of the theory? Certain of the central hypotheses were supported: (a) unilateral gestures were reciprocated; (b) reciprocations were proportional; (c) unilaterally reciprocated gestures reduced tensions; (d) unilaterally reciprocated gestures were followed by multi-

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35 This concept was introduced by Daniel J. Boorstein in The Image (New York: Atheneum, 1962), esp. pp. 9–12. A pseudo-event has the following characteristics: it is not spontaneously initiated; it is manufactured largely for publicity purposes; and it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, to create its own consequences.

38 Ibid., August 11, 1963, p. 3E.
39 Ibid., September 22, 1963, p. 8E.
lateral-simultaneous measures, which further reduced tensions; (e) initiatives were “suspected,” but, when continued, they “got across”; (f) the gestures and responses created a psychological momentum that pressured for more measures, a reversal of the cold war or hostility spiral; (g) when measures were stopped, tension reduction ceased (we shall see the significance of this point below); (h) the relatively more consequential acts were initiated multilaterally or were transformed from an initially informal, unilaterally reciprocated basis to a formal, multilateral one.41

Not all the assumptions and derivations of the theory were as clearly supported. Most important, it is impossible to tell, without re-running history for “control” purposes, whether multilateral negotiations could have been successfully undertaken without the “atmosphere” first having been improved by unilateral steps. The fact, however, that both the test treaty and the space ban were first introduced on a unilateral-reciprocal basis and that even in the reduced tension condition these measures were hard to defend before Congress, suggests that, if not preceded by tension reduction, they either might have failed, or the risks of failure would have been sufficiently high for the Administration to refrain from introducing them. (Attempts to advance a test ban in earlier periods failed.)41

Also, the Kennedy experiment was only a partial application of the theory: the gestures were not the clear signals a full test of theory would require. Thus, for instance, to gain the Senate’s consent for a test-ban treaty, its value for American security was stressed.42 It would allow, it was said, stopping of testing while we were ahead both in number of tests and weapons technology. Further, President Kennedy made it clear that the United States would “vigorously and diligently” pursue its underground nuclear test program.43 The wheat deal was interpreted in a similar fashion,44 e.g., as a show of Russia’s weakness. Further, during the whole period, American observers provided various interpretations of the gestures as other than efforts to communicate a desire for peaceful co-existence (e.g., the détente exacerbates the Soviet-Sino rift). While a policy is often supported by a large variety of arguments, and the self-serving ones are usually emphasized when facing Congress, their preponderance could not but have had negative side-effects on Soviet-American relations. Also, the same gestures would have been more effective had they been introduced with less hesitation, and if Soviet initiatives had been met with less ambivalence.

Above all, since the process was halted, one cannot tell whether psychological measures open the door to “real” give-and-take or are essentially meaningless in the absence of basic and lasting settlements of differences and conflicts. The fact

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41 The Hard Way to Peace, op. cit., pp. 99 ff. That this was necessary was a point of some debate. See Waskow, op. cit., pp. 75ff.
42 Spanier and Nogee, op. cit., chap. VI.
44 Documents . . ., op. cit., 1963, no. 27.
45 New York Times, October 14, 1963, p. 1E.
remains, however, that gestures that were almost purely psychological in nature led to an American-Soviet semi-détente lasting from June 1963 until now. Whether more of the same could have brought about more fundamental changes cannot be learned from this case.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Even though the adoption of the measures advocated by the theory yielded the expected psychological results, there still remains the possibility of spuriousness; i.e., that the result was produced by factors other than those specified by the theory. We need, then, to ask what other factors could account for the détente? Two alternative sources of tension reduction most often cited are examined below; we shall see that they do not invalidate the claim that the unilateral-initiatives approach deserves credit for the détente. It is, however, always possible to claim that still another factor was at work; there is no final test against spuriousness. But until it is actually shown that there was another factor that caused the specified effects, we are justified in holding that the theory has been strengthened by the Kennedy experiment. This is especially so, as we can trace directly the contribution of the unilateral initiatives to the détente.

The first alternative explanation is that of catharsis. According to this theory, the door was opened for a détente after the Cuban blockade discharged a large amount of frustration that Americans had accumulated over the cold war years. Traditionally, Americans have expected that wars will be short, end with an American victory, followed by the restoration of peace. In contrast, the cold war required a continual state of mobilization and prolonged tensions without the prospect of victory. The resulting frustration was deepened by the widely held belief that the Communists were more successful than the West in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Under the pressure of these frustrations, it is often suggested, efforts to reach accommodation with Russia became viewed as showing weakness, and a "tough" verbal posture was popular. The establishment of a Communist government in Cuba, Soviet successes in space, the fiasco of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, and the positioning of Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962 all further deepened American frustration. While initially the 1962 blockade raised many fears, once it proved not to lead to war and to yield a Soviet retreat, it became the first American victory in a long time. While the blockade's successes were widely viewed as supporting the "tough" line, suggesting that power politics could be used in the nuclear age, the psychological effect was in the opposite direction, one of cathartic release. One of the values of the psychological line of analysis is to highlight such differences between verbal postures and underlying emotional commitments. Fierce posture on one level need not be accompanied with the same on the other. "Tough" words may cover a moderate feeling. In this case, it is said, the Cuban showdown increased the American public's emotional willingness to accept arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union.

The other interpretation associates the initiation of the détente with the unfolding of a different psychological process — the effects of the increased visibility of the disintegration of the blocs. In 1962 Communist China attacked the Soviet Union publicly, criticizing Soviet involvement in Cuba as "adventurism" and its
retreat as "defeatism." Russia, like America, continued its economic and military support to India when it came under Chinese attack in 1962. About the same time, the American-French dispute forced itself on the public's attention.

Initially, the popular American press, apparently reflecting the opinion of the public at large, tended to ignore or regard as a "put-up job" the split in the East and to underplay the rift in the West. But the rifts finally gained recognition with the hostile rejection of Mao and of De Gaulle partially replacing that earlier focused on the Soviet Union. The Soviets now seemed "reasonable" and "responsible" compared to Communist China, for Russia appeared willing to share with us the concern over nuclear proliferation and dangers of war provoked by over-eager allies.

Some evidence to support the effect of this bifurcation of the bloc images in generating the détente can be seen in the press. A typical New York Times Sunday review-of-the-news section ran the following captions: "Conflict in East," "Russia vs. China," and "U.S. vs. France"; and last — "East vs. West." 45 Direct reporting of the relationship between changes in the intra-bloc situation and those which were inter-bloc was also common. For example:

The answer seems to hinge on whether Premier Khrushchev really wants a test ban. One school of thought is that he does. The argument runs that Moscow's relations with Peking have reached the point virtually of open rupture. Consequently, Premier Khrushchev is thought to be willing to deal with the West, especially if one result of such dealings might be increased difficulty for Peking in acquiring nuclear capability. 46

It is not implied that the only effect of the decline in the solidarity of the blocs was to bring the two superpowers closer to each other. In reality, the Soviet Union was occasionally reluctant to agree to American proposals so as not to lose points in its fight with China over control of the Communist movement in third countries. Similarly, the United States was not always eager to agree to Soviet initiatives for fear of displeasing West Germany and thus playing into the hands of France. But the consciousness of deep differences of interest within the blocs, even when they agitated against agreement between the bloc leaders, had the psychological effect of reducing inter-bloc tensions. The recognition of the splits in the alliances undermined the prevailing simplistic image of the forces of light fighting the forces of darkness. As a result, it is suggested, the ideological fervor of the international atmosphere declined, tension was reduced, and détente was enhanced.

Such a weakening of ideological fervor is important for the initiation of negotiations which give and take, because otherwise politicians find it hard to face their voters with the outcomes of the negotiations. As long as any give and take, even when completely symmetrical, tends to be viewed as a concession, if not outright appeasement, ideological disarmament is needed to allow the public to see that some genuine bargaining is possible, and that certain kinds of accommodation serve both sides to the disadvantage of neither.

At the same time, bifurcation of the bloc images shifted the focus of the xenophobia. Regarding the Communist camp, China became, with considerable disregard of its actual foreign policy, the villain; in the West, the focus of American

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self-righteousness was now De Gaulle. These two replaced the previous preoccupation with Soviet Russia. Xenophobia, it is suggested, was rechanneled rather than reduced. (Or, more technically, a new object was substituted rather than the drive extinguished or significantly weakened.)

All these psychological processes might have been feeding into each other. Catharsis, bifurcation of images, and unilateral initiatives might all have contributed to the détente as well as to each other. For instance, catharsis might have eased the initiation of a policy of unilateral initiatives, and in turn the resultant reduction of inter-bloc tensions accelerated bifurcation of the bloc images, which made easier the further reduction of tensions through additional unilateral initiatives.

We still remain with the difficult question of the relative weight of the three processes in bringing about the détente. While it is impossible to answer this question with precision, it seems that while catharsis and bifurcation might have helped, they were not necessary prerequisites to the resultant situation; unilateral initiatives alone could have produced the effect. The best evidence for this is found in the examination of two other occasions in which a thaw was achieved—the 1959 Camp David spirit, and the 1955 Geneva spirit. These cannot be analyzed within the limits of this paper, but they seem to show the validity of the assertion that unilateral initiatives can bring about a détente without the support of the other two psychological processes.

It also should be noted that the 1963–64 thaw did not immediately follow the termination of the Cuban crisis, in the sense that no détente existed between November 1962 and June 1963 (though this still would not rule out the role of catharsis as a preparatory condition). Similarly, while the bifurcation of the bloc images was deepened in 1962, it existed before, and was as much caused by the détente as it effected the détente. Above all, the effect can be most directly traced to the unilateral initiatives; it started with them, grew as they grew, and slowed down only as they decreased.

**THE EFFECTS OF SABOTAGE**

Sabotage is a traditional tool of foreign policy, going back at least to the ancient Greek states. In the age of mass democracies, one of its forms is that of creating international pseudo-events to affect the psychological atmosphere in a direction counter to that of the prevailing policy. In some formulations of the psychological theory, this problem is disregarded, for nations are conceived as analogous to individuals, thus being able to shift policies in the manner of one man changing his mind. In formulations which take into account the existence of vested interests in the continuation of inter-bloc tensions, both overt opposition to tension reduction and sabotage are expected. The lesson of the U-2 flight which triggered the termination of the 1959 thaw was analyzed before the 1963–64 détente took place. It showed the need of policymakers to realize that many governmental activities have a communicative value, and that if a government seeks to communicate that it has shifted to a new posture, measures are to be taken to ensure that no...

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41 Asked by a journalist if he believed that “nations act like people,” Osgood is quoted as having answered, “I do.” Herzog, op. cit., p. 158.
42 The Hard Way to Peace, op. cit., p. 104.
activities are undertaken or continued that conflict with the new posture. This point is to be emphasized, as some inconsistency is often deliberately introduced in the policy of most countries. For example, the U.S. position on M.L.F. for a while attempted to assure the Russians that there would be no proliferation of arms while at the same time encouraging the West Germans to hope for some control of nuclear weapons. But when one engages in psychological campaigns, consistency has a high value because “out-of-character” steps largely undermine the effect of the campaign on recipients who, the psychological theory suggests, are suspicious to begin with.

The foregoing discussion assumes that the U-2 flights were continued due to an oversight (neglecting to cancel this “hostile” activity as the change in posture took place), or were a planned attempt to reap the benefits of continued violations of Soviet territories on one level, while trying to reduce tensions on another. If, on the other hand, the flights were an act of sabotage by a service or group within it not concurring with the change in policy, then it would seem that if the American government is to follow a tension-reduction policy, a tightening of internal controls is necessary.  

The lesson of the U-2 incident is that it is necessary to anticipate both unwitting and deliberate sabotages and prepare a proper response. Several observers suggested that Premier Khrushchev was, for domestic reasons, looking for a way out of the 1959 détente and that the U-2 just provided an excuse. But the possibility that the Russian premier was really embarrassed before his fellow members of the powerful Presidium, some of whom objected to the détente, cannot be ruled out. That would suggest that he had not foreseen an act of sabotage and was not prepared to act in a way that would diffuse its chilling effect on the thaw. Further, Eisenhower’s insistence that he personally ordered the flight and his refusal to make apologetic comments, behavior which is common in such circumstances, made Khrushchev’s accommodation in favor of continuation of the détente more difficult — if he desired to continue. It also gave him a ready excuse if he were looking for one, although in this case he might sooner or later have found one anyway. The fact that Khrushchev was unwilling to terminate the Camp David atmosphere without such an excuse, suggests that he was not particularly anxious to terminate it at all. Moreover, had time been gained by not providing such an excuse, the pro-détente motives and forces might have prevailed. Drawing on all this, I suggested in 1962 that unilateral initiatives be guarded against sabotage, and, if it occurred anyway, the sabotage should be rapidly defused rather than allowed to damage the détente.

We have already seen that domestic forces and politics as well as allies prevented the United States from giving a clear signal of a shift to a Strategy for Peace. Several leading Democratic senators and important representatives of the military objected to the test-ban treaty; the wheat deal was made with much hesitation and debate; and various tension-provoking interpretations were given to the détente policy. Direct acts of sabotage also occurred, but their effect on the détente was

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much more limited than the U-2 flight; they were treated more in accord with the theory.

An example of an "out-of-character" event is found in a note struck by President Kennedy himself, when, during a speech at West Berlin's City Hall on the twenty-sixth of June, he not only described himself as a Berliner and repeated the usual statements regarding America's commitment to Germany's defense but added, in tones familiar to the pre-détente period:

There are many people in the world who really don't understand — or say they don't — what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin.

There are some who say that Communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin.

And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere — "We can work with the communists." Let them come to Berlin.

And there are even a few who say it's true that Communism is an evil system but it permits us to make economic progress. Let them come to Berlin.

Khrushchev, giving a counter speech a few days later in East Berlin on the occasion of Ulbricht's birthday, chose not to reciprocate in kind, and thus the incident was soon forgotten.

The "tailgate" clash on the route to West Berlin on October 10-12 came closer to undermining the Kennedy experiment. Briefly, what happened was that the Americans riding in a convoy to West Berlin refused to dismount for a head count, and the Russians would not allow them to pass. The Russians claimed they usually were granted the right to count the passengers, but the West claimed this was the case only if more than thirty soldiers were involved, and there were fewer this time. (When fewer, the Russians looked over the tail-gate, hence the name of the incident.) When the Russians countered that there were more than thirty, the United States answered that the balance were civilian drivers who did not "count"; the Russians claimed that they did. The Americans tried to break through; the Russians blocked the route with armed carriers. Headlines around the world projected for two days an image of two sides standing "eyeball to eyeball," finger on the trigger, in a typical cold war test of will, lacking any détente-like spirit. Finally, the crisis was resolved, and the convoy was allowed to pass.

Although who was to blame for the incident is by no means clear, this is of little importance to the analysis of its effect on America-Russia relations: tensions mounted rather than declined, and to most American newspaper readers the fault was completely Russian, and the senselessness of the act amidst a détente heightened anew their suspicions of Russia's good faith. The New York Times declared that "the provocative Soviet behavior on this matter has set back the cause of the détente, reinforced Western suspicion of Moscow." 51 The Herald Tribune's editorial on October 12 was entitled, "The Soviet Mask Slips." It claimed that "the wholly unjustifiable display of Soviet pettifogging at the entrance of Berlin, then, will be taken by the American government and people as an indication that the protestations of Mr. Khrushchev and of Mr. Gromyko concerning Russia's desire for more friendly relations with the U.S. are just a mask."

But once the incident was settled, the explanation encouraged by Washington was that there was a "misunderstanding" about the rules and not a new Soviet pressure on the West or a shift in Russian policy away from détente. Others attributed the incident to abuse of authority by low-ranking Soviet officers. One reliable American journal published an account that provided evidence suggesting the issue was largely caused by American army officers. A second interpretation, seeking to defuse the effects of the incident, was that Berlin was an "abnormal" situation, excluded from the general détente the Russians otherwise did favor. While the incident left the détente marred, especially as it was about to be slowed down anyway, these interpretations, encouraged by Washington and London, succeeded in restricting its damage. This was in sharp contrast to the impact of the U-2 flight.

A second incident, which occurred on October 31, 1963, had almost exactly the same pattern. An American scholar, Professor Frederick C. Barghoorn, was arrested in Moscow on espionage charges. President Kennedy stated that the charges were "unwarranted and unjustified" and that they "badly damaged" Soviet-American relations. Western newspapers again asked if Russia were shifting away from the conciliatory "Spirit of Moscow," and the conservative press sounded its "I told you so" horns. The professor was released, and it was almost immediately suggested that "the arrest might have been carried out by security officers ... anxious to throw a monkey wrench into Premier Khrushchev's policy of 'co-existence' with the West." Khrushchev chose not to identify with the arrest but let the Professor go because of the "personal concern" of President Kennedy. Later, although the incident had left its mark, its impact was, once again, defused. American sources further helped to dissipate the resultant tensions by suggesting that "they still found it conceivable that something had occurred to arouse their [the Russians'] suspicions about the professor." In each case, then, when a dissonant note was sounded during the Kennedy experiment, it was soon softened and modified to protect the main theme. Thus, both the fragility of the détente and the mechanisms to safeguard it were demonstrated.

**Psychological vs. "Real" Factors**

By far the most difficult question to answer is what gains can be achieved from a détente in other than psychological terms. The 1959 détente was the shortest and yielded nothing; the 1955 détente was longer and brought about the neutralization of Austria, the main instance since World War II in which territory held by the Red Army was released to a society with Western institutions. There is a widely held belief that the 1955 détente could have yielded much more, possibly an arrangement regarding Germany and Berlin, but this must remain speculation. The 1963 détente...
led to a partial test ban and a ban on the orbiting of weapons of mass destruction, both steps of largely psychological value. Whether or not it did prepare the ground for additional steps is yet unknown.

There remains a more general question which is of a different order from the analysis of any one period and its psychology: how important are psychological factors in affecting international behavior? Answers range from theories which imply these factors are all-important to those which view the determinants of international relations to be exclusively "real" factors. The correct view is probably somewhere between the extreme positions. Certainly factors other than psychology are relevant, and it can easily be demonstrated that psychological factors have "real" consequences. The question then is one of the relative importance of these factors.

While we are unable to provide a definite answer to this question, several comments can be made. First, the advent of nationalism and mass media has increased the importance of psychological forces. Second, the consequences of these forces seem to have increased with the introduction of nuclear deterrence forces, because deterrence is itself a psychological concept and is therefore affected by such factors as credibility, fear, and misperception.

In addition, the present study suggests that psychological forces are most important when the sides wish to initiate a change in policy but seem not to be strong enough to sustain the change when it is not supported by other factors. When other processes agitate for change (e.g., a new congruence in Soviet-American interests with regard to the spread of nuclear arms), a modification of psychological variables in the same direction makes the new policy easier to introduce. Moreover, the psychological forces might get somewhat "out-of-hand" and bring about changes in policy above and beyond what other considerations seem to suggest. (For example, in 1958 the United States sought to negotiate a moratorium on nuclear testing but not to bring about its initiation. When Russia suddenly declared a moratorium unilaterally, the United States felt it had no choice but to reciprocate. This did not, however, lead to additional arms control measures.) On the other hand, it seems that the psychological factors are basically well in hand; they cannot be used to bring about a policy that is a major departure from the policy other forces favor. Thus, in general, psychological factors have significant auxiliary and limited independent effects.

A study of the "actors" who are affected by psychological factors might in large part illuminate the reasons for the preceding statement. Most statements about "international tensions" are actually referring to states of mind of citizens rather than relations among nations or among the governing elites of the nations. The kind and degree of influence of the citizenry on foreign policy is a complicated question that cannot be explored here. But it might be suggested that to a great extent the effect of psychological factors on international behavior of a state is that of the citizens on foreign policy-making elites. In the pre-nationalist stage, the mass of the citizens had little effect on foreign policy, and psychological factors were, therefore,
relatively unimportant. In totalitarian societies, citizens have less influence on foreign policy than in democratic ones; hence psychological factors are relatively less consequential there.

In democratic societies, public opinion is determined through a complicated process in which the public, its local leaders, the mass media, the national elites, and various social and economic processes are working on each other. In the short run, one of the most outstanding features is that the national leadership is confronted with the public opinion it helped to crystallize at earlier points in time. Once a context (or gestalt) is established, there is a demand for consistency. Seeming inconsistency activates various psychological processes, such as the feeling of betrayal. Thus, at various points American Administrations have felt they could ill-afford politically to support the admission of Communist China to the United Nations, because the American public was educated against it, and the Administration believed that no amount of short-run explanation could change public opinion to make the political costs low enough. The Kennedy experiment, it seems, was much more oriented toward the American people than toward the Russians or any international "tensions." Its primary purpose, it seems, was not to affect international relations directly but to increase the range of options the Kennedy Administration could take up without running high political risks from a public steeped in cold war psychology. Thus the policy of unilateral initiatives can be said to have worked, and the experiment to have been successful. A wider range of foreign policy options was made politically feasible.