



Leveraging Familial Bonds to Resolve the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Case of Unconventional US Governance

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the unconventional strategies employed by President John F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, with a particular focus on the influential role of his brother. The first aim is to explore how familial bonds were leveraged in high-stakes governance, addressing the gap in scholarly attention regarding the pivotal involvement of President Kennedy's brother in the decision-making process. Despite extensive literature on the crisis, only a handful have written about it, and little has been said about this aspect. The second aim is to elucidate the unorthodox methods used by President Kennedy, especially his delegation of significant responsibilities to his younger brother and confidant (Scott and Hughes, 2015:208), who held no formal defense or diplomatic position. Through a comprehensive analysis of primary sources and seminal works from the Cold War era, the study highlights how Robert F. Kennedy facilitated dynamic discussions within the Executive Committee (ExComm) and conducted confidential negotiations with Soviet officials. The findings reveal that President Kennedy's reliance on his brother and the ExComm, rather than traditional cabinet structures, marked a significant departure from conventional governance practices. During the crisis, the USA and the USSR engaged in a strategic chess game, employing unconventional methods, including back-door diplomacy, to avert catastrophe. This study highlights these dramatic events and underscores the innovative and familial approach to crisis management that defined this pivotal historical period.

Keywords: Robert F. Kennedy, Cuban Missile Crisis, ExComm, John F. Kennedy, Khrushchev, Anatoly Dobrynin, Turkey

1. Introduction

The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 remains one of the prominent subjects within the academic discourse on international politics, garnering extensive attention and analysis (Anami, 1994:70). Despite the wealth of literature on this critical event, a limited number of scholarly works directly delve into the noteworthy involvement of Robert Francis Kennedy, the younger brother of the U.S. President and Attorney General, during the culmination of the Cuban Crisis. Moreover, the existing literature needs to examine his role, even misrepresented (Anami, 1994:71) in the context of and as an illustration of unconventional state governance amid an international nuclear conflict.

Therefore, this study aims to illustrate that President Kennedy employed unorthodox methods during the Cuban Missile Crisis to resolve the issue. Within the framework of state governance, he delegated powers and roles to his brother and confidant (Scott and Hughes, 2015:208), Robert Kennedy, who had yet to hold a position like the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense in the cabinet. Rather than resorting to conventional approaches such as utilizing solely the cabinet or the pure security bureaucracy, he opted for atypical methods, akin to those of a corporate board of directors, exemplified by the Executive Committee (ExComm), naturally facilitated by Robert Kennedy since the President preferred, for specific reasons, not to attend all of the ExComm meetings (Stern, 2015:210). This research aims to shed light on President Kennedy's unprecedented methods of discussion and persuasion during this critical period, focusing on his younger brother, Robert Kennedy, in resolving the crisis. However, the study will refrain

from glorifying Brother Kennedy; thus, alternative perspectives will be incorporated to the fullest extent possible in light of recently emerged information and confessions from individuals who experienced that period firsthand.

The incident occurring in 1962, recognized as the Cuban Missile Crisis, represents an intricate amalgamation of diplomatic negotiations and strategic maneuvers reminiscent of a chess game, exhibiting a complexity beyond superficial appearances. Amidst this complicated scenario, Robert F. Kennedy played a critical role in various capacities. As the brother and closest advisor to President John F. Kennedy (Rubin, 1985:101) as well as the President's indispensable partner (Schlesinger, 1978:531 & Hayes, 2019:475), his influence was notable, serving as the facilitator during ExComm discussions with adaptable perspectives and even captivated admirers, even from the members of ExComm (McNamara, 1969:13). Additionally, in his capacity as the covert messenger and negotiator for his elder brother with the Soviets, Robert F. Kennedy had an impact on the crisis proceedings. This study contends the importance of Robert Kennedy's involvement in the unorthodox decision-making process within state governance and the subsequent resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Before commencing the analysis, it is imperative to construct a literary framework methodically. This entails discerning and incorporating a selection of seminal and widely endorsed works from the Cold War epoch. Additionally, a discerning selection of works from subsequent periods, notably those germane to the Cuban Missile Crisis and its resolution, will be included to furnish contextual relevance to the research subject. This stage assumes utmost significance in grasping President Kennedy's non-traditional strategies for navigating the Cuban Missile Crisis, notably including his brother, Robert Kennedy, in influential roles despite the absence of a direct connection to positions conventionally associated with defense, military, or intelligence within the cabinet. Furthermore, it is contended that utilizing the recently formed advisory board, ExComm (The Executive Committee of the National Security Council), instead of a conventional cabinet or established security and defense bureaucracy, represents another illustration of unconventional state governance, which this study claims.

John F. Kennedy was keenly aware of potential drawbacks associated with the conventional management of crises, likely derived from experiences such as the Bay of Pigs (Stern, 2003:75) and Laos incidents during his early presidency. Consequently, he harbored an early conviction that addressing such formidable challenges was imperative. To foster uninhibited discussions and avoid drawing attention, he made the strategic decision not to attend all ExComm meetings (Schlesinger, 1965:686)—wisdom acknowledged by his brother (Kennedy, 1969:33). The President's presence often alters individuals' comportment, with even robust figures occasionally tailoring recommendations to align with perceived presidential preferences; therefore, JFK directed the ExComm group to proactively present recommendations for a singular course of action or potentially several alternative courses (Schlesinger, 1965:686 & Kennedy, 1969:33).

2. Literature Review on Kennedy Junior's Role

The relevant literature would be categorized into three distinct groups. An example of some of the selected literary frameworks from the first group, with no mention of Robert Kennedy, is Louis J. Halle's *The Cold War as History*, published in 1967, comprising thirty-eight chapters with an epilogue. Notably, it allocates only one chapter to the Cuban issue, focusing on Khrushchev's gamble in Cuba, its failure, and concluding a chapter in the history of humanity. This relatively brief chapter addresses the Cuban Missile Crisis as if the sole actors were President Kennedy and Khrushchev, overlooking the importance of ExComm and Robert Kennedy. In another instance, *The Cold War and After*, authored by Charles O. Lerche in 1965, includes a brief section on our topic within the "Landmark Issues and Crisis" chapter. However, when addressing the Cuban Missile Crisis, Lerche intertwines it with the Berlin Wall, titling the section "The Berlin Wall and Cuban Crisis." Once again, there is a notable absence of any mention of Robert Kennedy in his views on the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the work of Nicholas J. Cull titled *The Cold War and The United States Information Agency-American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy*:

1945-1989, published by Cambridge University Press in 2008, the emphasis is on U.S. public diplomacy, the establishment of the United States Information Agency (USIA), and its activities throughout the Cold War. While the book includes a limited section on the Cuban Missile Crisis, there is an absence of any narrative regarding the role of Robert Kennedy or ExComm in the crisis.

When necessitated to scrutinize literature that deviates from the works mentioned above, assuming a somewhat distinct approach, and delves into governance and problem-solving through non-traditional or unconventional methods, attention is drawn to specific scholarly contributions. These works manifest an inclination towards unconventional methodologies in statecraft and issue resolution. It becomes imperative to identify and examine scholarly endeavors that offer unique perspectives on governance, employing approaches that deviate from conventional norms. Among such deviations, a significant work would be *The Cold War Era*, written by Fraser J. Harbutt and published by Blackwell Publishers Ltd in 2002. In this book, even though the coverage of the Cuban Missile Crisis is limited, with scattered references throughout the text yet still when addressing the crisis, Harbutt briefly mentions the ExComm and Robert Kennedy. However, he downplays the significance of Robert Kennedy's role to a certain extent. Furthermore, Harbutt presents contrasting accounts to those detailed by Robert Kennedy in his memoir "Thirteen Days." In J.P.D. Dunbabin's work, *The Cold War: The Great Powers and Their Allies*, published by Pearson & Longman in 2007, contributes to the study of the Cold War and is concise. Nevertheless, the Cuban Missile Crisis is not significant in this work nor detailed in narration. Furthermore, Robert Kennedy is mentioned only once, "his brother," with no further commentary on his role in the crisis.

Beyond the scope of the previously discussed literature, there are scholarly endeavors that transcend traditional approaches to problem-solving, placing a particular emphasis on non-traditional methodologies. Notably, specific works delve into the distinctive involvement of Robert Kennedy in the resolution of the Cuban Crisis. These studies provide nuanced insights into applying non-conventional problem-solving strategies and illuminate the significance of Kennedy's contributions in navigating the complexities of the Cuban Missile Crisis. By foregrounding the non-traditional aspects of problem resolution, these scholarly works contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the historical events, shedding light on the intricacies of Brother Kennedy's involvement and impact during this critical period. In her analysis of the Cold War period, as presented in *The Cold War*, published by Greenwood Press in 1998, Katherine A.S. Sibley organizes her work with dedicated chapters for various geographical regions across the globe. While briefly touching upon the Cuban Missile Crisis, the author allocates a short passage to highlight Robert Kennedy's role in the crisis. Notably, Sibley praises Robert Kennedy's positive contributions in resolving the situation and acknowledges his unorthodox diplomatic methods in engagements with Russian counterparts. Another example came in the mid-70s, in the detailed biography of President John F. Kennedy authored by Peter Schwab and J. Lee Shneidman, titled *John F. Kennedy* and published by Twayne Publishers Inc. in 1974; the study provides comprehensive insights into Kennedy's life, including his political career and relationships within his family. The specific chapter, "President Kennedy: Foreign Affairs," dedicates a section to the Cuban Missile Crisis spanning five pages. Within this section, Robert Kennedy emerges as a substantial aide to President Kennedy. The authors depict Robert Kennedy engaging in debates with colleagues over the crisis and making significant contributions to its resolution. In the work, *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* by Jussi Hanhimaki and Odd Arne Westad, published by Oxford University Press in 2003, the Cuban Missile Crisis is addressed within the chapter titled "The Rise of Détente," rather than as a standalone section. In this context, Robert Kennedy is briefly mentioned among those contributing to the relaxation of tensions. The authors convey his significant role by noting that "the crisis was defused" after talks between Robert Kennedy and the Soviet Ambassador to Washington. Lastly, in their work, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, published by Longman in 1999, Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow explore the decision-making process that led to the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis. They approach the analysis from the perspectives of the United States as a rational actor and governmental politics. Notably, the authors explicitly position Robert F. Kennedy within the

resolution process, delineating his involvement in critical steps such as the consideration of an air strike and invasion (Stern, 2003:73), the implementation of a blockade, addressing the Turkish problem, engaging in secret diplomacy (Stern, 2003:372), and other pivotal aspects of the crisis resolution. To initiate the discussion on his pivotal role in the Cuban Missile Crisis as an example of atypical state governance, a brief biography of Robert F. Kennedy followed by a short introduction to the crisis's setting and background would offer a brief transition to the primary debate.

3. Shortly About “Bobby” Kennedy & Portraying the Cuban Crisis

Initially, Robert Francis, also named "Bobby," Kennedy, born on November 20, 1925, was a prominent American politician, serving as a Democratic Senator from New York and gaining renown as a civil rights activist (Schlesinger, 1965:601-608 & Sorenson, 1965:474-490). Praised by some as an icon of modern American idealism (Schlesinger, 1965:601-608 & 794-798), he held the significant role of being the younger brother to President John F. Kennedy. He served as one of his advisers during the presidential term. Appointed by President Kennedy in 1961, Bobby assumed the position of the US Attorney General. Beyond his official role, Robert was the president's confidante and closest advisor (Schlesinger, 1965:601-608). His publication 'Thirteen Days,' published in 1969, focuses on the crisis and received significant criticism in light of new information and confessions emerging in the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, the reliability and accuracy of the information provided have been partially questioned (Anami, 1994:71 & Hayes, 2019:476). It is understood that some high-ranking officials serving the government during President Kennedy's administration sought to create a legend around President Kennedy and his brother Robert with their publications and accounts (Hayes, 2019:476). Stern even claimed that the works of historians from the 60s and 70s who glorified Bobby were “profoundly misleading if not out-and-out deceptive” (Stern, 2012:34).

Secondly, to conclude the introduction about him and the topic, it is essential to provide a short overview of the setting and background of the crisis to assist in better analyzing his involvement in these events and their resolution. Cuba was a dominant foreign policy issue during the Kennedy administration. Despite its proximity to the United States, Cuba was considered a member of the enemy camp, namely the Soviets, garnering intense attention from the Kennedy administration (Merrill and Peterson, 2000:381).

On one hand, the Castro administration of Cuba, led by communists, was allying with the Russians and seeking military protection. On the other hand, Kennedy and his team, including his brother, were strategizing to either overthrow Castro (Merrill and Paterson, 2000:381 & Scott and Hughes, 2015:123) or launch an invasion of the island with the aim (FRUSd, 1962:n.p.) of establishing it as a sanitized zone (FRUSa, 1962:n.p. & FRUSb, 1962:n.p.), entirely immune to communist influence. This intention manifested through the now-famous term "quarantine" (JFKWHA, 1962:n.p.) employed during the crisis. The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 marked a significant confrontation involving the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the United States. Approximately one month before the crisis unfolded, the Cuban government, with Soviet assistance, initiated the construction of bases intended for deploying medium and intermediate-range ballistic nuclear missiles (Merrill and Paterson, 2000:381) capable of targeting a substantial portion of U.S. territory (JFKWHA, 1962:n.p.). On October 14, evidential photographs of the ongoing construction of Soviet missile bases in Cuba were obtained through a U-2 photoreconnaissance plane. Initially, the United States chose a strategy involving aerial and naval attacks on Cuba (FRUSc, 1962:n.p.), subsequently opting for the implementation of a military "quarantine." The U.S. officially stated that the introduction of offensive weaponry into Cuba would not be tolerated. It insisted that the Soviet Union dismantle the missile facilities either under construction or already completed on the island (JFKWHA, 1962:n.p.).

While the Kennedy administration was optimistic that the Kremlin might acquiesce to their demands, anticipating a potential military standoff by Tuesday, October 28, 1962, Khrushchev expressed a contrasting perspective. In a letter to Kennedy on October 24, he characterized the U.S. quarantine as "the violation of the freedom to use international waters and international air space is an act of aggression

which pushes mankind toward the abyss of a world nuclear-missile war” (Khrushchev’s letter, 1962:2) and accused the U.S. of “piracy” and following "degenerate imperialism" (Khrushchev’s letter, 1962:2 & Sorensen, 1965:709). Amidst the confluence of crisis and upheaval, in a departure from the orthodox paradigm of state governance, the counsel proffered was not to respond to the most recent letter purportedly scripted by the Kremlin on behalf of Khrushchev, which was suggested by Bobby Kennedy (Schlesinger, 1965:709). Instead, the recommendation stood for the composition of a response to a prior epistle authored directly by Khrushchev (Kennedy, 1969:101-102), which shows, according to Schlesinger, Brother Kennedy’s ingenuity (Schlesinger, 1965:709) and significances in the resolution of the crisis and the confusion within the Soviet Union (Kennedy, 1969:96); thus, the response was re-written by Robert in collaboration with Theodore Sorensen (Rubin, 1985:111). The former letter sent by the USSR government, apparently written by Khrushchev himself, was characterized by a discernibly softer and more personalized tone (Kennedy, 1969:93), as also appraised by the U.S. Department of State. This proposal bore significant import as a pivotal stride towards ameliorating and resolving the prevailing crisis. Under ordinary circumstances, propositions from the U.S. State Department personnel concerning retorts to missives from Khrushchev, especially considering the subsequent letter, were inclined toward a commensurate tenor and resoluteness, potentially propelling an escalation and intensification of the crisis. In essence, these suggestions would harbor the potential to redirect the historical trajectory onto an alternate course. Contrary opinion notwithstanding, this narrative asserts that such a narrative was part of the “Trollope ploy,” thus responding to Khrushchev’s second letter was false because the response contained replies to both letters and was not confined only to one (Stern, 2015:2015-2017).

Publicly, the Soviets appeared to disregard the U.S. demands; however, covert diplomatic channels were actively engaged behind the scenes, leading to a fortunate development as a proposal emerged to address the crisis. On October 28, 1962, President John F. Kennedy and United Nations Secretary-General U Thant convened with Soviet representatives and reached an agreement for the dismantling of missiles in Cuba. As part of the resolution, the U.S. conceded to a commitment to non-invasion of the island, ultimately ending the confrontation. During diplomatic discussions conducted through back-channel negotiations with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin (Schlesinger, 1965:709 & Stern, 2003:206), U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy presented a proposal that included a commitment to the expeditious removal of Jupiter missiles stationed in Turkey and Italy, which was initially proposed by, the UN Ambassador of the U.S, Adlai Stevenson during the early stages of the crisis, and the removals to be done shortly after the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis (Kennedy, 1969:107-109 & Scott, 2007:55-56) and ordered FBI to put a halt to the activities against Cuba on October 28 (Scott and Hughes, 2015:68). Among the very unorthodox governance methods utilized by President Kennedy’s was apparently to trust a younger brother more than many of his cabinet members, or one of his senior diplomats and to place Robert Kennedy at the more forefront for the solution of the issue than many advisers or secretaries.

Moreover, the Secretary of Defense served during the Kennedy administration claimed that the U.S. Government exhibited a heightened level of effectiveness during that pivotal period compared to any other time throughout his seven years of service in the capacity of Secretary of Defense (McNamara, 1969:14), which would indicate the effectiveness of President Kennedy’s uncustomary methods during the crisis. The various entities within the government, including the State Department, civilian and military leaders of the Defense Department, the CIA, the White House staff, and the UN mission, collaborated seamlessly and cohesively. Still, they were also willing to resort to unconventional means to achieve a resolution instead of rigidly adhering to the confines of their official duties. McNamara asserts that such a harmonization, to a great extent, is due to the presence of Bobby in ExComm by stating that:

That they did so was in large part a result of the efforts of Robert Kennedy. It was he, acting with his brother’s consent, who did so much to organize the effort, monitor the results, and ensure the completion of the work on which the recommendations to the President were to be based (McNamara, 1969:14).

In the context of the same issue, Theodore C. Sorensen, John F. Kennedy's speechwriter and one of his key advisers who participated in the ExComm meetings, remarked that, while various Cabinet members and officials are sometimes credited with shaping discussions when the President was absent, the Attorney General emerged as the most notable figure. Not because he presented specific ideas or presided over the meetings (which no one did) but due to his consistent efforts in prodding, questioning, and eliciting arguments and alternatives. Robert himself acknowledged the significance of such an understanding in state governance when he wrote that "his conduct (referring JFK) of the missile crisis showed how important this kind of skeptical probing and questioning could be" (Kennedy, 1969:120). In other words, the Attorney General's proactive approach played a vital role in keeping discussions concrete and progressing, a particularly challenging task given the fluctuating participation of various individuals in the meetings (Sorensen, 1965:679).

4. Dilemma in Balancing Brother Kennedy's Actions and Ideals During Challenging Times

Following the foundational ideals upon which Robert Kennedy's nation was built, the Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba presented a twofold challenge to the United States. Beyond constituting a direct threat to U.S. power in Latin America, it also posed a peril to the overall unity and integrity of the hemisphere (Weldes, 1999:44). In response to this multifaceted challenge, Robert Kennedy openly declared the intention to employ military measures against the deployed missiles (Weldes, 1999:44) since he believed that "missiles might in the future constrain the ability of the United States to use its military forces in response to some problems in the hemisphere" (Weldes, 1999:44). Despite being perceived as relatively young and lacking experience in navigating complex political issues (Editorial, 1960:22 & Mills, 1998:115), Robert F. Kennedy held a unique position as the younger brother of the President. His grasp of constitutional principles, laws, and regulations was profound; however, his expertise in effectively managing an international nuclear crisis was somewhat limited (JFKOH-RFK-01, 1964:15). Nevertheless, Robert F. Kennedy's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis showcased his commitment to defending the principles upon which his nation stood, even in the face of formidable challenges.

Additionally, the role of an Attorney General in providing counsel to the President on complex matters, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, raises intriguing considerations (Scott and Hughes, 2015:208). Unlike typical scenarios involving familial dynamics, this wasn't a situation where a younger brother could engage in a fraternal exchange with an elder sibling. If this person weren't Bobby, another attorney general would likely not have been invited to participate in the ExComm meetings (Scott and Hughes, 2015:208); Robert was even found aggressive or impulsive during these meetings (Stern, 2003:85&131). In contrast, the gravity of the Cuban Missile Crisis placed the fate and future of millions in the hands of ExComm, a body convened by the President, and the President's brother was a member. Remarkably, despite his familial relationship, Robert assumed a pivotal role within the ExComm during the deliberations on the Cuban Missile Crisis. Unlike figures such as the Chief of the CIA or military leaders, a conventional hierarchical order did not dictate his influence but rather his intelligence, insights, and the President's trust in his judgment. In the October of 1962, amidst the Cuban Missile Crisis, Kennedy demonstrated his adept political skills by effectively securing compromises and mitigating the assertive stances of influential figures within the hawkish¹ faction (Schlesinger, 1965:690 & Stern, 2003:73). The president's confidence in him regarding negotiation matters is widely recognized, underscoring the pivotal role he played in the crisis.

Nevertheless, Robert Kennedy's perspectives underwent significant evolution during the ExComm meetings, reflecting the dynamic nature of his ideas. While shouldering considerable responsibilities and amidst the core of the crisis, Robert acknowledged the impracticality of unwavering determination; he

¹ Enthusiasts of the Cuban Missile Crisis now have access to intriguing new content from the recently partially opened Robert F. Kennedy records. The released material provides a detailed insight into the internal divisions within the White House during the crisis, showcasing a clear divide between "the hawks" advocating for an immediate bombing of Cuba and "the doves" supporting a diplomatic resolution to the situation. More information about "hawks" and "doves" can also be retrieved from Bartram, Michele (2012) the US Government Publishing Office (GPO): <https://govbooktalk.gpo.gov/2012/10/18/hawks-vs-doves-the-joint-chiefs-and-the-cuban-missile-crisis/>

contemplated that perspectives needed to be solicited, and dissenting opinions should be articulately communicated, which was reflected in his memoir when he confessed that “Our situation was made difficult by the fact that there was no obvious or simple solution. A dogmatism, a certainty of viewpoint, was not possible. For every position there were inherent weaknesses; and those opposed would point them out, often with devastating effects” (Kennedy, 169:44). It would be asserted at this point that this type of flow of ideas and change of views was inherent in him. Thus, in the initial days, he faced the possibility of launching a surprise attack (Scott and Hughes, 2015:127) on the Soviet missiles in Cuba, underscoring the influence of historical analogies, particularly the lessons drawn from the events at Pearl Harbor (Schlesinger, 1965:689 & Scott, 2007:5). In his memoir, Robert F. Kennedy succinctly summarized the impact of Pearl Harbor on his mindset and its consequential effect on his approach to resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis. This demonstrates how historical events played a crucial role in shaping his thoughts and opinions as he navigated the complexities of the crisis:

The general feeling in the beginning was that some form of action was required. There were those, although they were a small minority, who felt the missiles did not alter the balance of power and, therefore, necessitated no action. Most thought an air strike against the missile sites at that stage could be the only course. Listening to the proposals, I passed a note to the President: I now know how Tojo felt when he was planning Pearl Harbor (Kennedy, 1969:25).

Nevertheless, Robert demonstrated sagacity in recognizing the potential repercussions of launching an unanticipated attack, a departure from his ostensibly youthful and impulsive persona. He articulated that such a move by the United States would essentially amount to a "Pearl Harbor in reverse" (Sorensen, 1965:684 & Weldes, 1999:58). He deemed this approach unacceptable, asserting that, historically, the United States has not adhered to a strategy of launching surprise attacks without warning (Weldes, 1999:197-198). He emphasized that the tradition of delivering Sunday morning surprise blows on smaller nations contradicted the established principles upheld by the United States throughout 175 (Schlesinger, 1965:689) years, and such an attack should not be undertaken if the U.S was to maintain the moral position at home and around the world (Kennedy, 1969:38-39 & Weldes, 1999:58).

The moral lesson proposed by Junior Kennedy suggests that Robert Kennedy was not inflexible in his perspectives and was not fixated on a single hawkish notion (Stern, 2003:73) but was somewhat open to the free exchange of ideas. Secondly, those who previously labeled him as either a peace dove or a hawk may not have had sound and substantial evidence to support their claims in either suggestion. Thirdly, and perhaps most notably, according to Schlesinger, Robert Kennedy's moral proposition marked a crucial turning point in the ExComm discussions and among its members (Schlesinger, 1965:690). This pivotal moment has led to a shift in ideas, with many transitioning from considering air strikes or invasion—options that could potentially result in numerous casualties—to favoring the implementation of a blockade (Schlesinger, 1965:690 & Kennedy, 1969:37-38 & Stern, 2003:73).

Robert Kennedy was adopting, learning, and flexible but still young. Another illustration negating the perception that Robert was merely characterized by youthful restlessness lies in his dual stance regarding Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, during the Kennedy administration. While expressing admiration for Acheson, he concurrently endorsed conflicting ideas during ExComm meetings. This contradiction is acknowledged by Robert himself in his memoir, underscoring the complexity and nuance in his perspectives:

Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson began attending our meetings, and he was firmly in favor of an air attack. I was a great admirer of his. In 1961, President Kennedy asked him to prepare a report for the National Security Council recommending a course of action to deal with the Russian threat to Berlin. Listening to his presentation, I thought that I had never heard anyone so lucid and convincing and would never wish to be on the other side of an argument with him. Now, he argued that an air attack and invasion represented our only alternative in the same clear and brilliant way (Kennedy, 1969:30).

Despite Robert's profound admiration for Dean Acheson, he paradoxically advocated for opposing viewpoints, contending that implementing such ideas would be impractical in maintaining morale both within the United States and globally. He asserted that their struggle against Communism transcended physical survival; instead, it encompassed preserving heritage and ideals. According to Robert, these values were integral and should not be compromised or jeopardized in pursuing their objectives (Kennedy, 1969:30).

Additionally, this notion supports the perspectives put forth by Pachter. The author categorizes Robert F. Kennedy as a hard-boiled student of Realpolitik within the ExComm members. Despite this characterization, Robert asserted that he would not "compromise on the ideals upon which this country was built"(Pachter, 1963:13 & Kennedy, 1969:39). This underscores Robert's commitment to maintaining the fundamental principles and values that shaped the foundation of the United States, even as he navigated the complex and pragmatic considerations of Realpolitik. Subsequently, Robert Kennedy's role assumes greater significance as he undergoes a discernible shift in alignment, gradually aligning his ideas with the dovish camp (Sorenson, 1965:672-711 & Schlesinger, 1965:685-710). Notably, he takes on the responsibility of initiating negotiations with the Russians, a task delegated to him by the President. This evolving role underscores Robert's pivotal position in diplomatic efforts and his growing influence in shaping crucial decision-making processes during this period.

5. Junior Kennedy as the Facilitator, Secret Negotiator: The Evolution of Ideas on the Brink of a Nuclear Crisis

Robert F. Kennedy was considered pivotal in managing and resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis. His significance lies in his ability to avoid rigid adherence to his initial ideas, allowing them to evolve throughout the crisis. Additionally, his openness and frankness in communicating his thoughts directly to the President, bypassing hierarchical barriers, played a vital role. Initially aligned with the 'hawk' camp (Scott and Hughes, 2015:127) mainly when he argued an invasion of Cuba (Anami, 1994:74 & Stern, 2003:73 & Thompson, 2009:186), somewhat a different approach than his elder brother who initially considered an air attack to the missile sites (Thompson, 2009:186), Robert Kennedy's ideas transformed hawkish stances to more moderate and sensible approaches in dealing with the crisis at hand. His perspectives oscillated between the hawk and dove camps (Stern, 2003:73), ultimately settling in the latter—a more tempered and conciliatory stance towards the end of the crisis. This journey from the hawkish to dovish camp signifies the nuanced and dynamic nature of Robert Kennedy's contributions during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Furthermore, President Kennedy entrusted Robert F. Kennedy (Scott and Hughes, 2015:208) with significant responsibilities, such as overseeing ExComm meetings in his absence (Sorensen, 1965:679). and confidentially negotiating with the Soviets (Schlesinger, 1965:699-701 & Sorensen, 1965:555-598, 668-669, 690-701). John F. Kennedy did not attend all ExComm meetings, as told by Bobby Kennedy and Schlesinger, because he refrained from arousing attention but continued his regular schedule, including election campaigns and speaking engagements (Kennedy, 1969:33-34, 44 & Schlesinger, 1965:689-695). Contrary to Robert F. Kennedy and Sorensen's account of why the President was away in some meetings, Stern claimed that such assertions were false because John Kennedy was there except when to keep the crisis discussions secret during the first week (Stern, 2015:211). Yet still, it is noteworthy that these tasks and negotiations were delegated not to the Secretary of State but to an individual occupying the highest echelons of the judiciary branch, illustrating an unconventional approach to addressing a political crisis. In crisis management, the procedural framework and organizational structure of the decision-making process can be as consequential as the ultimate decisions. The Cuban Missile Crisis stands as a notable and consequential instance of an unorthodox decision-making process within the realm of hard politics or as a superb example of calculated crisis management, as Paterson asserted (Merrill and Paterson, 2000:409&435)

Robert Kennedy addresses this matter in his memoir, asserting that the Secretary of State cannot provide detailed advice to the President on crises that fall under his department's purview (Kennedy, 1969:115-116). He highlights the potential risk that crucial information may be omitted or distorted due to errors or judgment as it passes through several hands to the Secretary or the President (Kennedy, 1969:116). Therefore, Kennedy emphasizes the President's need for direct access to expertise and knowledge to ensure accurate and unfiltered information; otherwise, he might have fallen into a miscalculation trap, similar to the 1961 debate over sending troops to Laos. During this debate, the clarity of information regarding the possibility of an attack on US soldiers who would be landing at Laos airport was uncertain (Kennedy, 1969:117-118). Therefore, the solution was to obtain objective and unfettered information (Kennedy, 1969:118).

Hierarchy and established state institutions wield significant influence in conventional political decision-making processes. Nevertheless, adherence to such structures can sometimes yield unfavorable outcomes, as exemplified by the Bay of Pigs incident. President Kennedy drew valuable lessons from the Bay of Pigs experience (Schlesinger, 1965:700). Robert Kennedy considered the Bay of Pigs incident advantageous for the administration, considering it a momentous event that imparted crucial lessons. The failure of the Bay of Pigs undertaking (Thompson, 2009:185) played a pivotal role in the subsequent success of ExComm. A significant outcome of the Bay of Pigs was the heightened involvement of Robert Kennedy in decision-making processes in the US government as he stated, "My engagement in international affairs was limited until after the Bay of Pigs" (JFKOH-RFK-01, 1964:15). Despite the setbacks in endeavors to overthrow Castro (Merrill and Paterson, 2000:383-387 & Thompson, 2009:185), the insights gained contributed to shaping the Kennedy administration and equipping them to manage the Cuban Missile Crisis in the ensuing year effectively. It became evident to the President that Robert was his primary advisor, with a distinct focus on the presidential perspective and a genuine concern for the President's well-being (Beschloss, 1991: 304-305).

Moreover, relying solely on figures and statistics can be deceptive, as heads of state institutions may need help expressing their authentic views. Hierarchical constraints may hinder a robust discussion and the decision-making process. Recognizing these challenges, John F. Kennedy established an unconventional decision-making body, the ExComm. This departure from traditional approaches aimed to foster a more dynamic and effective response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Those directly involved in the crisis and ExComm meetings have voiced their belief that the atypical leadership approach mentioned played a crucial role in resolving the situation. Robert Kennedy highlighted such an understanding in his memoir by writing:

During all these deliberations, we all spoke as equals. There was no rank, and we did not even have a chairman. Dean Rusk-who, as Secretary of State, might have assumed, might have assumed that position and other duties during this period and frequently could not attend our meetings. As a result, with the encouragement of McNamara, Bundy, and Ball, the conversations were wholly uninhibited and unrestricted. Everyone had an equal opportunity to express himself and to be heard directly. It was a tremendously advantageous procedure that only sometimes occurs within the executive branch of the government, where rank is often so important (Kennedy, 1969:46).

On the other hand, Sorensen wrote that a noteworthy facet of those gatherings was an unmistakable sense of complete equality; in a crisis devoid of precedent, the significance of protocol diminished significantly (Sorensen, 1965:679). Furthermore, rank held little importance (Stern, 2003:58), significantly when secrecy impeded staff support. ExComm constituted a group of fifteen individuals, each independently representing the President rather than distinct departments; Assistant Secretaries engaged in spirited disagreements with their respective Secretaries; Sorensen's participation was notably more uninhibited than in any previous National Security Council meeting, and the President's absence encouraged everyone to express their opinions openly, notwithstanding the constraints of protocol or hierarchy (Sorensen, 1965:679).

The mentioned ExComm consisted not only of current cabinet members but also included individuals from the former cabinet, close advisors, friends, and, notably, the President's younger brother and Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy. Robert Kennedy assumed diverse roles in addressing the crisis. However, what stands out prominently is the dynamic flow of ideas within this assembly. In his memoir detailing the situation, Robert F. Kennedy provides a compelling illustration of the diverse perspectives within the ExComm, including his own, stating that:

They were the men of highest intelligence, dynamic, courageous, and dedicated to their country's well-being. In his opinion, none were consistent from the beginning to the end. That kind of open, unfettered mind was essential. For some, there were only minor changes, perhaps varieties of a single idea. For others there were continuous changes of opinion each day: some because of the pressure of events even appeared to lose their judgment and stability (Kennedy, 1969:30).

Having initially advocated for an invasion, Robert F. Kennedy underwent a significant shift in his stance, ultimately endorsing a decision to impose a blockade and quarantine on Cuba (Stern, 2003:134). However, he acknowledged the limitations of this approach, noting that the missiles were already present in Cuba, and implementing a blockade would essentially be akin to "closing the door after the horse had left the barn" (Kennedy, 1969:27). Additionally, he recognized the potential for heightened tension and a confrontation with the Soviet Union, particularly in the act of intercepting their ships (Kennedy, 1969:27).

During the deliberations within the ExComm meetings, Secretary of Defense McNamara put forth the proposal for a naval blockade. Robert F. Kennedy initially harbored reservations about this strategy, expressing the concern that a blockade would entail a prolonged and sluggish process stretching over several months. However, his inclination, characterized by a hawkish disposition, gradually evolved into a more dovish position. On October 19, he decisively aligned himself with the advocacy for a blockade, notwithstanding its public designation as a "quarantine" (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:231). In a more nuanced and reflective tone, Robert F. Kennedy expounds on his transformation towards a dovish stance and his endorsement of the blockade in his memoir, articulating that:

I supported McNamara's position in favor of a blockade. This was not from a deep conviction that it would be a successful course of action but a feeling that it had more flexibility and fewer liabilities than a military attack. Most importantly, like others, I could not accept the idea that the United States would rain bombs on Cuba, killing thousands and thousands of civilians in a surprise attack. Maybe the alternatives were not very palatable, but I did not see how we could accept that course of action for our country (Kennedy, 1969:29).

Robert F. Kennedy's contributions to resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis are most comprehensively elucidated through his clandestine and confidential negotiations with the Soviets. As a discreet messenger and negotiator, Robert engaged in backdoor communications with the Soviet ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin (Kennedy, 1969:63-65 & Stern, 2003:206). Remarkably, within the cabinet, only a select few were privy to the specifics of Robert F. Kennedy's responsibilities, a confidential assignment bestowed upon him directly by the President himself (Schlesinger, 1965:690 & Scott and Hughes, 2015:16,24). The negotiations' details and insights gained from the Russians and concessions were classified as top-secret (Pope, 1982:1) and remained shrouded in secrecy even in the aftermath. Notably, accounts from the Soviet perspective introduced some contradictory perspectives into the narrative (Pope, 1982:1). The practice of backdoor diplomacy had already commenced before the Cuban Missile Crisis, notably in negotiations related to a nuclear test ban treaty and the Berlin crisis. However, the decision to entrust the Attorney General with such a critical role underscores the immense trust that the President placed in Robert F. Kennedy. This move attests to the President's confidence in Robert's capabilities and reliability. Furthermore, Robert F. Kennedy substantiated his brother's trust by showcasing his trustworthiness,

intelligence, and sagacity through adept negotiations and strategic maneuvers in dealings with the Soviets (Scott and Hughes, 2015:16&24-28).

6. Conclusion

The Cuban Missile Crisis is a compelling case study, highlighting the pivotal role of flexible and unorthodox approaches in effective crisis management. Within the intricate tapestry of actors involved, including Soviet leader N. Khrushchev, Secretary of Defense McNamara, and ExComm, a standout figure emerges – Robert F. Kennedy, the Attorney General and younger brother of President Kennedy during the early 1960s.

The crisis, a complex amalgamation of elements such as the looming threat of nuclear war, intricate backdoor diplomacy, the role of ExComm, the contours of the containment policy, and the power dynamics among significant nations, imparts invaluable lessons. Foremost among them is the illuminating transformation of Robert F. Kennedy's initially rigid and hawkish ideas into more dovish and moderate stances when the nation's and humanity's interests hang in the balance. Bobby was aware of the human weaknesses under stress and crises, which was indicated by his evaluation of members of ExComm when he said:

However, even many years later, those human weaknesses-impatience and fits of anger are understandable. Each one of us was being asked to make a recommendation that would affect the future of all mankind, a recommendation which, if wrong and if accepted, could mean the destruction of the human race. That kind of pressure does strange things to a human being, even brilliant, self-confident, mature, experienced men (Kennedy, 1969:44).

Although Stern claimed that there was nothing on ExComm tapes, which were revealed in later years, or in the available documentary record, to support Bobby's claim (Stern, 2015:210), it would still be a relevant comment by Robert Kennedy, firstly, this was a personal memoir in which one would tell about feelings, and secondly, it would be a misjudgment based predominantly on audio tape recordings and without considering the other elements in the crisis, i.e., other meetings outside ExComm, diplomatic correspondences, etc. The Cuban Missile Crisis, unfolding against the backdrop of intricate geopolitical dynamics, provides a fascinating exploration into the evolution of ideas within the unorthodox political body, ExComm. Robert F. Kennedy's nuanced perspectives played a pivotal role in steering this dynamic process, serving as a mirror to the subtle shifts (Stern, 2003:134) in strategies and ideologies, which was coupled with the profound impact of brotherhood and trust in facilitating the resolution of a crisis of such magnitude.

Furthermore, the study explored the influence of Robert Kennedy's proactive approach in shaping discussions and eliciting alternative viewpoints during the crisis. Through a nuanced examination of Robert Kennedy's multifaceted role and President Kennedy's unconventional governance strategies, this study offers insights into the complexities of crisis management and decision-making processes within international politics.

The unconventional decision to entrust such critical tasks to an individual outside traditional diplomatic channels highlights the unorthodox approach to managing the crisis. Kennedy's memoir elucidates the necessity of direct access to expertise and knowledge in crisis management to ensure accurate decision-making. The establishment of the ExComm, characterized by egalitarian discourse and uninhibited discussions, facilitated a more dynamic response to the crisis. Kennedy's role as an undercover negotiator with the Soviets further underscores his pivotal contribution. This study also highlights Kennedy's transformation from an advocate of military intervention to a proponent of diplomatic solutions, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of crisis management and decision-making processes within complex politics.

This academic abstract examines the pivotal contributions of Robert F. Kennedy in managing and resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis, focusing on his evolution of ideas and clandestine negotiations as a facilitator and secret negotiator (Scott, 2007:118-119 & Stern, 2003:372). Kennedy's significance lies in his ability to transcend rigid adherence to initial hawkish stances, transitioning towards more moderate approaches amidst the crisis. His dynamic evolution from the hawkish to dovish camp reflects the nuanced nature of his contributions. Furthermore, Kennedy's unique position as a confidant to President Kennedy allowed him to assume significant responsibilities, including overseeing ExComm meetings and conducting confidential negotiations with Soviet officials (Scott, 2007:118-119).

In conclusion, Robert F. Kennedy commands heightened attention for his adept ability to transcend fixated and rigid viewpoints, demonstrating a remarkable capacity to adapt to the unfolding situation. His flexibility, intelligence, and profound brotherhood contribute significantly to resolving the Cuban Missile Crisis. The crisis, with its multifaceted dimensions, underscores the enduring value of these attributes in navigating the complexities of global geopolitics and fostering diplomatic solutions for the greater good of international peace and stability.

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