

DIEFENBAKER,  
THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS,  
AND THE IMPACT OF SOCIETY  
ON FOREIGN POLICY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Typically, students of foreign policy have viewed the decision-making process from perspectives that downplay, if not ignore, societal influence. Canadian scholar Patrick Stuart Robinson has gone against this trend, asserting that foreign policy, properly understood, is in fact rooted in society. According to Robinson, the political process is inherently a social activity, and as such, imposes certain constraints on decision-makers. He asserts that decision-makers, like all members of society, have a role to play. Indeed, as the symbolic representatives of their constituency, these individuals have a particularly significant position within society -- they are at the helm of the ongoing process of affirming its values and rules. Like everyone else, they too are aware of what is expected of them according to their role. However, because of their status, and because of the importance of what they do, decision-makers are especially burdened by societal expectations. Their choices cannot simply be made according to personal preferences; rather, they must be made against the backdrop of their leadership position and its attendant obligations to society. Importantly, as Robinson notes, the "political fortunes [of decision-makers] -- even their survival -- depend to a great extent on how they are popularly perceived to have discharged [their]...responsibility." As a result, considerations of role and appropriateness are often pivotal to the policy-making process.

This thesis, a case study of the Canadian response to the Cuban missile crisis, lends credence to Robinson's argument. Specifically, it shows that considerations of role, responsibility, and appropriateness were highly relevant to the Diefenbaker government in the formulation of Canadian policy. Moreover, this thesis dispels the popular notion that Canada's reaction to the crisis can be explained solely by reference to Prime Minister Diefenbaker's propensity for indecision, his personal antipathy for President Kennedy, or his strong Canadian nationalism.

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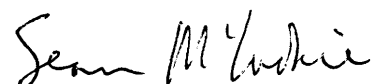
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Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sean M. Yushie". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sean M. Yushie".

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

Former Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson once remarked that foreign policy "...is merely domestic policy with its hat on...Canada's foreign policy, so far as it is Canadian policy at all, is, in fact, largely the consequence of domestic factors..."<sup>1</sup> If one concedes that domestic factors have a role in shaping Canada's external relations, the question remains as to how and why they do. Typically, students of Canadian foreign policy have viewed policy-making from a perspective which downplays, if not ignores, societal influence.<sup>2</sup> Such an interpretation, known as "statism," suggests that

...foreign policy making, with limited exception, remains the almost exclusive preserve of a handful of politicians, bureaucrats, and ex-officio players who, by the rules of parliamentary procedure and by custom and tradition, are well insulated from the demands of civil society.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to statism, this thesis explores the centrality of societal influence on Canadian external relations. It challenges the argument that the state is autonomous from society, and proposes instead that foreign policy, properly understood, is rooted in society. To develop this proposition, the thesis examines as a case study Canada's

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<sup>1</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989), 19.

<sup>2</sup> David Goldberg, *Foreign Policy and Ethnic Interest Groups: American and Canadian Jews Lobby for Israel* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Goldberg is paraphrasing Kim Richard Nossal, who suggests that "...the orthodoxy of domestication notwithstanding, the state enjoys... relative autonomy vis a vis civil society." According to Nossal, "only at the outer limits of a broad band of acceptable behaviour will the state's actions not diverge from societal preferences." See Kim Richard Nossal, "Analyzing the Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy," *International Journal* 39, no. 1 (Winter 1983-84), 22. Works espousing a statist interpretation of Canadian politics include S.D. Clark, "Canada and the American Value System," in Richard Schultz, Orest M. Khrulak and Sidney I. Pobihushchy, eds., *The Canadian Political Process: A Reader. Revised Edition* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), 61-8; Robert Presthus, "Interest Groups and the Canadian Parliament: Activity, Interest, Legitimacy, and Influence," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* IV, no. 4 (December 1971), 444-60; Robert Presthus, "Interest Group Lobbying: Canada and the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 413 (1974b), 44-57; Nossal, *The Politics*, *passim*; Nossal, "Analyzing the Domestic Sources," 1-22.

reaction to the events of October 1962. The Cuban missile crisis is selected because it was an event in Canadian history where societal impact on external policy was particularly visible, yet which has been explained, in large part, according to the statist tradition.

## **2. SOCIETY, STATE, AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS**

To date, only a handful of Canadian foreign policy analysts have questioned prevailing assumptions concerning society and its relation to the state. Writing the foreword to Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon's book on interest groups in Canada, scholar Don Munton lamented that

...a good deal is known about the predilections of prime ministers, past and present, and about the workings and views of officialdom in the Department of External Affairs. However, less is known about the factors within the Canadian society, economy, and polity which influence foreign policies, and how such influence is exerted. Beyond a lingering, fairly common - and almost certainly incorrect - assumption that these factors do not matter much, there is little general understanding of the subject.<sup>4</sup>

Within the literature that explores the impact of society on Canadian foreign policy, there are basically two theoretical approaches. The preponderance of existing work is premised on an interpretation of influence which arises mainly out of the overt participation of societal groups in the decision-making process. Examples of this work include studies by Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, David Taras, and David Goldberg which examine interest groups and their impact on foreign policy,<sup>5</sup> and pieces by Harald von Riekhoff, John Kirton, and Peyton Lyon which focus on the collegial decision-making process under Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau.<sup>6</sup> Less attention has been devoted to the study of

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<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, *The Domestic Mosaic: Domestic Groups and Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1985), vii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*; David Goldberg and David Taras, "Influencing Canada's Middle East Policy: The Domestic Battleground," in David Goldberg and David Taras, eds., *The Domestic Battleground: Canada and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 3-13; and Goldberg, *Foreign Policy*, 9. See also Presthus, "Interest Groups," 44-60.

<sup>6</sup> Harald von Riekhoff, "The Impact of Prime Minister Trudeau on Foreign Policy," *International Journal* XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 1978), 267-86; John Kirton, "Foreign

Canadian society in general and its more subtle impact on foreign policy. Denis Stairs, writing in 1977, provided a broad theoretical framework for studying the various aspects of domestic influence. For Stairs, society's role in parameter-setting was of particular importance:

...The pressure of constituent opinions - or at least what are perceived as constituent opinions - will clearly limit a policy-maker's practical freedom of maneuver. This can happen, moreover, even when the relevant opinions are not expressly articulated.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, Michael Tucker's text on Canadian foreign policy suggested that societal impact "...has been determined largely by the nature of political responses of government to it, and this has been one for the most part of government's sense of the 'mood' of the people, be it sectional or national."<sup>8</sup> Most recently, Robert Cox has gone so far as to suggest that the disposition of powers like Canada to play a middle power role in the world is rooted fundamentally in the "...characteristics, values and interests of the state...and the civil society within which it is embedded."<sup>9</sup>

Building upon work by Stairs and others, this thesis will examine the tumultuous events of the Cuban Missile Crisis to show that society does indeed play a significant role in the shaping of Canadian foreign policy.

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Policy Decision-Making in the Trudeau Government: Promise and Performance," *International Journal* XXXIII, no. 2 (Spring 1978), 287-311; and Peyton Lyon, "The Trudeau Doctrine," *International Journal* XXVI, no. 1 (Winter 1970-71), 19-43. Other studies premised on the same view of societal impact include Walter Soderlund and Ronald Wagenberg, "The Editor and External Affairs: The 1972 and 1974 Election Campaigns," *International Journal* XXXI, no. 2 (Spring 1976), 244-54; and Denis Stairs, "The Press and Foreign Policy in Canada," *International Journal* XXXI, no. 2 (Spring 1976), 223-43.

<sup>7</sup> Denis Stairs, "Public Opinion and External Affairs: Reflections on the 'Domestication' of Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* XXXIII, no. 1 (Winter 1977-78), 132. Stairs envisaged four possibilities for domestic (non-governmental) influence: agenda-setting, parameter-setting, policy-setting, and administration setting. Italics in original.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Tucker, *Canadian Foreign Policy: Contemporary Issues and Themes* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1980), 42.

<sup>9</sup> David Black and Heather Smith, "Notable Exceptions? New and Arrested Directions in Canadian Foreign Policy Literature," *Canadian Journal of Political Studies* XXVI, no. 4 (December 1993), 765.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS

### 1. SOCIETY

Before discussing the theoretical framework of the thesis, it is necessary to briefly examine one of its key concepts -- society. In the most general of terms, a society is an "...autonomous group of people engaged in a broad range of cooperative activities."<sup>1</sup> Yet, a society is much more involved than such a simple definition would suggest. This complexity is best illustrated by asking "What differentiates one society from another?" In part, the answer to this question is found in the physical characteristics of the society in question -- its geography, population, genetic makeup, age, and its production and consumption of material goods. In part, too, the answer lies in the normative characteristics of the society -- its values, rules, roles, and expectations.<sup>2</sup> It is the latter, normative dimension of a society which is of particular concern for this thesis, and which requires further elaboration.

Every human society, whatever its physical makeup, is a normative order, an ever-changing system of (sometimes conflicting) values and rules of conduct.<sup>3</sup> As such, each society has a moral/ideological foundation which comprises its core beliefs and ideals. Structured around this foundation of values is a framework of formal and informal

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<sup>1</sup> Autonomy is key to the definition of a society -- it allows one to differentiate between a society and its sub-units. Basically, the distinction is about authority, or sovereignty. Thus, at a conceptual level, the state and society are intertwined. Gerhard Lenski and Jean Lenski, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, 4th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982), 8. See Nick Mansfield, *Introductory Sociology: Canadian Perspectives* (Toronto: Collier Macmillan Canada Inc., 1982), 82-84; Michael Oakeshott, "The Vocabulary of a Modern European State," *Political Studies* XXIII, no. 2 (1975), 337.

<sup>2</sup> David Frisby and Derek Sayer, *Society* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1986), 27-28, 42-51, 69, 96-105, 120 and 123. See also Lenski and Lenski, *Human Societies*, 23 and 34-53.

<sup>3</sup> Society is always in a state of flux, changing sometimes incrementally, sometimes radically. Because of this, some norms and values in a society may actually be incompatible with each other. Further, various groups within society may also have differing opinions, values, and norms -- in short, society is not a monolithic entity. Mansfield, *Introductory Sociology*, 349-367.

rules according to which relations with others are conducted and judged. These rules, or norms, define what behaviour is acceptable or appropriate for whom under what circumstances.<sup>4</sup> Because of norms, an individual socialized into a particular society will have certain expectations of how a good boy should behave, for example, or how a responsible adult should act, or even how a worthy government should lead the country. Similarly, each individual is aware of what behaviour is considered appropriate for himself/herself according to his/her role in society.

Importantly, a society is not only about norms; it is also about their enforcement -- rules can serve no purpose without general compliance. Therefore, every society has a wide array of positive and negative sanctions which are used by its members to motivate aberrant individuals to behave. These social sticks and carrots range "...all the way from a simple word of encouragement to a large monetary prize or appointment to an important office, from a fleeting frown on someone's face to the death penalty."<sup>5</sup> However, external stimuli can only go so far in motivating individual action; as each person is ultimately responsible for his/her own behaviour, self-regulation is a crucial aspect of social control. Accordingly, every society goes to great lengths to ensure that all of its members internalize its values and rules of conduct. Through the process of socialization, each person is trained to experience feelings such as guilt, obligation, or pride. These feelings are perhaps a society's most effective tool in securing compliance to its norms.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lenski and Lenski, *Human Societies*, 33.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* It must be noted, however, that all unpleasant social sanctions notwithstanding, people still occasionally go against rules and values of a society. In part, this may be due to conflicts in the normative fabric of that society. For example, the issue of abortion is highly contentious because it places important values in irreconcilable conflict - the right to life, and the right of personal choice.

Having very briefly outlined the normative dimension of society (hereinafter referred to as society) and its impact on the individual, the discussion will now turn to how society affects decision-makers in the political process.

## **2.1 POLITICS, ROLE, CHOICE, AND THE LOGIC OF APPROPRIATENESS**

As outlined in the introduction, this thesis proposes to examine the effect of society on the Canadian government's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. To do so, it will utilize a theoretical framework that has recently been developed by Patrick Stuart Robinson in critical response to the tendency of existing international relations literature to exclude "...political context and content from its narrow procedural analysis of foreign policy making."<sup>7</sup> Crucial to Robinson's perspective is his characterization of politics. Building on the work of James March and Johan Olsen, Robinson emphasizes that politics is, at base, "...the discussion/engagement of a normative social order."<sup>8</sup> If, by definition, politics is inherently a social exercise, how should this affect the analysis of the foreign policy decision-making process? Robinson suggests that political leaders must be viewed in the context of society.<sup>9</sup> He contends that decision-makers, like all members of a society, have a role to play. Indeed, as the symbolic representatives of their constituency, these individuals have a particularly significant position within society -- they are at the helm of the ongoing process

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<sup>7</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning, and the Institutional Context of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *International Journal* XLIX, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 425. See also P. Stuart Robinson, "Hobson's Choice: The Politics of International Crisis Escalation," (Ph.D. Thesis, University of British Columbia, November 1991).

<sup>8</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 433. See James March, and Johan Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989); James March and Johan Olsen (eds.), *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, 2nd ed. (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1987). See also Oakeshott, "The Vocabulary," 337, 412.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson castigates existing international relations theory for treating the political leader as "...though he were an autonomous utility-seeking decision-maker." P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 413.

of defining and affirming its values and rules.<sup>10</sup> Like everyone else, they too are aware of what is expected of them according to their role. However, because of their status and the importance of what they do, decision-makers are especially burdened by societal expectations. Their choices cannot simply be made according to personal preferences;<sup>11</sup> rather, they must be made against the backdrop of their leadership position and its attendant obligations to society.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, as Robinson notes, the "...political fortunes [of decision-makers] -- even their survival -- depend to a great extent on how they are popularly perceived to have discharged [their]...responsibility."<sup>13</sup>

As a result, policy-makers often make their decisions more according to appropriateness than instrumental consequentiality -- it is not what is specifically done (or even whether it is successful.)<sup>14</sup> that is important so much as that the means and ends are considered to be fitting. March and Olsen, in discussing this phenomenon, suggest that

...political institutions and the individuals in them need to communicate to their observers that the decisions they make are legitimate...Legitimacy is established by showing that the decisions accomplish appropriate objectives or by showing that they are made in appropriate ways.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Hobson's Choice," 40. James March and Johan Olsen, "Organizational Choice Under Ambiguity," in March and Olsen, eds., *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, 11. See also March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> The argument may be made that the values and preferences of decision-makers do not differ considerably from the constituency they represent. After all, they have "...been subject to the same social and cultural factors...." Bernard Cohen, *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Wisconsin: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 199.

<sup>12</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Hobson's Choice," 148; March and Olsen, "Organizational Choice," 15; Denis Stairs, "Public Opinion and External Affairs: Reflections on the 'Domestication' of Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* XXXIII, no. 1 (Winter 1977-78), 140.

<sup>13</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 417.

<sup>14</sup> For example, when Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien raises the question of human rights in his discussions with dignitaries from the People's Republic of China, he does not really expect any substantive results. Thus, his behaviour cannot be justified on a purely instrumental basis. It is more easily explained with reference to notion of appropriateness - 'human rights' are important to Canadians, and consequently it is expected that their leader champion them - if only at a symbolic level. See March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, 50, 160. See also P. Stuart Robinson, "Hobson's Choice," 300.

<sup>15</sup> March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, 49.

In essence, their every choice must be justifiable -- if not to themselves,<sup>16</sup> then at least to their constituency.<sup>17</sup> Fundamentally, it is this notion of legitimacy which forms the nexus between the individual decision-maker and the rest of society, and is thus the means by which social values and expectations find purchase in the foreign policy process.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL APPLICABILITY**

As Kim Richard Nossal notes in his influential text on Canadian foreign policy, there are myriad, ever-fluctuating factors which influence state behaviour. As a result, it is highly improbable that "...one source or determinant is likely to manifest itself consistently as the single explanation of a particular decision or set of decisions in foreign policy."<sup>18</sup> Naturally, society's impact on the foreign policy process is no exception to this rule. It must be remembered that political leaders are not mindless conduits, formulating every external policy decision according to the dictates of society. However, that said, there are situations where the decision-making process is best explained by using the analytical concepts of role, legitimacy, and the "logic of appropriateness."<sup>19</sup>

Fundamentally, societal impact on a foreign policy decision is linked to the political saliency of the issues involved. The more important an issue to society, the more likely decision-makers are constrained by societal expectations. Governments have considerable

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<sup>16</sup> "...The force that moves the typical official is a personal ambition to do something that seems important to him, and to do it well.... The official is not a 'mindless bureaucrat' but a knowledgeable person with some convictions about the value and appropriateness of particular courses of action." Cohen, B., *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Wisconsin: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 201.

<sup>17</sup> One analyst makes the wry observation: "self-consciousness of role has always linked politics and the theatre." Leo Bogart, *Silent Politics: Polls and the Awareness of Public Opinion* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1973), 140.

<sup>18</sup> Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989), 12. Italics in original.

<sup>19</sup> March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, 160.

latitude when dealing with foreign policy issues which are of little impact domestically, or which are of little concern domestically. However, if an issue is of particular societal significance -- for symbolic or other less emotive reasons -- policy-makers may find their range of socially acceptable choices to be quite limited. Whether this really affects the decision-making process, however, is dependent upon "the nature and circumstances of the state."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, the extent to which the logic of appropriateness is capable of explaining decision-making behaviour is linked to each particular government's need and desire to legitimate its actions.<sup>21</sup> A government's stability (real or perceived) and sensitivity to criticism (actual or possible) are critical elements in determining the extent to which choices are made and justified according to the normative dictates of society.<sup>22</sup> Relevant factors include the personalities of individual decision-makers, their perceptions of the issues, and the nature and strength of political opposition. In some instances, however, government decisions must at least be minimally defended and legitimized, no matter what the nature and circumstances of the state. This is certainly the case with international crises.<sup>23</sup>

In an international crisis, a society faces a significant threat to its values, or even to its very existence. The response of the state, be it to wage war or to back down and suffer the consequences, must be defended or legitimized in one form or another. Such justification, of

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<sup>20</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 427.

<sup>21</sup> This, of course, is linked to the nature of action to be taken. The use of force, for example, constitutes an indisputably political act "...which to some extent must be defended and legitimized." P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 426.

<sup>22</sup> According to P. Stuart Robinson, "political stability is clearly important, for the commitments of leaders will be more binding if their hold on power is so tenuous that unfulfilled promises might bring about their downfall." *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>23</sup> A crisis is defined as a "change in [the state's]... external or internal environment, which generates a threat to basic values, with a simultaneous or subsequent high probability of involvement in military hostilities, and the awareness of a finite time for their response to the external value threat." Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 43-44.

course, is made with reference to the values and expectations of society. In doing so, policy-makers are implicitly either reaffirming or redefining the normative fabric of their collectivity. Robinson goes so far as to suggest that crises are instances *par excellence* of societal impact on foreign policy making because they "...exhibit most acutely the logic of collective action and its collective understanding." Indeed, they are major "formative [events] in the evolution" of a society.<sup>24</sup>

For Canada, the Cuban missile crisis was certainly one such formative event. Using Robinson's framework to highlight the link between the Diefenbaker government's actions and society, the thesis will show that Canada's reaction cannot be properly understood without reference to the important societal issues engaged by the crisis. Before this argument is made, however, discussion will turn to a critical examination of the "conventional wisdom" concerning the Canadian response to the events of October 1962.

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<sup>24</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning," 423.

CHAPTER TWO: EXISTING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE DIEFENBAKER GOVERNMENT'S  
RESPONSE TO THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS OF OCTOBER 1962

During the past five decades, international relations have been dominated by the East-West conflict that rose out of the ashes of World War II. Every state, large or small, found its foreign policy greatly affected by what eventually came to be known as the 'Cold War.' At one level, the Cold War was merely a struggle between two technologically advanced superpowers, each vying for world ascendancy. At another, more profound level, the Cold War was about ideology; it pitted the beliefs and values of the West against those of the East. Quite simply, it was the most encompassing conflict the world has yet to see. Yet ironically, it was a war that could not logically be fought in any traditional sense. Indeed, the advent of nuclear weapons introduced a critical dynamic into the conflict -- the prospect of world annihilation. As a consequence, the Cold War, while ideologically intense, was remarkably subdued, limited mainly to wars of proxy and flourishes of rhetoric. Direct confrontation between the two major protagonists, the United States and the Soviet Union, was by and large avoided. A near exception to this pattern was the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 -- a handful of days during which the world tottered over the abyss of nuclear armageddon.

Canada was a minor player in this head-to-head conflict between superpowers. Yet, its response to the events that October has received considerable attention. Why did Canada delay in alerting its military forces? Why did the Diefenbaker government hesitate in offering support for the American quarantine? For the most part, the existing literature on the subject has provided rather narrow responses to these questions, laying the blame for alleged Canadian waffling and indecision squarely at the feet of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.<sup>1</sup> While such a

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963), 333-40.

Diefenbaker-centred explanation is not without basis, its narrow focus warrants a critical re-evaluation -- the task of this thesis. The first section of this chapter will examine the prevailing interpretations of the crisis, as derived from works by Peter Newman, Patrick Nicholson, Peyton Lyon, and Knowlton Nash. The remainder of the chapter will address revisionist explanations of the crisis and their contribution to a more complete understanding of events, and will discuss how the thesis plans to build upon their ideas to go beyond the narrow focus of the conventional wisdom.

## 1. DIEFENBAKER-CENTRED INTERPRETATIONS OF THE CANADIAN RESPONSE TO THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

### 1.1 THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: PART ONE

A fundamental tenet of the conventional wisdom finds basis in Prime Minister Diefenbaker's seemingly chronic inability to make decisions of any political magnitude.<sup>2</sup> Influential journalists such as Peter Newman and Patrick Nicholson and former Cabinet colleagues such as Douglas Harkness, Pierre Sévigny and Gordon Churchill, have all made the argument that the major, if not only, reason for the delay in alerting Canadian forces and in publicly supporting US President John Kennedy's stand lay in Diefenbaker's propensity, now infamous, for indecision.<sup>3</sup> The Prime Minister, according to his detractors, simply could not make tough choices. The Cuban missile crisis, they say, was just another example of this.

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 34. According to Haydon, "Diefenbaker's inherent indecisiveness... [is a] frequent theme in many later assessments and a cornerstone of the conventional prevailing wisdom."

<sup>3</sup> Peyton Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs: 1961-1963* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 37. See also Newman, *Renegade in Power*, 333-40; Patrick Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision* (Don Mills: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1968), 145-178; Pierre Sévigny, *This Game of Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 253, 257; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 176-177.

To be truthful, Diefenbaker, like any other politician, did not like being forced to decide thorny issues. In answering his critics, he would find solace in the words of his idol Sir John A. Macdonald -- "precipitous action does not always result in wise decisions."<sup>4</sup> At base, the Prime Minister's reluctance to make politically difficult decisions stemmed from the fact that he "...believed that governments defeat themselves by their own mistakes and he wanted to keep these self-inflicted wounds to a minimum."<sup>5</sup> Thus, when faced with a particularly divisive and problematic dilemma, he would frequently put it off, with the hope that an acceptable solution would be more readily found at a later time.<sup>6</sup> In this, it should be noted, Diefenbaker had much in common with Canada's longest serving, and perhaps most politically astute Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, whose credo was "postpone, postpone, abstain."

Of course, Prime Minister Diefenbaker was not always loath to make up his mind. He acted quite precipitously when he approved the North American Air Defence (NORAD) agreement on July 24, 1957, having been "stampeded"<sup>7</sup> into accepting it by Chief of Defence Staff General Charles Foulkes. The agreement, which united Canadian and American forces in the aerial defence of North America, would have enormous repercussions for the future. As the implications of NORAD for Canadian sovereignty made themselves more clear with the passing of time, the Prime Minister may very well have regretted his haste, though he would not admit it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane and Ross, 1995), 442.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Kyba, *Alvin: A Biography of the Honourable Alvin Hamilton, P.C.* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1989), 205.

<sup>6</sup> John Hilliker and Donald Barry, *Canada's Department of External Affairs: Volume 2 Coming of Age, 1946-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 135; H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 318.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes, House of Commons Special Committee on Defence, 1963, 510. Cited in Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 264-265.

<sup>8</sup> Defending his decision to approve NORAD without even going to Cabinet, Diefenbaker staked his reputation on the fact that NORAD entailed no loss of sovereignty for Canada, and that extensive consultation would occur in the case of an emergency. Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 292-295; John Diefenbaker, *One Canada*:

According to Nicholson, Newman, et al., Diefenbaker was patently unable to handle any major issues at all by the time of the Cuban crisis. In essence, he lacked the political confidence to act decisively. The root of the problem, these authors suggest, can be traced all the way back to the horrendously difficult decision to scrap the Avro Arrow in 1959. Writing for *Maclean's*, Blair Fraser commented on the choice to terminate the fighter program:

The plain truth is, nobody thought the government would have the courage to make such a painful decision. The fact that the decision was right didn't carry enough weight. It meant an early end to twenty thousand jobs, most of them in the very heartland of the Conservative Party. It went against the emotional urges of all Canadian air force men, and of most air-force veterans. It disappointed a big Canadian industry with many big Conservative shareholders. In short, it was political poison, of a kind to scare any politician out of a year's growth.

Unfortunately for the Progressive Conservative government, the cancellation of the Arrow, justifiable as it may have been, was not well received by Central Canada. The backlash was immediate and forceful, and came as a real shock to Diefenbaker. He had been caught in a no-win situation, and, according to Postmaster General William Hamilton, the Prime Minister desperately wanted to "...avoid any such issue in the future."<sup>10</sup> From that point on, the Progressive Conservatives, with their huge parliamentary majority, governed as if they were a minority government. Political caution was the watchword of the day, and

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*Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker - The Tumultuous Years* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 316. Smith is quoting Blair Fraser, who wrote "Backstage at Ottawa: What Led Canada to Junk the Arrow," in *Maclean's* (October, 25, 1958).

<sup>10</sup> Peter Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Lost 1962-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), xii. With the decision to scrap the Arrow, the Diefenbaker government was criticized for not only destroying up to 14,000 jobs, but for effectively ending Canada's ability to independently supply itself with state-of-the-art aviation weaponry. If it had decided to continue the program, however, it would have been subject to the charge that it bought the monumentally expensive interceptors (which were of dubious strategic utility, given the shift to intercontinental missiles) out of partisan, electoral opportunism. For an excellent account of the decision to terminate the Arrow, see Russell Isinger, *The AVRO Canada CF-105 Arrow Programme: Decisions and Determinants* (M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1997).

Diefenbaker became even more determined to act only when there was a consensus in Cabinet.<sup>11</sup>

The electoral rebuff of the 1962 elections dealt another massive blow to Diefenbaker's confidence, especially when viewed in conjunction with the death of his close friend and confidant Senator William Brunt.<sup>12</sup> The Prime Minister's mental trauma was further compounded by a bone fracture suffered on July 21, and he "...was sent to bed by his doctors -- who may have been prescribing for low spirits as much as for a broken ankle."<sup>13</sup> During a period of several weeks, Diefenbaker fell into a deep depression, wavering on the brink of breakdown.<sup>14</sup> Physically, he would eventually recuperate by the end of the summer, but it would take him much longer to recover his political self-assurance.<sup>15</sup>

When the Cuban missile crisis broke on October 22, the Canadian government, like most others, was caught relatively unprepared.<sup>16</sup> Following President Kennedy's broadcast and Prime Minister Diefenbaker's speech in the House of Commons, Canadian Defence Minister Douglas Harkness was made aware that the US military had been placed on Defence Condition Three (DefCon 3).<sup>17</sup> He immediately approached the

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<sup>11</sup> Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, xii; Kyba, Alvin, 201; John Hilliker and Donald Barry, "Choice and Strategy in Canadian Foreign Policy: Lessons from the Postwar Years, 1946-1968," *Canadian Foreign Policy* III, no. 2 (Fall 1995), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 111; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 448.

<sup>14</sup> Agriculture Minister Alvin Hamilton would later remark: "...he was completely off his rocker for three or four months! You have to admit it, he was unstable. He just seemed confused...." Cited in Knowlton Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing Across the Undefended Border* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 172. See Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 115.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Thordarson, "Posture and Policy: Leadership in Canada's External Affairs," *International Journal* XXXI, no. 4 (Autumn 1976), 676.

<sup>16</sup> This is with the notable exception of Britain, which was warned of the brewing crisis on October 19. See Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, "Canada, the United States, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Pacific Historical Review*, no. 18, (May 1979), 163.

<sup>17</sup> The United States military had five stages of vigilance which ranged from DefCon Five (Normal) to DefCon One (War). DefCon Three indicated severe international tension. The Canadian military used a similar, but not equivalent, scale of graduated alerts. "The big difference was that the US DefCon system could be kept internal to the military whereas the Canadian/NATO system involved civilian agencies beyond the military vigilance level." Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 148. The American DefCon Two, for example, was more along the lines of the Canadian Simple Alert. For a more complete description of the Canadian military vigilance measures, please refer to Appendix II.

Prime Minister to ask him to call an emergency Cabinet session to authorize a corresponding state of military preparedness.<sup>18</sup> To Harkness' surprise, Diefenbaker balked at his request, deciding instead to schedule a Cabinet meeting for the next morning.<sup>19</sup> When Cabinet convened the next day, there was no agreement on what to do. There was a serious split, with Harkness, and Associate Minister of Defence Pierre Sévigny championing an immediate alert for Canadian forces, and Secretary of State for External Affairs Howard Green and Diefenbaker leading the resistance.<sup>20</sup> Cabinet met twice more (once more on Tuesday, and once Wednesday morning), with no decision forthcoming -- no decision to alert Canadian forces or to endorse Kennedy's quarantine measures. For two days, the Diefenbaker government was, in Nicholson's words, "...perched indecisively upon the fence."<sup>21</sup> Only after Harkness was informed that some of the US military had moved to DefCon 2 was he able to convince the Prime Minister, whom he "tackled" alone,<sup>22</sup> to authorize a Canadian alert.

The conventional wisdom has seized upon the fact that Diefenbaker eventually made the decision to go to alert without consulting Cabinet, and has concluded that "...the Prime Minister's attitude was decisive." It suggests, with some justification, that had Diefenbaker immediately "favoured...action, the Cabinet would certainly have gone along."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the argument is made that Canada's hesitation during the crisis was largely attributable to the Prime Minister. This inference is misleading because it ignores the significant divisions within Cabinet

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<sup>18</sup> At this time, the War Books had been withdrawn for revision. Consequently, the Minister of Defence had to go to the Cabinet for authorization for each change in Canadian military mobilization -- including the discreet phase of vigilance which, when the War Books were in effect, the Minister could declare on his own initiative.

<sup>19</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 124. Harkness believed that approval would be a mere formality, and had in fact told the military to begin preparations for going to alert while he went to seek the necessary authorization from Cabinet.

<sup>20</sup> Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 161.

<sup>22</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

on the issue -- divisions that served to reinforce the Prime Minister's hesitancy.<sup>24</sup> Yet this is not the only problem with the prevailing indecision thesis.

Most egregious is the facile characterization of the dilemma facing the Canadian government. Essentially, according to Nicholson, Newman, Harkness et al., there was no dilemma at all -- Canada should have immediately fallen in line with the American initiative to combat communist aggression. To do otherwise, they imply, was utterly incomprehensible.<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, they give no real attention to the important political issues engaged by the crisis which conflicted with the desire to follow the United States' lead against communist Russia -- issues such as national sovereignty, and the threat of nuclear war. Thus, by a logic of omission, the conventional wisdom concludes that Canada's hesitation could only have been a function of Diefenbaker's propensity for indecision rather than of any reasoned choice that he and others in Cabinet had made.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.2 THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: PART TWO

A second major theme in the literature on the crisis is that Prime Minister Diefenbaker delayed alerting Canadian forces and withheld governmental endorsement of American initiatives because he would not allow Canada to be "pushed" around by President Kennedy and the United States. This argument, made most forcefully by Peyton Lyon and Knowlton Nash, suggests that Diefenbaker's extreme nationalism, when combined with his bitter hatred for Kennedy, led the Prime Minister to resist

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<sup>24</sup> Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet (whose work is examined later in this chapter) suggests that had the Cabinet been united in wanting to back the United States, Diefenbaker would not have demurred. Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 177.

<sup>25</sup> See Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 155, 167 and 176; Newman, *Renegade in Power*, 333, 338. This prejudice in favour of backing the United States may explain why Nicholson and Newman gloss over the split in Cabinet -- it makes the wisdom of automatically following the American lead less self-evident.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Haydon is certainly correct when he concludes that "...there are just too many other factors to accept such a narrow answer. For instance, one has to ask to what extent Diefenbaker's reluctance to declare an alert was attributable to domestic politics." Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 189.

supporting American efforts to force a Soviet retreat on Cuba.<sup>27</sup> This aspect of the conventional wisdom stands up better under scrutiny, and offers some insight into the crisis. However, before it is discussed, it is necessary to briefly examine Diefenbaker's nationalism and his relationship with President Kennedy.

John Diefenbaker was a patriot.<sup>28</sup> In Canada, that sometimes means being anti-American, and, according to Knowlton Nash, Diefenbaker was "...anti-American to the tips of his toes."<sup>29</sup> Denis Smith offers a more balanced appraisal of Diefenbaker, stating that while he did not "...have any basic prejudice against the United States, he was tempted to assert Canadian independence."<sup>30</sup> Truly, Diefenbaker believed himself to be a champion of Canadian sovereignty, and he constantly opposed the erosion of Canada's right to independent action. As Prime Minister, he was particularly touchy about Canada's relationship with the United States, and was quite sensitive to the charge that he, in hastily signing NORAD, had surrendered Canadian sovereignty in any way whatsoever. In the event of crisis, he would affirm, Canada would be consulted by its ally over what course would be taken.<sup>31</sup>

Significantly, Diefenbaker's nationalism did not overly affect Canadian-American relations until after President Dwight Eisenhower retired from office. Eisenhower, whom Diefenbaker admired, treated the Prime Minister with incredible solicitude, and was always anxious to ensure that the two men got along. Diefenbaker, in turn, had much in

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<sup>27</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37; Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 172. See also J.L. Granatstein, "When Push Came to Shove: Canada and the United States," in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 96-97.

<sup>28</sup> Sévigny, *This Game*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 380.

<sup>31</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 54. Diefenbaker would always affirm that NORAD enhanced Canadian sovereignty, rather than diminished it. For an example of this, see Diefenbaker's speech at Dartmouth College made in September 1957. A copy of it is included in Arthur Blanchette, *Canadian Foreign Policy 1955-1965: Selected Speeches and Statements* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977).

common with the US President, and was flattered by the respect and deference that Eisenhower showed him. The excellent personal rapport that developed between the two leaders went far in facilitating good relations between their respective governments. In later years, Diefenbaker would observe that while Eisenhower was in office, "Canada was not treated as a forty-ninth state composed of Mounted Police, Eskimos and summer vacationers."<sup>32</sup>

President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was another matter altogether. Diefenbaker came to hate the young President, who was more than happy to reciprocate in kind. The Prime Minister's dislike for Kennedy was evident well before the Cuban missile crisis broke. As far back as July 12, 1959, Diefenbaker was already voicing reservations about the then Senator, considering him to be nothing more than a brash political opportunist.<sup>33</sup> The day after Kennedy defeated Republican candidate Richard Nixon to become the thirty-fifth President of the United States, the Prime Minister expressed serious misgivings to his liaison officer with External Affairs, Basil Robinson. Diefenbaker, with remarkable prescience, told Robinson that "...with Kennedy in control, we were closer to war than we had been before."<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Diefenbaker made an attempt, perhaps half-hearted, to develop some sort of rapport with the new President. He was not successful.

Much of the problem lay in the Prime Minister's considerable personal insecurity.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Diefenbaker saw much to envy in the President -- youth, charisma, breeding, popularity, and wealth. Moreover, Diefenbaker sensed that "...there was a new phenomenon on the political scene...[and] he was worried about how it would affect him."<sup>36</sup> In short, Kennedy's dynamism was threatening both on a personal and

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<sup>32</sup> Cited in Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 146.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* See also Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 79-80.

<sup>35</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 165; Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 60.

<sup>36</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 61. Nash is quoting Basil Robinson.

political level. Unfortunately, the new President was not Eisenhower, and had neither the patience nor the understanding necessary to establish a good working relationship with the Prime Minister. More importantly, Kennedy was not fond of Diefenbaker, whom he considered an insincere platitudinous bore, and was not at all inclined to assuage his personal insecurities and anxieties.<sup>37</sup> Right from the start, the hyper-sensitive Prime Minister took umbrage at personal slights from the President, many of them intentional.<sup>38</sup>

Further, the Kennedy government, in the Prime Minister's eyes, evinced "little respect for Canadian independence."<sup>39</sup> While the breadth of this thesis does not allow for a full account of all the events which led Diefenbaker to that conclusion, it is worth mentioning two of the more notable instances of Kennedy's disregard for Canadian sovereignty.

The first incident occurred on April 17, 1961. That day, the United States launched the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion. The attack on Cuba, ill-advised though it was, was not what particularly worried Diefenbaker. Rather, the Prime Minister was concerned that Canada was neither consulted nor informed about the operation by its NORAD partner. When Kennedy visited Ottawa a month later, Diefenbaker expressed his hope that Canada would be informed of any future plans involving drastic action with respect to Cuba. To this, the President responded that he had learned much from the gaffe, and that "...the US planned no more military action in Cuba unless there was a serious provocation. In any event, he promised, 'We would talk with you before doing anything.'"<sup>40</sup>

A second episode illustrative of the Kennedy administration's lack of respect for Canadian sovereignty occurred during the President's

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>38</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 496. Knowlton Nash devotes much attention to chronicling the decline of the relationship between Diefenbaker and Kennedy. See Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 190.

<sup>40</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 113.

visit to Canada in May 1961. Like many of his predecessors, the President was determined to get Canada to join the Organization of American States (OAS). Unfortunately, Kennedy's zeal took him too far. When the topic was first broached in private conversation with the President, Diefenbaker made it quite clear that his government was not interested in joining the OAS any time soon. Kennedy was not deterred, however, and went over Diefenbaker's head, bringing the issue up in his speech to the Canadian Parliament -- a move showing little respect for the Prime Minister's earlier decision. The President even pressed Diefenbaker on the OAS during their breakfast the next day.<sup>41</sup> Howard Green, always a strong defender of Canada's right to independent action, commented acerbically on Kennedy's antics, stating that "...one of the least effective ways of persuading Canada to adopt a policy is for the President of another country to come here and tell us what we should do."<sup>42</sup> In this, he certainly echoed the Prime Minister's views.<sup>43</sup>

During the same visit, a brief written by presidential advisor Walt Rostow came into Diefenbaker's possession. While the content of the memorandum was nothing out of the ordinary, the Prime Minister was incensed by its tone. Most offensive was that it advised Kennedy to "push Canada towards"<sup>44</sup> a number of policies favourable to US interests. To Diefenbaker, the phrasing of the Rostow memo typified "...the attitude of Americans: they thought nothing of pushing Canada around."<sup>45</sup> The Prime Minister, however, would not be bullied by President Kennedy, and neither would Canada. If anything, that sentiment would harden during the months leading up to October 1962, and, according to the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 115; Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 386; Robert Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Ontario: Canadian Institute for International Affairs, 1968), 164.

<sup>42</sup> Reford, *Canada*, 206-207.

<sup>43</sup> J. L. Granatstein, "When Push Came to Shove," 93.

<sup>44</sup> DCCA, MG01/XXI/85/D/113.

<sup>45</sup> H. B. Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 206-207. Diefenbaker would hang on the memo, and even considered making it public during the course of the 1962 elections, which threatened to take on a decidedly anti-American flavour. See Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 432; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 38.

conventional wisdom, is the key to understanding the Canadian government's reaction to the Cuban missile crisis.<sup>46</sup>

On Sunday, October 21, 1962, Diefenbaker was informed by Canadian diplomatic sources that tensions were rising between the United States and Cuba over the alleged presence of Soviet nuclear weaponry on the tiny Caribbean island. He did not know the details of the situation, but he knew with dreadful certainty that any US confrontation with Cuba would invariably affect Canada. All the Prime Minister could do for the time being was wait for events to develop further.

The next morning, Diefenbaker was notified that the former US ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, was coming to Ottawa that afternoon to deliver an urgent message from the United States government. At 5:15 Monday evening, Merchant met with the Prime Minister, Defence Minister Harkness, and External Affairs Minister Green, presenting them with a communiqué from the President. In his letter to the Prime Minister, Kennedy briefly detailed the discovery of the nuclear missile bases, and informed Diefenbaker of the planned American quarantine of Cuba. The President then asked Diefenbaker to support an American resolution which would be placed before the Security Council calling for the "...withdrawal of missile bases and other offensive weapons in Cuba."<sup>47</sup> Following the reading of Kennedy's missive, Merchant provided Diefenbaker, Green, and Harkness with the photographic evidence of the missile sites, taken days earlier by American spy planes. He then outlined in more detail the actions the United States was taking concerning Cuba. Finally, Merchant concluded the meeting by presenting the text of the speech that President Kennedy

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<sup>46</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 492.

<sup>47</sup> Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet and Don Munton, "Confronting Kennedy and the Missiles in Cuba, 1962," in Don Munton and John Kirton, eds., *Canadian Foreign Policy: Selected Cases* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1992), 84.

would broadcast little over an hour later.<sup>48</sup> The American envoy then left to brief Under-Secretary for External Affairs Norman Robertson, and Air Chief Marshall Frank Miller. With nothing he could really do at that point, Diefenbaker went home to eat supper and watch Kennedy's broadcast.

Although he did not say so to Merchant, the Prime Minister was furious with the US government.<sup>49</sup> Characterizing Diefenbaker's reaction to the briefing, Basil Robinson suggests that,

...despite what he had learned in advance, it would have been completely out of character if [Diefenbaker] had not been upset at being presented with the evidence of the Soviet missiles and the outline of the President's plans, at a stage when he could do little more than acknowledge their receipt. It was, after all, a very important development for the defence of North America, and it had been he who had entered (hastily, it will be recalled) into the NORAD agreement five years before...The Prime Minister's resentment at the absence of genuine consultation should have come as no surprise.<sup>50</sup>

Following the broadcast of Kennedy's speech, the Prime Minister made a statement to the House of Commons at the behest of Liberal Opposition leader Lester Pearson. Basing his address on a memorandum from External Affairs, Diefenbaker appealed for calm and solidarity, and asserted that nuclear missile bases in Cuba could not be interpreted in any way as defensive. He then proposed:

...that the United Nations should be charged at the earliest possible moment with this serious problem...If there is a desire on the part of the U.S.S.R. to have the facts, if a group of nations, perhaps the eight nations comprising the unaligned members of the 18 nation disarmament committee, be given the opportunity of making an on-site inspection in Cuba to ascertain what the facts are, a major step forward would be taken. This is the only suggestion I have at this moment; but it would provide an objective answer to what is going on in Cuba.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Diefenbaker did secure some changes to the wording of the speech -- Kennedy removed some disparaging remarks aimed at Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

<sup>49</sup> Noting that Diefenbaker seemed irritable and distracted, Merchant nonetheless came away from the meeting under the impression that the Prime Minister empathized with the Americans, and would "...give public support to the President." Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 456.

<sup>50</sup> H.B. Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 285.

<sup>51</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (cited hereinafter as *Debates*), 22 October, 1962, 806.

It was not the statement of unequivocal support for the quarantine for which the Americans had hoped. Diefenbaker's speech seemed to cast doubts on the claims made by President Kennedy only hours earlier. According to Knowlton Nash, that may have been exactly what the Prime Minister intended.<sup>52</sup>

The United States government was taken by surprise by the Prime Minister's speech in the House of Commons -- especially since Livingston Merchant had earlier reported that Diefenbaker was on side. Indeed, a press release issued following the President's broadcast had even made "...specific reference to the Canadian support that Merchant thought Diefenbaker had given."<sup>53</sup> Upon hearing of the press statement, the Prime Minister launched into an angry tirade, saying

'That young man has got to learn that he is not running the Canadian government...What business has he got? There is no decision which has been made as yet. I am the one who is going to decide and I am the one who has to make the declaration. He is not the one.'<sup>54</sup>

When Defence Minister Harkness approached the Prime Minister later that evening to get Cabinet approval for moving Canadian forces to the equivalent of DefCon 3, Diefenbaker refused to call a meeting. Still "propelled by his fury at Kennedy's failure to consult him,"<sup>55</sup> the Prime Minister dismissed Harkness, stating that Cabinet would discuss the issue the next morning.

When Cabinet met the next day, opinion was sharply divided between those who favoured immediately declaring an alert, and those who wanted to "go slow"<sup>56</sup> and avoid provocation. Green, whose views were quite similar to those held by the Prime Minister, delivered an emotional plea

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<sup>52</sup> Nash cites Minister of Post Ellen Fairclough as saying that "the Prime Minister made the proposal largely because Diefenbaker did not trust Kennedy." Former Conservative MP Dick Thrasher and Citizenship and Immigration Minister Richard Bell confirm that the Prime Minister doubted Kennedy's motives about Cuba, and that he thought that the President was "playing politics with Cuba." See Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 186-189.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>54</sup> Sévigny recalls Diefenbaker's outburst in Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 14-15.

<sup>55</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 191.

<sup>56</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 87-88.

not to rush blindly into supporting the United States, especially since "...the United States President had not kept the commitment to consult with Canada over the impending crisis. 'If we go along with the Americans now,' he said, 'we'll be their vassals forever.'"<sup>57</sup> Diefenbaker echoed Green's argument, stating that Canada should not "snap to attention" in support for Kennedy's dangerous political posturing over Cuba.<sup>58</sup> In the end, according to one Minister, the decision was made to put off declaring an alert for the time being so as to "...register dissatisfaction with Washington's failure to consult earlier with Ottawa."<sup>59</sup>

That afternoon, President Kennedy telephoned the Prime Minister to complain about the lack of Canadian support for the US position, both in and out of the United Nations.<sup>60</sup> Specifically, the President asked that Canadian NORAD forces be put on an alert status equivalent to DefCon 3. Diefenbaker tersely refused the President's request, stating: "No, we can't possibly do that!"<sup>61</sup> The Prime Minister then went to the heart of the matter, asking: "When were we consulted?" To this, Kennedy snapped: "You weren't."<sup>62</sup> In the end, Kennedy's phone call served only to deepen Diefenbaker's predilection to dig in his heels at American pressure.

The same afternoon, however, Diefenbaker would assert in the House of Commons that his previous suggestion for a UN inspection group was not intended to "...cast any doubts on the facts of the situation as outlined by the President of the United States in his television

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<sup>57</sup> Cited in Newman, *Renegade in Power*, 337. Notwithstanding the fact that "neither Mr. Green nor any other of the other ex-ministers whom [he] consulted recall such a statement during the Cuban crisis," Lyon asserts that "irritation with the short notice given the government by Washington was probably an important factor in the Prime Minister's thinking." See Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 193.

<sup>59</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37.

<sup>60</sup> There is some debate as to when the telephone call occurred. Diefenbaker wrote in his memoirs that Kennedy phoned him on Monday, October 22. Most accounts of the crisis suggest that it most likely occurred the next day, on Tuesday afternoon.

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Granatstein and Hillmer, *For Better or Worse*, 205.

<sup>62</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 196; Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 458; Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 83.

address."<sup>63</sup> Rather, the Prime Minister would suggest, the proposal was intended to supplement the initiatives undertaken by the United States.

Cabinet met again on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning. Both times Diefenbaker, supported by Green, resisted demands by Harkness, Sévigny, and Trade and Commerce Minister George Hees that Canada should go to alert, stating: "Kennedy is trying to push us into this thing and we shouldn't be pushed."<sup>64</sup> To bolster his position, which by Wednesday was only supported by a minority of ministers, Diefenbaker made reference to an alleged telephone discussion he had with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, in which he was told "...that the United Kingdom had not gone on alert and would not, at this stage, since additional mobilization could easily be interpreted as a provocative measure by the Russians."<sup>65</sup> Arguing that mobilizing the Canadian military had the possibility of destabilizing the tense diplomatic situation, Diefenbaker was convinced that discretion was the better part of valour. No alert was declared. No overt support for the United States position was forthcoming.<sup>66</sup>

Later that Wednesday, however, the United States moved its Strategic Air Command and some of its naval forces to DefCon 2 -- immediate enemy attack expected. Harkness believed that it was now absolutely necessary that Canadian forces be formally alerted, and he went back to the PMO to force Diefenbaker's hand.<sup>67</sup> Faced with this new

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<sup>63</sup> *Debates*, (October 23, 1962), 821.

<sup>64</sup> Cited in Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 199.

<sup>65</sup> Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 17; Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 174.

<sup>66</sup> Cabinet did take steps to prohibit the overflight of Canada by Soviet aircraft, and to ensure that the planes of Soviet satellites were searched for war materials if they chose to enter Canadian airspace. Other steps concerning the rotation of troops and the manning of warning centers were taken so as to allow for a rapid mobilization if it became necessary. See *Cabinet Conclusions*, (October 23, 1962), 2-3; *Cabinet Conclusions*, (October 24, 1962), 2-6.

<sup>67</sup> Frustrated with Cabinet's refusal to declare an alert, Harkness went behind Diefenbaker's back Tuesday morning, ordering the armed forces to go to alert in "as quiet and unobtrusive a way as possible." H. Basil Robinson contends that Diefenbaker was aware that the military was secretly going to alert, and "...just let it happen informally." Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 195; H. B. Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 288.

information, the Prime Minister "...shook his head ruefully and said, 'Oh well, all right, go ahead...go ahead.'" <sup>68</sup>

It was not until the next day, Thursday October 25, that Diefenbaker offered a public endorsement of the American actions in the House of Commons -- "...so that the attitude of the government [would] clearly be understood." <sup>69</sup> The Prime Minister resolutely affirmed that "...we intend to support the United States and our other allies in this situation." <sup>70</sup> Canada, however belatedly, was now backing the US position. Peyton Lyon would later note that Diefenbaker's speech, when compared "...to the statements being made by the leaders of the other allies of the United States,...was still conspicuously lacking in expressions of confidence in President Kennedy's leadership." <sup>71</sup>

Looking back at the crisis, here does indeed seem to be considerable support for the conclusion that Diefenbaker "...responded slowly and reluctantly because he had been offended by the failure of the American President to take him fully into his confidence before the late afternoon of October 22..." <sup>72</sup> However persuasive this argument may be, it is, nevertheless, incomplete. Its main fault stems from the fact that the government's motives during the crisis are interpreted in a socio-political vacuum. Was Diefenbaker just an anomalous individual acting purely according to personal preferences? Were Harkness and Green? To what extent did society buttress or weaken their individual inclinations towards action? What important political issues were at stake? The Diefenbaker-centred focus of the conventional argument leaves

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<sup>68</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 200.

<sup>69</sup> *Debates*, (October 25, 1962), 912.

<sup>70</sup> *Debates*, (October 25, 1962), 912.

<sup>71</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. Douglas Harkness suggests that "if it had been Eisenhower he was dealing with and not Kennedy, it would have been very different. He just had an obsession about Kennedy." Basil Robinson follows a similar line, stating that "...if he had been taken into the American confidence, the Prime Minister might well have agreed to put the forces on alert much sooner than he did." See Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 184-206.

these questions unanswered, and as a consequence, provides an incomplete understanding of the crisis.

## **2. 'Revisionist' Interpretations of the Crisis: The Perspective Broadens**

In contrast to most accounts of Canada's role in the Cuban missile crisis, three works in particular challenge "...the conventional wisdom that most of the problems were products of Diefenbaker's idiosyncrasies."<sup>73</sup> Three case studies, written by Robert Reford, Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet,<sup>74</sup> and Peter Haydon respectively, examine the October crisis in considerable detail and provide students of Canadian foreign policy with a much more comprehensive explanation of why the Diefenbaker government reacted the way it did. Of particular relevance to the thesis is that each work includes some consideration of the socio-political context which framed the crisis in Canada. The following section of this chapter will briefly examine how Reford, Ghent-Mallet and Haydon contribute to an understanding of events, and will discuss how the thesis builds upon their insights.

### **2.1 Robert Reford**

In his 1968 study, Reford examines the Off-shore Islands crises, the Suez crisis, and the Cuban missile crisis in an attempt to illustrate that "...there is an instinctive Canadian reaction to an international crisis which is constant, regardless of the circumstances or of the political party in office."<sup>75</sup> He suggests that the normal Canadian approach to an international crisis is to: avoid violence, go to the United Nations, and ensure that Canadian sovereignty is respected.<sup>76</sup> The Canadian response to the Cuban missile crisis, he

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<sup>73</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 10.

<sup>74</sup> Ghent-Mallet's 1992 article with Don Munton is a revised edition of her 1979 work. For the purposes of this thesis, the two publications are considered together.

<sup>75</sup> Reford, *Canada*, vii.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

submits, was perfectly illustrative of this instinctive reaction. According to Reford, the decision to delay going to alert was consistent not only with the desire to avoid provocation and escalation, but also with the "...normal sensitivity for Canadian policy to be made in Ottawa and the anxiety to avoid the appearance of answering automatically when Washington called."<sup>77</sup> Similarly, Diefenbaker's proposal for an independent United Nations inspection team, is construed as satisfying the traditional Canadian desire to resolve international crises under the auspices of the United Nations.<sup>78</sup>

Generally, there is considerable merit in Reford's examination of the October crisis. However, his most important analytical contribution is that he frames the Canadian government's decisions in a way that highlights their societal context. While he acknowledges the Prime Minister's personal impact on Canada's response to the crisis,<sup>79</sup> Reford portrays the government's reaction as rooted in fundamental principles which gird Canadian national life. Unfortunately, there are some problems in Reford's analysis of societal impact on foreign policy. First and foremost is that he regards the values and goals of Canadian society as immutable constants.<sup>80</sup> When conceptualizing the instinctive Canadian reaction to international crises, Reford neglects the fact that society is continually in a state of flux. Consequently, he gives insufficient attention to the conflicting impulses which are thrown into opposition as society evolves.<sup>81</sup> As a result, he does not fully explain the divisions within Cabinet during the crisis, or even the eventual

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 178. Reford explains that "this would be a Canadian initiative, and it would show that Canada was prepared to put forward suggestions rather than automatically follow a policy which Washington had adopted. In addition, it might buy time, and time might be important if the world were to avoid being plunged into a nuclear holocaust."

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-207.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, 8. Reford ascribes particular validity to these principles because they strengthen Canada's capacity as a middle-power to influence international affairs, rather than because they reflect Canadian society. See *ibid.*, 233-239.

<sup>81</sup> Reford does draw attention, however, to the divisive nuclear warhead issue which complicated the decision-making process during the crisis. *Ibid.*, 184-185, 206.

decision to go to alert and support the United States.<sup>82</sup> This thesis, by contrast, will place the Diefenbaker government's actions in the context of a society undergoing significant and tumultuous change.

A second problem with Reford's analysis is that he does not explain the linkage between Canada's so-called national principles and a particular foreign policy decision.<sup>83</sup> Essentially, he does not reveal how and when these principles become policy.<sup>84</sup> Nor does he reveal how and when these principles do not become policy. In the case of Cuba, Reford does not really explore why Canada's instinctive reaction manifested itself -- he only suggests that it did. This thesis, by using Robinson's framework to highlight the nexus between society and the decision-maker, hopes to rectify this omission.

## 2.2 Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet

Like Reford before her, Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet is another scholar who examines the Cuban missile crisis in great detail. Her two excellent case studies on the subject warrant special consideration for a number of reasons.

Of all the literature that covers Canada's role in the October crisis, Ghent-Mallet's work is unique in the depth of its exploration of the differences of opinion within the Diefenbaker government. Lamenting that most secondary accounts "...have paid insufficient attention to the divisions within the Cabinet...",<sup>85</sup> she examines how the various cabinet

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<sup>82</sup> In his explanation of why Canada waited forty-two hours to go to alert and of why Canada waited seventy-two hours to publicly back the United States, Reford does not address why Diefenbaker chose to reverse his earlier decision to delay. *Ibid.*, 204-215.

<sup>83</sup> All Reford says on this topic is that in times of crisis, "... where time is of the essence, the instinctive reaction is most likely to show itself and through it, the true nature of a country's attitude to world affairs will become apparent." *Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 244-245. "How were these principles applied in practice? Principles are not policy and a great deal can depend on how they are put into operation. In crisis diplomacy, it is important not to base policy simply on an automatic response, like one of Pavlov's dogs." Beyond this, Reford leaves this question open for further study.

<sup>85</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 172.

ministers reacted to the crisis. Her research reveals an interesting picture. On the one side were Douglas Harkness, Pierre Sévigny, and George Hees, leading those who favoured going to an immediate alert. Leading the resistance were Diefenbaker, Howard Green, Alvin Hamilton, Waldo Monteith, and Richard Bell. The remaining ministers, comprising "...approximately half the Cabinet,...were at first uncertain as how to proceed."<sup>86</sup> Ghent-Mallet asserts that while they "...came eventually to support Harkness, their varying degrees of resentment over the United States' failure to consult Canada initially strengthened the position taken by Diefenbaker and Green."<sup>87</sup> Hence, Ghent-Mallet dispels the notion that the lack of a Cabinet decision could be blamed on the Prime Minister alone. Instead, she shows that the split within Cabinet was quite significant, and that it cannot be ignored when attempting to explain why the Canadian government hesitated to follow the American lead.

Another way that Ghent-Mallet contributes to a greater understanding of the crisis is by drawing attention to President Kennedy's October 22 letter to the Prime Minister. Examining the text of the President's missive, she notes that in comparison to the communiqué sent to Prime Minister Macmillan, the message Diefenbaker received did not include

...a lengthy exposition on the dangers of the crisis or...offers of private discussion. In the much shorter message to Diefenbaker, therefore, the President appears to be placing greater emphasis on a solution through the United Nations. Since turning to the UN was the traditional Canadian instinct in time of crisis, this undoubtedly struck a chord with Canadians.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, she suggests that Kennedy's letter may have reinforced Diefenbaker's personal inclination to seek a UN solution to the crisis.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 87.

<sup>87</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 172-173.

<sup>88</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 84.

<sup>89</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 166.

Ghent-Mallet's two case studies are especially significant in that they make reference to the socio-political context in Canada and how it affected the way the crisis was handled. In her analysis of the Diefenbaker government's actions, Ghent-Mallet draws upon Reford's conceptualization of a typical Canadian response to crises. She concurs with his earlier assessment that both the call for a UN inspection team and the initial decision to delay going to alert were consistent with the instinctive Canadian approach to international dilemmas.<sup>90</sup> Notably, Ghent-Mallet observes that

...this approach had been voiced by the leaders of all national parties in the House of Commons after the President's speech, and it was one that had always won popular support. Given the uncertain status of his minority government, voter approval was certainly one of Diefenbaker's concerns if not one of the rest of the Cabinet, and the Prime Minister was sure that the majority of the electorate would not approve Kennedy's action or want to be militarily involved in the Cuban affair.<sup>91</sup>

In doing so, Ghent-Mallet draws attention to the politics of the October crisis. Unfortunately, given the scope of her two case-studies, she is unable to examine in depth this dimension of decision-making. This thesis, by contrast, is concerned solely with the politics of the Diefenbaker government's decisions.

### 2.3 Peter Haydon

Undoubtedly, Peter Haydon's 1993 book is the most comprehensive account of the crisis. Writing three decades after the fact, the former Royal Canadian Navy Commander is able to take advantage of previously classified information to provide an exhaustive account of Canada's role

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 167, 174; Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 84. Consequently, this aspect of her analysis is subject to the same criticism leveled against Reford. However, Ghent-Mallet examines the considerable sympathy within Canada for Cuba's plight, and points out the increasing importance of "...exercising the right to an independent foreign policy." Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 175.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 174-175.

in the events of October 1962.<sup>92</sup> His incisive examination is particularly noteworthy for the following reasons.

First and foremost, Haydon explores in considerable depth the military dimension of the crisis in Canada and how it influenced the decision-making process. Taking issue with the narrow focus of the conventional wisdom, he instead "...places Canadian actions in the larger context of national defence policy, nuclear weapons, civil-military relations, and the whole fabric of defence cooperation between Canada and United States in the early 1960s."<sup>93</sup> Haydon describes the military command structure in Canada, focusing especially on NORAD and its implications for Canadian sovereignty. Notably, he points out that the Diefenbaker government's understanding of consultation was at variance with that held by the military on both sides of the border. While Diefenbaker, and many other politicians within Canada,<sup>94</sup> "...believed in [the necessity of] consultation at the highest political level,...the Canadian and US military staffs and the American political system believed that consultation should take place at working levels as part of the coordination process."<sup>95</sup> Thus, Haydon is able to explain, in good measure, why the Canadian military, under the orders of Defence Minister Harkness, went to a *de facto* state of alert without Cabinet approval.

Of particular relevance to this thesis, however, is Haydon's second major contribution to a more complete understanding of events -- he draws attention to the domestic political implications of the crisis. In light of the Diefenbaker government's precarious position within

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<sup>92</sup> "He provides an unmatched day-by-day, indeed hour-by-hour account of Canada's involvement." Joel Sokolsky and Joseph Jockel in Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, xii. Notably, Haydon details Canada's military participation in the crisis -- especially its role in the joint anti-submarine operations.

<sup>93</sup> Sokolsky and Jockel in Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, xii.

<sup>94</sup> This includes members of the Liberal party, who would later charge that the crisis was an episode where "... the governing principle of civil control of the military had been compromised...." Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

Parliament, Haydon points out that "...the political price of miscalculation was very high..."<sup>96</sup> In handling the crisis, he suggests that the Progressive Conservatives had to walk a very fine line. Essentially, they had to act in such a way that would not leave them "...open to criticism from Pearson and the Opposition front bench..."<sup>97</sup> Haydon points out that the Cuban missile crisis forced the Canadian government to "...face not one but several difficult political issues, each in conflict with another..."<sup>98</sup> He suggests that, in the end, Diefenbaker probably "...thought he was playing to public opinion by standing up to the Americans and stressing a UN role..."<sup>99</sup> What is noteworthy here is that Haydon identifies the political difficulty of the crisis as stemming directly from the important issues in Canadian society that were brought into conflict. However, like Ghent-Mallet, he offers this insight into the decision-making process of the crisis without exploring it fully.

This thesis is not the first to examine the impact of Canadian society on the Diefenbaker government's handling of the Cuban missile crisis. Reford, Ghent-Mallet, and Haydon have all offered useful observations on this dimension of the decision-making process. Yet, much remains to be explored. Using Robinson's framework to highlight the link between society and policy, this thesis will build on their insights.

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-180. Haydon posits that "the alert state acquired a symbolic status as an umbrella issue for all the foreign and defence policy issues opened up by the crisis." See *ibid.*, 128.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 122. Haydon concludes his twelve page discussion of why Canada hesitated by stating: "Overall, one comes to the conclusion that Diefenbaker delayed the alert for several reasons, all of which were political." See *ibid.*, 201.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE DETERMINANTS OF SOCIETAL IMPACT ON CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

Properly understood, the Canadian response to the Cuban missile crisis was a function of numerous factors -- some considerably more important than others. No explanation of decision-making during the crisis can possibly avoid discussing the personal impact of its key actors. Thus, as the previous chapter shows, existing accounts of the crisis focus on the part played by Diefenbaker, and to a lesser extent Harkness and Green, in determining Canadian policy. In doing so, however, most works neglect to explore with equal vigour the socio-political dimensions of the Cuban crisis. This represents an analytical shortcoming because, as P. Stuart Robinson points out, crises are formative events *par excellence* in the evolution of a society.<sup>1</sup> As such, they "...exhibit most acutely the logic of collective action and its collective understanding."<sup>2</sup> With that in mind, this thesis contends that an adequate explanation as to why Canada equivocated in backing the United States in 1962 must necessarily place the Diefenbaker government's decisions against the backdrop of society. The next two chapters propose to do just that. In this chapter, there will be a brief examination of the nature and circumstances of the Diefenbaker government, characterizing the extent to which considerations of role and appropriateness dominated political activity in 1962. Discussion will then turn to the momentous socio-political issues that the Cuban Missile Crisis brought to a head in Canada. The final chapter will re-examine the Cuban missile crisis, highlighting the extent to which these political issues constrained and compelled Diefenbaker and his Cabinet colleagues in the decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning and the Institutional Context of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *International Journal* XLIX, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 410. G.M. Dillon asserts that "crisis policy-making acts as an identity-defining activity imbued with political invention and ideology which determines as well as reflects, the character of domestic politics." Cited in *ibid.*, 423.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

# 1. THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CANADIAN GOVERNMENT IN AUTUMN 1962

According to P.S. Robinson, the degree to which the decision-making process reflects societal values and concerns is determined in large part by the desire of a government "...to legitimize itself and its actions."<sup>3</sup> This thesis contends that, by time the Cuban missile crisis broke on the world, considerations of role and appropriateness were especially visible aspects of the Canadian political process.

Characterizing the style of Canadian politics in the years 1961-1963, Peyton Lyon observes that "appearance, to all parties, [had come] to matter more than achievement; posture substituted for policy."<sup>4</sup> This certainly was the case for the floundering minority government under John Diefenbaker. In 1962, the summer elections resulted in a veritable rout of the Progressive Conservatives, reducing by ninety-two their seats in the House of Commons. It was a shattering reversal of fortune from their record-setting victory of 1958. Reflecting on the new complexion of Parliament, Social Credit leader Robert Thompson warned that the Conservatives now led "...a House of minorities,"<sup>5</sup> and that they ought not forget it. Indeed, to sustain his government, Diefenbaker would now have to rely on backing from either the Social Credit Party or the New Democratic Party. The Social Credit Party, not in the mood to force an election at that point, offered qualified support to the besieged Conservatives.<sup>6</sup> On the other side of the House, the Liberals, under a more confident Pearson, sensed that their star was on the rise,

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>4</sup> Peyton Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs: 1961-1963* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Thompson as cited in Patrick Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision* (Don Mills: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1968), 130. The new distribution of seats was as follows: Progressive Conservatives - 116, Liberals - 100, Social Credit - 30, and New Democrats - 19.

<sup>6</sup> It was explicit that while Social Credit would support the Diefenbaker government, this support was conditional, and would be revoked if the need presented itself. Moreover, it was not clear that the Cr ditiste wing of the Social Credit party was united in endorsing Thompson's willingness to give the Progressive Conservatives a chance. Deputy-leader R al Caouette, for example, went on record as saying "...the country needs a stable government. The quicker we have another election, the quicker we will have such a government." Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 126.

and this propelled them in their scathing and unrelenting attacks on the vulnerable Diefenbaker government.<sup>7</sup> Remarking on the viciously partisan nature of Canada's twenty-fifth Parliament, historian Peter Stursberg explains that "...most of the members expected another election to be called shortly and were in no mood for anything but politicking. So, the divided Parliament sounded more like the hustings, than a legislative assembly."<sup>8</sup>

If in Autumn 1962, the Conservatives had to exercise caution in face of intense parliamentary scrutiny, the same situation applied to Diefenbaker, who also had to worry about support within his own party. Diefenbaker was never the unanimous choice of his party, and his authority was opposed by a significant party minority.<sup>9</sup> Much of his cabinet was comprised of political rivals and opponents.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, during his first two Parliaments as Prime Minister, Diefenbaker was relatively secure. After all, it was he who had brought the Progressive Conservatives back into power after twenty-two years of retreat, and it was he who had given them the greatest parliamentary majority in Canadian history. However, with the electoral disaster of June 18, and the evident decline of Diefenbaker's leadership skills, many in Cabinet, and the Conservative party in general, were convinced that it was time for the old leader to step down.<sup>11</sup> According to biographer Denis Smith,

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<sup>7</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 145; Pierre Sévigny, *This Game of Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 229-230; Paul Martin, *A Very Public Life: Volume Two -- So Many Worlds* (Toronto: Deneau, 1985), 360. Martin claims that the Liberals "planned to bring about [the Diefenbaker government's] defeat on a vote of non-confidence as soon as the House assembled."

<sup>8</sup> Peter Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Lost 1962-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Interviews with H. Basil Robinson on August 9 and 14, 1995; Patrick Kyba and Wendy Green-Finlay, "John Diefenbaker as Prime Minister: The Record Re-examined," in Donald C. Story and R. Bruce Shepard, eds., *The Diefenbaker Legacy: Politics, Law, and Society Since 1957* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1998), 58-62.

<sup>10</sup> Judy LaMarsh in Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 141-144.

"for perhaps one-third of its members, the problems of governing the country gave way to the problem of changing the leadership."<sup>12</sup>

In light of the electoral rebuke suffered by his government, and of challenges from Parliament and from within his own party, one would expect Diefenbaker to have carefully formulated policy against considerations of what would be appropriate and/or justifiable -- as indeed he did. But this did not represent a significant deviation from Diefenbaker's normal style of leadership.<sup>13</sup> According to H. Basil Robinson, the Prime Minister was always acutely sensitive to the political implications of the decisions facing his government.<sup>14</sup> In the formulation of external policy, he viewed each decision in terms of how it affected Canada domestically.<sup>15</sup> Characterizing the underlying motives which propelled the Prime Minister in his decisions, Robinson suggests that Diefenbaker "...concentrated on what had to be done to attract the general approval of the wider Canadian public."<sup>16</sup> This does not mean to say that Diefenbaker was unprincipled -- indeed, as Prime Minister he was quite aware of his role as leader of Canada, and this responsibility

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<sup>12</sup> Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane and Ross, 1995), 452.

<sup>13</sup> More than any other Prime Minister, Diefenbaker was "...concerned with what the public thought of him and his government." Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 141. Diefenbaker never felt politically secure anywhere -- even in his home riding of Prince Albert. He was always looking for ways to maintain or increase his popularity. See Dick Spencer, *Trumpets and Drums: John Diefenbaker on the Campaign Trail* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1994), *passim*.

<sup>14</sup> Interviews with H. Basil Robinson on August 9 and 14, 1995; Ken Rasmussen, "Bureaucrats and Politicians in the Diefenbaker Era: A Legacy of Mistrust," in Story and Shepard, eds., *The Diefenbaker Legacy*, 160-164.

<sup>15</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 16; Peter Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies), 180; Jocelyn Ghent-Mallet and Don Munton, "Confronting Kennedy and the Missiles in Cuba," in Don Munton and John Kirton, eds., *Canadian Foreign Policy: Selected Cases* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1992), 79.

<sup>16</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 314-315. Robinson suggests that "political priorities naturally influenced the process of decision-making in foreign affairs." He notes that, according to Diefenbaker, "the forces that would be influential in keeping [the] government in office were basically domestic rather than international." In ascertaining the national mood, Diefenbaker relied heavily on his personal correspondence. Peter Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963), 86; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 139; Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 15, 246, 159-160; H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 144.

weighed upon him heavily.<sup>17</sup> But he was also quite aware that his political fortunes depended on the extent to which the Canadian public perceived him to have legitimately discharged that responsibility.

## 2. THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ISSUES OF CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CUBAN

### MISSILE CRISIS

John F. Kennedy shocked the world with his televised disclosure that American surveillance had discovered a covert build-up of nuclear missile bases in Cuba. Decrying the Soviets for their "deliberately provocative and unjustified" disruption of the status quo, the President resolutely announced that "...a strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba [was being] initiated."<sup>18</sup> Implicit in his speech was the warning that if the Soviets continued in their actions, war with the United States would be a very distinct possibility. Kennedy had called Nikita Khrushchev's bluff, and it was now up to the Soviet Premier to decide the fate of world peace. By the same token, if Khrushchev was undeterred by the threat of nuclear war, "...Kennedy might have to cross the brink first."<sup>19</sup>

The President's gambit placed the Diefenbaker government in a awkward position. Although Canada was America's closest ally by virtue of recent history and joint defense agreements, its government was, nevertheless, not consulted by Kennedy in the formulation of the risky Cuba policy. Yet, as a member of NORAD and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Canada was bound to share in the dire consequences

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<sup>17</sup> Diefenbaker was quite aware that decisions he made affected the lives of millions of Canadians. As Prime Minister, he would frequently comment on the burdens of his position, that no-one could feel the weight of responsibility that came with occupying Canada's highest office. Interviews with H. Basil Robinson on August 9 and 14, 1995; Interview with John Hilliker on August 9, 1995; Erika Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking About Nuclear Weapons and Canada's Defence Policy," in Story and Shepard, eds., *The Diefenbaker Legacy*, 33, 38-39.

<sup>18</sup> Address by President Kennedy on October 22, 1962, as reproduced in David Larson, *The "Cuban Crisis" of 1962: Selected Documents, Chronology and Bibliography*, 2nd ed. (New York: University Press of America, 1986), 61.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 239.

of an American misstep. Confronted with a *fait accompli* by the US President, the Diefenbaker government faced difficult choices, complicated by the momentous societal issues which the crisis brought into conflict within Canada.<sup>20</sup> Three major socio-political issues were engaged by the October crisis: Canadian nationalism; Canada's solidarity with its allies in the fight against communism; and, most fundamentally, Canada's survival.

The following discussion will examine these issues, taking care to show how and why they were engaged by the Cuban crisis. Notably, it will explore how each concern figured in media and Parliamentary discourse during that fateful week, demonstrating the extent to which the Canadian public and its leaders ascribed importance to each issue during the crisis as it evolved. Furthermore, in the case of maintaining allied solidarity with the United States, the discussion will also illustrate the extent to which there was an initial divergence in opinion between the general public and its political leaders.

#### 2.1a THE RISE OF CANADIAN NATIONALISM AND THE QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

In the years immediately following the end of World War II, there was a general consensus on foreign affairs within Canada. Robert Reford, citing the near unanimity with which Parliament endorsed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, points out that foreign policy simply was not "...the subject of major controversy in Canadian domestic politics."<sup>21</sup> The few arguments which did arise on the topic were typically limited to disputing the means of Canadian external policy, rather than its ends.

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<sup>20</sup> P. Stuart Robinson asserts that "...in a crisis states must prepare, explain and justify that definitively collective action of a national mass society: the waging of war. To do so requires more than an expression of interest. It requires an expression, affirmation, and perhaps re-definition of what this particular nation-state is about as an ethical and political entity." P. Stuart Robinson, "Reason, Meaning, and the Institutional Context of Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *International Journal* XLIX, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 423.

<sup>21</sup> Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Ontario: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1968), 7.

In many ways, this remarkable concurrence of opinion on foreign affairs could be attributed to the hard lessons of 1939-1945, and as well to the spectre of communism which came to loom large in the post-war world.<sup>22</sup> The necessity of rebuilding the international system, in combination with the overriding fear of Soviet aggression, served to galvanize the West. In the case of Canada, these requirements minimized any differences of opinion Canadians might have had among themselves, as well as with their NATO allies.<sup>23</sup>

By the late 1950s, however, the world was undergoing rapid and tumultuous change. Massive decolonization was resulting in a proliferation of new states, uninterested in the conflicts of their old colonial masters. Great Britain, devastated by the Second World War, was unmistakably in decline. The United States, in stark contrast, was inescapably in the ascendant. While the dictates of the Cold War still dominated thinking in the Western alliance,<sup>24</sup> strains, both economic and political, were coming to the fore (for example, the Suez crisis). At the same time, there was a dawning realization of the moral and strategic dilemmas posed by the awesome destructive power of the atom. The world was in transition, and so was Canada.

Indeed, Canadian society was experiencing a transformation of considerable magnitude -- a coming of age of sorts. In describing the evolving socio-political milieu of 1957, Peter C. Newman observed that

decisive shifts in a nation's political history are seldom discernible from their undramatic beginnings. Moods and ideas change, men begin to question accepted beliefs, and finally the shifting political climate finds expression in a strong new leader who, almost intuitively, manages to gauge the nameless but profound discontent stirring in the land. Having correctly

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with John Hilliker on August 9, 1995; Interviews with H. Basil Robinson on August 9 and 14, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Denis Smith observes: "By 1948 there were no big issues in Canadian politics. In foreign policy, as the dangers of the Cold War deepened, there was virtual consensus that the country had no choice but to shelter under American protection while playing helpful mediator at the United Nations when it could." Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 166.

<sup>24</sup> By the late 1950s and early 1960s, "...the Cold War seemed less perpetual in prospect and NATO's purpose more open to debate." Thus, the East-West conflict may have had a diminished capacity to foster Western unity than was earlier the case. H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 313.

interpreted and articulated the nation's mood, he becomes irresistible.<sup>25</sup>

In Canada, this strong new leader was John George Diefenbaker, and his advent as Prime Minister represented a "revolution" in the national psyche.<sup>26</sup> In part, the widespread appeal of Diefenbaker and his newly elected Progressive Conservative government reflected "the emergence of a new national political maturity [in Canada]."<sup>27</sup> Challenging Canadians to fulfill their appointment with destiny, Diefenbaker invoked a vision of national greatness which resonated with the growing mood of self-sufficiency and self-assertiveness.<sup>28</sup> From the outset, his government articulated a policy of national independence that placed a premium on Canada's ability to "...determine the right stand to take on problems, [to] keep in mind the Canadian background and, above all, [to] use Canadian common sense."<sup>29</sup> Given the growing sensitivity within Canada to US domination, the general popularity of such a pro-Canadian policy comes as no surprise.<sup>30</sup>

Canada, it must be remembered, was created in an act of negative will.<sup>31</sup> Its birth, and continued existence can be explained in part by

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<sup>25</sup> Newman, *Renegade in Power*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Regenstrief, *The Diefenbaker Interlude: Parties and Voting in Canada: An Interpretation* (Toronto: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1965), 9.

<sup>27</sup> Donald C. Story, "Book Review of H. Basil Robinson's *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs*," *Saskatchewan History* XLII, no. 89 (Autumn 1989), 121.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-123. See also J. Murray Beck, *Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 316; Colin Campbell, and William Christian, *Parties, Leaders, and Ideologies in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1996), 172-173.

<sup>29</sup> Howard Green in a speech made on February 10, 1960. Cited in Reford, *Canada*, 153.

<sup>30</sup> The popular support for Diefenbaker's pro-Canadian foreign policy can be seen in the reaction to his refusal to accede to United States pressure concerning trade with Cuba. For example, in the October 26, 1960, article "Canada's Cuban Policy," the *Charlottetown Guardian* had the following comments: "The Canadian government is being commended by all parties in this country for having the courage to resist pressures from Washington and the wisdom to follow an independent Canadian course." The *Vancouver Sun*, in a February 3, 1962, article entitled "Diefenbaker's Sensible Voice," concurred, stating: "As Mr. Diefenbaker said, we must follow the course we think best for Canada. Prime Minister Diefenbaker spoke in a clear, sensible, Canadian voice which deserves the support of his fellow Canadians."

<sup>31</sup> Of course, there were many positive reasons behind Confederation. The point here is that anti-Americanism was, and will always be, one of the defining characteristics of the Canadian identity. See Martin Lipset in M.A. Schwartz,

the desire of most Canadians not to be American.<sup>32</sup> Thus, it was particularly irksome (and ironic) for Canadians to discover that, having finally achieved political autonomy from Great Britain, they were now falling into a dependent position with the United States.<sup>33</sup> Most alarming was the extent to which Canada was becoming reliant on the US for its commerce. By 1957, trade with America accounted for roughly two-thirds of Canada's imports and exports.<sup>34</sup> Anxiety over this economic domination was one motivation behind Prime Minister's announcement in June of that year of his government's intent to divert 15% of Canadian imports from the United States to Great Britain.<sup>35</sup> Five years later, in 1962, US investment in the Canadian economy continued unabated. According to a Bureau of Statistics report for that year,

...90% of our rubber industry, 96% of automobiles and parts, 69% of petroleum and natural gas, 67% of electrical apparatus and 66% of smelting and refining of non-ferrous ores [was] under US capital control. Of the 6712 Canadian concerns controlled outside this country, 4,240 [were] held in the US.<sup>36</sup>

With such a large share of Canadian industry under American direction, more and more Canadians, of all partisan affiliations, were becoming concerned about the implications of foreign ownership for Canadian sovereignty.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, there was growing apprehension over

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*Public Opinion and Canadian Identity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), vi.

<sup>32</sup> In 1967, Blair Fraser wrote: "without at least a touch of anti-Americanism, Canada would have no reason to exist. Of all general definitions of the Canadians, this is the most nearly valid: twenty million people who, for anything up to twenty million reasons, prefer not to be Americans." Blair Fraser, *The Search For Identity: Canada, 1945-1967* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1967), 301.

<sup>33</sup> Schwartz, *Public Opinion*, 13, 59.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Bothwell, *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 73. This number was approximately the same in 1962. See D. Forster, "The Economy," in John T. Saywell, ed., *Canadian Annual Review, 1962* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 150-216.

<sup>35</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 251-257; Knowlton Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing Across the Undefended Border* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 47.

<sup>36</sup> As cited by Walter Stewart in "US Investment in Canada has Tiger by the Tail," *Toronto Telegram*, (September 12, 1962).

<sup>37</sup> J.L. Granatstein, "When Push Came to Shove: Canada and the United States," in T.G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 87; Eldegard Mahant and Graeme

cultural penetration by the United States -- American cinema, television, and periodicals abounded, flooding the Canadian market.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, too, the wisdom of Canada's close military alliance with an increasingly aggressive United States was being called into question.<sup>39</sup> In short, a significant number of Canadians<sup>40</sup> believed that unless Canada began asserting its independence, it would cease to exist as a sovereign entity.<sup>41</sup> To them, "...there was more than mere rhetoric..."<sup>42</sup> in the pro-Canadian positions adopted by their national leaders.

That the concern for Canadian independence was an important issue engaged by the Cuban crisis is shown by the extent to which it figured in both the media and Parliament. Surveying the press response to President Kennedy's embargo, one finds that considerable anxiety was expressed over the fact that the Americans did not consult Canada when

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Mount, *An Introduction to Canadian-American Relations*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1989), 229.

<sup>38</sup> Granatstein, "When Push Came to Shove," 87. The O'Leary Commission was formed in 1962 to tackle the issue of protecting Canada's publications from American competition.

<sup>39</sup> James Minifie argued that an independent Canada had the potential for a glorious future -- "but not as the client of a power committed to the struggle for paramountcy." For Minifie, "an impregnable neutralism [had to] be [Canada's] warranty of independence." James M. Minifie, *Peacemaker or Powder-Monkey* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1960), 174. See also Tom Keating, *Canada and World Order: The Multilateralist Tradition in Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1993), 151.

<sup>40</sup> Peyton Lyon cites a December 1961 Gallup poll indicating 38 per cent as believing that American influence over Canada was "unduly great." Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 513. Margaret Schwartz's book contains a summary of Gallup poll information on Canadian-American relations. Unfortunately, its utility is limited because, for the most part, it lists only the percentage of those who answered positively. However, according to a 1963 poll, 44 per cent saw Canadian dependency on the United States as "not a good thing." Similarly, a 1958 poll indicated that only 30% of Canadians thought that "...American policies were not costing her the friendship of her allies." See Schwartz, *Public Opinion*, 65-73.

<sup>41</sup> According to John Holmes: "...the foreign policy of Canada must be so designed as to bolster Canadian nationalism and in so doing bolster Canadian independence. Otherwise we perish or at least dwindle." John Holmes, "Nationalism in Canadian Foreign Policy," in Peter Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1966), 214. See also Minifie, *Peacemaker*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Beck, *Pendulum*, 317. By the early 1960s, pro-Canadianism was a plank in every major party platform. Max Harrelson, "Canada-US Relations #4: Says Canadians Leaning Closer to Neutralism," in *Ottawa Journal*, (February 16, 1961); "The Shopping Basket Election," *Toronto Telegram*, (June 9, 1962); Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, vol. 2: 1948-1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 25; Martin, *A Very Public Life*, 369.

deciding their posture on Cuba. On Tuesday October 23, the day after Kennedy's televised address, the *Fredericton Gleaner* criticized the United States' position, stating bluntly that "...the day is past for unilateral action."<sup>43</sup> The *Ottawa Citizen*, too, found fault with American unilateralism, pointing out that "...it may create great strains among the Western allies -- who were not consulted, but who share the risk of war."<sup>44</sup> On Wednesday, the *Toronto Telegram* quoted the British government's view that "because...the United States acted unilaterally without consulting its allies,...neither Britain nor other NATO members have any commitment, militarily or otherwise, if the situation leads to war."<sup>45</sup> Likewise, the *Globe & Mail* suggested on Thursday that "...Canada, Britain and the other Western allies can and should make their displeasure felt in Washington at the President's failure to consult them in advance of imposing the quarantine."<sup>46</sup> The *Winnipeg Tribune* pointedly observed that the American position "...pulled the rug from under all pretense about Canada and the United States being joint partners in continental defence."<sup>47</sup>

In the aftermath of the crisis, the *Ottawa Citizen* defended the Diefenbaker government's refusal to immediately accede to US demands for support, stating: "It is not that we want to obstruct the Americans. It is simply that we must be given time to make a considered decision in light of our own convictions and interests."<sup>48</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* was less restrained:

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<sup>43</sup> "Brinkmanship," *Fredericton Gleaner*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>44</sup> "The Blockade of Cuba," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>45</sup> "Don't Count on Us: Mac," *Toronto Telegram*, (October 24, 1962); "Britain swinging firmly behind Kennedy's Cuban move," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 27, 1962).

<sup>46</sup> "The Crisis Continues," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>47</sup> "Three Day Stutter," *Winnipeg Tribune*, (October 26, 1962). Eleven days later, the *Tribune* wrote "...there were Canadian voices raised, particularly in the Liberal Party press, urging that Canada should shout 'ready, aye, ready.' But as declared by others consistent with Canadian philosophy, 'Canada has not relinquished British Colonialism to replace it with American.'"

<sup>48</sup> "A Lesson from the Crisis," *Ottawa Citizen*, (November 7, 1962). Charles Lynch, writing for the *Ottawa Citizen*, observed that "... Prime Minister Diefenbaker demonstrated ...that he is no push-button leader. He may also have

Generally, the critics take the line that the government took too long to make up its mind to cry, 'ready, aye, ready!' when Washington declared an emergency and called on this country, as a partner in NORAD, to leap to the alert...Maybe the critics have managed to convince themselves that Canada is already the 51st state and should act accordingly. Mr. Diefenbaker and his ministers are not convinced of that yet. In this they represent the thinking of most of us, regardless of party.<sup>49</sup>

Consistent with the press reaction, an examination of the speeches made by Canadian politicians during the crisis reveals an acute awareness of the implications of the crisis for the issue of Canadian sovereignty. Of all the parties, the New Democratic Party (NDP) was the most forthright in its criticism of the United States' disregard for its alliance partners. Following Kennedy's broadcast, NDP House leader H.W. Herridge told the House of Commons that "...the members of [his] group [were] interested to know if the Canadian government was consulted or informed before this momentous statement was made and this policy laid down."<sup>50</sup> The next day, Herridge pressed Howard Green for a response, asking once again: "Was the government of Canada consulted or informed prior to President Kennedy's statement?"<sup>51</sup> At that point, the Prime Minister stepped into the fray, replying tersely that "...the government of Canada was informed."<sup>52</sup> Two days later, following Diefenbaker's speech in support of the American quarantine measures, Herridge had this to offer:

Some people still cling to the fetish that Canadians must never rock the boat of United States foreign policy...It would seem to me...that the government of our friendly and powerful neighbor decided on its course of action without consulting its nearest neighbor, Canada, or its NATO allies, but merely informed them of the action decided upon. I emphasize -- and no one can properly contradict me -- that this is a flagrant violation of the terms of the North Atlantic Treaty. The President of the United States has ignored the consultative machinery of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Its members were not asked for their opinion or advice; they were simply and baldly told what the United States

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demonstrated, as the other Canadian Prime Ministers have before him, that he can't be pushed around." Charles Lynch, "Statesmanship (or was it sluggishness?)," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 27, 1962).

<sup>49</sup> "Mr. Diefenbaker's Responsibility," *Vancouver Sun*, (January 3, 1963).

<sup>50</sup> Canada, *House of Commons Debates* (cited hereinafter as *Debates*), 22 October, 1962, 807.

<sup>51</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 821.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

intended to do, and to that course of action in the present world situation we take the strongest exception.<sup>53</sup>

If the NDP was outspoken in its criticism of the United States, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, too, demonstrated an appreciation of the symbolic importance to Canada of independently determining its course in external affairs. While at no time did the Liberals overtly make an issue out of the lack of consultation by the Kennedy government, they did wait until Wednesday evening before offering an endorsement of the American quarantine of Cuba. In announcing his party's support for the US position, Pearson made it clear that he was articulating an independent Canadian approach, motivated by Canadian interests and values.<sup>54</sup> Satellitism was unacceptable to him and to the Liberals.

The Social Credit Party, too, was aware of burgeoning Canadian nationalism. When on Thursday it announced its support for the United States' stance on Cuba, it was quite careful to frame its position within the context of independent choice. Robert Thompson's speech was most illustrative:

We as Canadians have respect for our own sovereignty, and we support the United States as our friends and best neighbours. We do not do so as a vassal state or as a weak neighbour. We do it because we are Canadians, citizens of the sovereign state of Canada. Let us stand together on our policy as Canadians, remembering that we do not have to bend ourselves to all the whims of those who are much more powerful than we are.<sup>55</sup>

The Progressive Conservatives, like their opposition in the House of Commons, were mindful, too, of the issue of Canadian sovereignty in their policy pronouncements. While it was careful not to criticize the motives behind Kennedy's unilateralism, the Diefenbaker government did

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<sup>53</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 916-917.

<sup>54</sup> Pearson said that Canada should offer the United States "...all the support that is possible as well as the constructive and considered counsel that can mean so much from a friend but has no value from a satellite." In "Pearson Urges Canada Back US," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>55</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 915.

underscore the fact that it was not consulted by Washington.<sup>56</sup> Following the crisis, the Prime Minister stressed that

in light of this recent experience, it should be made clear that consultation is a prerequisite to joint and contemporaneous action being taken, for it could never have been intended that either of the nations would automatically follow whatever stand the other might take.<sup>57</sup>

His government's policy during the crisis, it was implied, was a result of an independent consideration of the circumstances of the crisis, in light of Canadian goals and values.<sup>58</sup>

## 2.1b CANADIAN NATIONALISM AND THE UNITED NATIONS: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

In discussing the rise of Canadian nationalism and the quest for independence in the late fifties and early sixties, it is impossible to avoid consideration of the importance of the United Nations for Canada's foreign policy at that time. Scholar Tom Keating, in his excellent examination of the multilateralist tradition in Canada, points out that the United Nations fulfills a number of critical functions for a middle power like Canada. First and foremost, the UN is a vehicle for international peace and security. Those goals, worthy in and of themselves from a Canadian standpoint,<sup>59</sup> happen also to be beneficial in a more instrumental sense -- Canada is best able to prosper in an "orderly and predictable world environment."<sup>60</sup>

Second, the United Nations is a forum through which Canada, in conjunction with other like-minded middle and small powers, may hope to

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<sup>56</sup> Transcript of CBC interview of Howard Green on Wednesday, October 24, 1962., 11. Diefenbaker Canada Centre Archives (DCCA), MG01/XII/C/120 Cuba; *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 821, 853; *Debates*, October 25, 1962, 911.

<sup>57</sup> Transcript of speech to Zionist Dinner in Toronto, November 5, 1962, 4. DCCA, MG01/XXI/vol. 91.

<sup>58</sup> In his October 24 interview with DePoe and Lynch, Green defended the Conservative government's handling of events, stating that "...Canada has taken an attitude in a Canadian way." Green Interview, 8.

<sup>59</sup> After all, the principles girding the British North America Act are "Peace, Order, and Good Government."

<sup>60</sup> Leroy Bennett, as cited in Keating, *Canada and World Order*, 16. This is both a function of Canada's dependence on trade and of its relatively insignificant military capability. See *ibid.*, 17.

exert some influence on the great powers of the world.<sup>61</sup> More specifically, the UN offers Canada an opportunity to influence the foreign policy of the United States.<sup>62</sup> Lester Pearson, one of the main architects of Canada's post-war internationalist policy, wrote that involvement in the UN "...helped us to escape the dangers of a too exclusively continental relationship with our neighbour without forfeiting the political and economic advantages of that inevitable and vitally important association."<sup>63</sup>

Third, participation in the United Nations serves to develop and reinforce the positive dimensions of Canadian nationalism.<sup>64</sup> According to John Holmes, the UN has

...provided a stage on which Canada could emerge from the shadow of the great powers,...[and allows it to] establish an unmistakable identity. It has given Canada the chance to prove itself, to gain a reputation in the world. In the past decade it has offered also a congenial military role which has given the country a sense of purpose for its armed forces not so readily felt for the more subordinate role of lesser military allies -- important and essential though that role may be. Pride in the mediatory role has given a certain style to Canadian diplomacy. The reputation for objectivity is sought. Comment on world events is muted, and emphasis is placed on maintaining contact even with international malefactors.<sup>65</sup>

It was this third function that the UN had come to serve increasingly by the late 1950s and early 1960s. Propelled by burgeoning nationalist sentiment, the Canadian public was concerned about Canada's status and influence in the international community.<sup>66</sup> The ever-popular United Nations had come to be viewed as the proper locale for Canadian statesmen to pursue foreign policy.<sup>67</sup> Unquestionably, Canada was still

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<sup>61</sup> John Holmes, "The United Nations in Perspective," *Behind the Headlines* XLIV, no. 1 (October 1986), 13; Keating, *Canada and World Order*, 17, 102. This influence is arguably much greater than would be the case if Canada were pressing its case alone.

<sup>62</sup> Keating, *Canada and World Order*, 19-20, 47.

<sup>63</sup> Pearson, *Mike II*, 32. Pearson was commenting on Canadian multilateralism, of which participation in the United Nations was a major part.

<sup>64</sup> Holmes, "Nationalism," 208; Keating, *Canada and World Order*, 112.

<sup>65</sup> Holmes, "Nationalism," 208.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Spencer, "External Affairs and Defence," in John T. Saywell, ed., *Canadian Annual Review, 1962* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 103; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> John Paul and Jerome Laulicht, *In Your Opinion: Leaders' and Voters' Attitudes on Defence and Disarmament* (Clarkson: Canadian Peace Research

viewed by both the world and its own people as the "helpful fixer" in the international arena, and there was considerable pressure "...on Canada's UN team to produce victories, to step into the world arena clad only in a Maple Leaf, and slay a few major dragons."<sup>68</sup>

The appropriateness of using the United Nations for a successful resolution to the Cuban crisis was manifest in both press commentary and in Parliament. The media reaction to Diefenbaker's proposal for a UN inspection team was, for the most part, positive.<sup>69</sup> The *Ottawa Citizen* called Diefenbaker's idea "...a useful suggestion."<sup>70</sup> The *Winnipeg Tribune* wrote that "...any device that purchases time for emotions to cool makes sense. If we are to survive..., human intelligence and not force must make it possible."<sup>71</sup> The *Globe & Mail* was most supportive, suggesting that

Prime Minister Diefenbaker deserves the fullest credit for his statesmanlike attitude when he spoke in the Commons immediately after the President's broadcast. He was quick off the mark with the only constructive suggestion to emerge in the hour of crisis by proposing that the representatives of the eight neutral nations on the UN Disarmament Commission should be asked to investigate the existence of missile bases in Cuba. This suggestion might have had more weight if it had been put to the Security Council before the United States took action, but it still deserves to be pressed, even if the only result is to show the neutral world that the Soviet Union and Cuba will allow no impartial investigation.<sup>72</sup>

When it became evident that the neutral inspection team was a non-starter,<sup>73</sup> the press still looked to the United Nations for a resolution of the crisis.<sup>74</sup> UN Secretary-General U Thant's proposal for a two week

Institute, 1964), 58; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 5; Bruce Thordarson, "Posture and Policy: Leadership in Canada's External Affairs," *International Journal* XXXI, no. 4 (Autumn 1976), 672-673.

<sup>68</sup> Stanley Westall, as cited in Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 7.

<sup>69</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 130-131; Reford, *Canada*, 183.

<sup>70</sup> "The Commons United," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962). The *Citizen* wrote: "for the first time in the present Parliament, the House stood united. There was... a unanimous desire to find some way of being helpful."

<sup>71</sup> "Sensible Suggestion," *Winnipeg Tribune*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>72</sup> "Canada and the Crisis," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>73</sup> "Canada Preparing UN Resolution," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962). Castro categorically refused to allow foreign observers on Cuban territory. Moreover, neither Cuba nor the Soviet Union denied the American charges.

<sup>74</sup> "The hope of the world right now would appear to rest in the United Nations." The *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, as cited in "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962).

stand-still was met with widespread support. An editorial in the *Toronto Star* wrote: "There is hope today that the United Nations has again demonstrated its value as an agency for cooling off international conflicts before they reach the point of explosion."<sup>75</sup> As it turned out, Thant's suggestion was never realized, and the crisis was quickly resolved by negotiations between Khrushchev and Kennedy.

On Parliament Hill, the United Nations figured very prominently in the dialogue on the crisis. Following Kennedy's "sombre and challenging" speech, Diefenbaker affirmed at once that "...the United Nations should be charged at the earliest possible moment with this serious problem."<sup>76</sup> His ill-fated proposal for a neutral UN inspection team was well received by Pearson, in particular, who commented: "I think it is important, as the Prime Minister has indicated, that these international organizations should be used for the purpose of verifying what is going on."<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the three opposition parties immediately expressed their relief that the United Nations was being involved in resolving the dispute, and voiced their concern that Canada work actively in support of the international organization in this time of trouble.<sup>78</sup> This view would consistently be articulated throughout the crisis.

Of all the parties in the House of Commons, the NDP was the most fervent in its support for a UN solution. On Wednesday, which happened to be United Nations' Day, NDP member David Lewis put forward a proposal for Canada to table at the United Nations. He asked if the government would consider placing

...a resolution requesting that both the USSR and the United States to act immediately and simultaneously to turn back Soviet ships from Cuba and to remove the shipping blockade by the United States, in order to create opportunity for the United Nations to initiate necessary negotiations to remove the threat to peace?<sup>79</sup>

<sup>75</sup> "A Reasonable UN Proposal," *Toronto Star*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>76</sup> *Debates*, 22 October, 1962, 806.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 806-807. In fairness, with the exception of Diefenbaker, Harkness and Green, no other Canadian politicians had, at that time, seen the photographic evidence of missile sites in Cuba.

<sup>78</sup> *Debates*, 22 October, 1962, 806-807; *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 882.

<sup>79</sup> *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 882.

The next day, following Diefenbaker's announcement of support for the US quarantine, H.W. Herridge reiterated the NDP proposition, adding that "...it might be necessary to have some ships from other countries police the shipping lanes to make certain that the two big powers carried out their undertakings."<sup>80</sup> Canada, it was implied, could be one such country. Pearson, too, opined that Canada might play a prominent role in such a naval inspection force.<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, nothing came of the NDP suggestions, or for that matter, Thant's similar proposal for a stand-still.<sup>82</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the crisis, however, Herridge criticized the Diefenbaker government for having lost a "...golden opportunity to give leadership to the smaller nations."<sup>83</sup> That same day, though, Howard Green was in New York, making it known that Canada was ready to contribute "...to whatever inspection and verification arrangement the United Nations [might] undertake"<sup>84</sup>

While the NDP was most ardent in its advocacy of a strong UN role in resolving the crisis, it was certainly not alone. The House of Commons was united in supporting the efforts of the world organization to secure a solution to the conflict.<sup>85</sup> With the exception of Social Credit, every party advanced proposals for UN resolutions which would serve to diffuse the crisis.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, in the aftermath of the crisis, every party went out of its way to express its gratitude to the United

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<sup>80</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 917.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 914-915.

<sup>82</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 141.

<sup>83</sup> *Debates*, 29 October, 1962, 1006.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 1003.

<sup>85</sup> *Debates*, 22-29 October, 1962, *passim*.

<sup>86</sup> The Social Credit Party did call for Canada to exercise leadership "...other than that which [was] being given by the two great opposing forces in this world conflict." *Debates*, 25 October, 915-916. The proposals for UN resolutions are found in *Debates*, 22 October, 1962, 806; *Debates*, 24 October, 882-883; and *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 914-918.

Nations.<sup>87</sup> In short, the Parliamentary reaction was well within Canada's post-war tradition of the "helpful fixer."

## 2.2 ALLIED SOLIDARITY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNISM

Looking back at the events of October 1962, historian J.L. Granatstein observes that "no one doubted Canada's response in time of war. The question [had been] what Canada would do in the immediate crisis."<sup>88</sup> Certainly, that was the crux of the matter -- how would Canada react to Kennedy's unilateral imposition of a quarantine around Cuba? If the October crisis engaged emerging Canadian nationalism and the Canadian will to exercise an independent voice in international relations, it also sparked the desire among Canadians to stand firm with the United States in the fight against Communist aggression.

Canada, it must be remembered, was rooted firmly in the Western bloc -- militarily, economically, and socially. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was no disputing that the vast majority of Canadians and their leaders were strongly anti-communist.<sup>89</sup> Diefenbaker, in particular, attempted to foster the image that he was an implacable champion of western democracy fighting valiantly against the communist menace.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, notwithstanding the rise of nationalist sentiment in Canada, "...nobody was burning Uncle Sam in effigy."<sup>91</sup> Most Canadians felt considerable affinity for their neighbours to the south.

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<sup>87</sup> *Debates*, 29 October, 1003-1006.

<sup>88</sup> Granatstein, "When Push Came to Shove," 96; "Allies Support the United States," *Windsor Star*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>89</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 535; Bothwell, *Canada and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 67. Leading into the 1962 elections, both the Liberals and Conservatives played up their anti-communist credentials. In particular, the Liberals attacked Diefenbaker's trade with Communist states. "Besmirching Canada's Name," *The Globe & Mail*, (February 19, 1962). In turn, the Conservatives decried the Liberals for being 'soft of communism.' J.T. Saywell, *Canadian Annual Review* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 9, 21.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Newman, "New Tory Election Game: Baiting Liberal Comsymps," *Maclean's*, (May 5, 1962), 62; Kevin Gloin, "Canada-US Relations in the Diefenbaker Era: Another Look," in Story and Shepard, eds., *The Diefenbaker Legacy*, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Dick Spencer, *Trumpets*, 87.

So, while they were often anxious about the United States, neutrality was not an option.<sup>92</sup>

An examination of the press commentary reveals that the issue of allied solidarity figured very prominently during the crisis. The day after President Kennedy's televised address, several newspapers printed articles demanding that Canada stand firm with the United States against Cuba and the Soviet Union. The *Winnipeg Tribune* asserted that "...there can be no doubt as to Canada's alignment -- we haven't any choice."<sup>93</sup> The *Windsor Star* wrote that "...Canadians should be behind John F. Kennedy all the way."<sup>94</sup> As the week progressed, more and more papers took this position. The *Calgary Herald* asserted that "...Canada's duty in the current crisis over Cuba is to give unqualified support to the United States."<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the *Vancouver Province* was critical of any equivocation in backing the Americans.<sup>96</sup> The *Globe & Mail* offered this warning:

Any attempt to sit on the fence in this period of crisis, to remain uncommitted, would be interpreted around the world as a rebuke to the United States and as aid and comfort for her enemies. Such a course is unthinkable.<sup>97</sup>

Prime Minister Diefenbaker's eventual declaration of solidarity with the US was met with universal support, but it did not dampen the ground swell of criticism damning his government's seeming hesitation.<sup>98</sup> However, the Progressive Conservatives were not the only party to draw

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<sup>92</sup> Schwartz, *Public Opinion*, 73; "Time to Quit Whining and Sniping at US," *Windsor Star*, (June 6, 1962); Charles Hanly, "The Ethics of Independence," in Stephen Clarkson, ed., *An Independent Foreign Policy for Canada?* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968), 21. Max Harrelson, "Canada-US Relations #4: Says Canadians Leaning Closer to Neutralism," *Ottawa Journal*, (February 16, 1961).

<sup>93</sup> "US Goes it Alone," *Winnipeg Tribune*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>94</sup> "Canada Too," *Windsor Star*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>95</sup> "Canada's Proper Course," *Calgary Herald*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>96</sup> "A Nation Without a Voice," *Vancouver Province*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>97</sup> "Canada and the Crisis," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962). The *Globe & Mail* did offer this qualification: "all that being said, there remain strong grounds for questioning, not the necessity of what the President has done, but the way in which he has done it."

<sup>98</sup> Media articles concerning the crisis continued well into November. For the most part, criticism of the Diefenbaker government figured quite prominently. Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 180.

media fire for failing to support the United States during the crisis. On Thursday, October 25, the *Vancouver Province* reprimanded the Liberals (and by implication, the other opposition parties) for their failure to immediately stand firm with the Americans, stating:

And if the government was silent, so was the Liberal opposition, which had a golden opportunity to speak for the millions of Canadians..., to affirm its principles and intentions, to tell the world on whose side we stand.<sup>99</sup>

A week later, the *Winnipeg Free Press* offered an even more biting condemnation:

Certainly, the posture of Parliament in the hours following President Kennedy's quarantine of Cuba was not only confused but, to most Canadians humiliating. Neither the government, the Liberal opposition nor the two splinter parties seemed to realize, or at any rate none admitted candidly, that here was only one immediate question for Canada to decide...Three days passed before the attitude of government and opposition clarified on the central issue of the quarantine. By that time an overwhelming majority of Canadians agreed. Their thinking, in fact, was far ahead of the government's.<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, as the previous press excerpts indicate, Canada's politicians did not offer any specific endorsement of President Kennedy's quarantine measures at the outset of the crisis. Following the President's address, all four parties in the House of Commons offered comment on the emerging international situation. Prime Minister Diefenbaker spoke first. Reporting that the missile bases were undoubtedly offensive in nature, he appealed for calm and "...for the banishment of those things that sometimes separate us."<sup>101</sup> This was either an oblique reference to allied solidarity, or a call for non-partisan unity in the House of Commons. Whatever the case, the Prime Minister did not go further in offering any explicit support for the President.

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<sup>99</sup> "A Nation Without a Voice," *Vancouver Province*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>100</sup> "Why Canada Failed," *Winnipeg Free Press*, (November 1, 1962). Interestingly, the article went on to offer the following insight: "...the first Canadian lesson of Cuba is that there will be no clarity in our foreign policy until a majority government is elected."

<sup>101</sup> *Debates*, 22 October, 806.

If Diefenbaker had avoided the issue, the same could also be said of the other parties in the House. Robert Thompson's speech, in particular, was a marvel of ambiguity:

We have a moral obligation, not only to our own people but also to our neighbours and friends in this ideological struggle that encompasses the world today, and it is our obligation to make our own stand on these matters clearly understood...I believe it is characteristic of Canadians not to panic but thoughtfully and cautiously to watch the developments that are taking place with the definite conviction that it is our responsibility to do what is morally right and to make our actions in that regard known.<sup>102</sup>

Unfortunately, Thompson gave no indication of what he thought the morally correct course of action was. For their part, the Liberals and NDP did not offer any comment at all on Kennedy's quarantine measures.<sup>103</sup> However, NDP leader Tommy Douglas, having just won his seat in Vancouver that evening, did suggest to the press that the United States government was overreacting -- after all, "...for fifteen years the Western powers have been ringing the Soviet Union with missile and air bases."<sup>104</sup>

The next day, to quell domestic and international criticism, the Prime Minister offered a clarifying statement to the House of Commons. He asserted that his suggestion for a UN inspection team was not meant to "...[cast] any doubts on the facts of the situation as outlined by the President of the United States."<sup>105</sup> Rather, it was intended to supplement the initiatives already undertaken by the Americans. Diefenbaker also made it abundantly clear that his government was quite convinced that the Kennedy government had portrayed the Cuba situation accurately.<sup>106</sup>

It was not until Wednesday, however, that a Canadian political party came out in forthright support for Kennedy's quarantine measures. That evening, Liberal leader Lester B. Pearson issued a brief press

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 807. Thompson did make it clear that he did not believe the crisis to "...be a result of the political situation in the United States." However, that hardly qualifies as offering support for the American position.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 806-808.

<sup>104</sup> "Russia Ringed in for Years," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>105</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 821.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

statement announcing "...that Canada should give all the support that is possible to the position taken by the United States in the Cuban crisis."<sup>107</sup>

A few hours later, Howard Green was interviewed on the CBC by Norman DePoe and Charles Lynch. DePoe asked: "Mr. Green, what is Canada's policy in this crisis? Are we backing the United States all the way?"<sup>108</sup> To this, the Minister for External Affairs replied:

Canada's always stood by her friends and of course Americans are our friends and we are standing by them and, mind you, President Kennedy has had to make a very difficult decision when he was faced with finding out suddenly that the Soviet Union was installing offensive missile bases in Cuba. I don't know what history will say about this action but that action has been taken now, and I think the important fact is what's done from now on.<sup>109</sup>

Lynch raised the issue of the quarantine, inquiring whether the government endorsed it. Green answered somewhat evasively that "...the Americans have considered that the action has been necessary and they've taken it and I think that we must accept that fact."<sup>110</sup> DePoe was not satisfied with that response, and asked if Green supported the quarantine, or if he merely accepted it. At this point, the Minister simply replied: "We are friends of the United States and we are standing beside them."<sup>111</sup> Later in the interview, DePoe went back to the heart of the matter, asking: "Is Canada prepared to back the United States all the way? What happens if we come right up against World War III?"<sup>112</sup> Green had this to say:

Well, Canada is an ally of the United States and, as I said in opening, Canada stands with her allies. There's never been any question of that, and there's no doubt of that today. Mind you, we're going to do everything we can to get this crisis settled. We don't want a nuclear war and I don't suppose either of you two want one either, or any other level-headed Canadian.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>107</sup> "Pearson Urges Canada Back US," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>108</sup> Green Interview, 1.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

While Green made it clear that the Canadian government was standing by the United States, he also gave the impression that the government was doing so more out of a sense of obligation, than out of a "...conviction that appropriate and legally defensible action was being taken."<sup>114</sup>

On Thursday afternoon, however, Diefenbaker announced in the House of Commons his unwavering intention to "...support the United States and [its] other allies in this situation."<sup>115</sup> More importantly, he offered a strong endorsement of the American quarantine measures.<sup>116</sup> The Canadian government, notwithstanding its initial hesitation, was now completely on-side. Speaking from the opposition benches, Pearson reiterated his party's solidarity with the United States, adding the qualification that this did not necessarily mean approval of all the details of the American action. The Liberal leader emphasized "...the necessity of rallying round our neighbour and our friend as members of the North Atlantic alliance."<sup>117</sup> For the Social Credit party, Robert Thompson spoke once again about of Canada's moral obligations. This time, he was less ambiguous:

It is only as we stand together with those who hold the same ideals and cherish the same way of freedom that we have in this country that we can have any hope of standing against the onslaught of communism in our time.<sup>118</sup>

Only the New Democratic Party still refused to endorse the US position in any way whatsoever. Attacking the brinkmanship of both the Soviet Union and the United States, Herridge maintained his party's emphasis on a UN solution to the conflict. Even in the aftermath of the

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<sup>114</sup> H.B. Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 289.

<sup>115</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 912.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 913. The *Hansard* reports the Prime Minister as saying: "There is a debate going on throughout the world regarding the legality of the quarantine measures which the United States has imposed. To my mind such arguments are largely sterile and irrelevant. We have a situation to face. Legalistic arguments, whatever they may be, cannot erase the fact that the Soviet Union has posed a new and immediate threat to the security not only of the United States but of Canada as well."

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 914.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 915.

crisis, the NDP offered neither praise nor support for Kennedy's actions.<sup>119</sup>

Of particular interest, however, was Diefenbaker's speech on Sunday, October 28, in which he "rushed to the front of the parade."<sup>120</sup> In a brief statement, the Prime Minister announced with evident relief that the crisis had passed. Somewhat ironically, he went on to assert that "...this prospect has resulted from the high degree of unity, understanding and cooperation among the Western allies." The Canadian government, he declared, "...[had] played its full part."<sup>121</sup>

### 2.3 NUCLEAR WAR AND THE ISSUE OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL

In the early 1950s, to offset the Soviet Union's growing superiority in conventional forces, the United States articulated a strategy of deterrence which emphasized a willingness to take advantage of its nuclear superiority.<sup>122</sup> According to the doctrine of massive retaliation, the Americans threatened to "...devastate Soviet and Chinese economic and political centers in response to any aggression, no matter how limited."<sup>123</sup> As the Communists developed their own nuclear capabilities, US strategy was revised to take account of the new "balance of terror,"<sup>124</sup> and by the early 1960s, the possibility of mutual assured destruction provided both sides with a considerable incentive for détente.<sup>125</sup> It was hoped that their large nuclear arsenals had

<sup>119</sup> *Debates*, 29 October, 1962, 1005-1006.

<sup>120</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 461.

<sup>121</sup> DCCA, MG01/XII/56/C/120. *Statement by the Prime Minister, The Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, P.C., Q.C., M.P.*, (October 28, 1962). 1.

<sup>122</sup> Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 743n21.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 740-741.

<sup>124</sup> In August 1956, Secretary of the Air Force Donald Quarles offered the following explanation of evolving US nuclear strategy: "Neither side can hope by a mere margin of superiority in airplanes or other means of delivery of atomic weapons to escape the catastrophe of such a war. Beyond a certain point, this prospect is not the result of relative strength of the two opposed forces. It is the absolute in the hands of each, and in the substantial invulnerability to interdiction." *Ibid.*, 745n23.

<sup>125</sup> The strategy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) was formally articulated by US Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara in 1964. It was put forward to deter the

rendered direct hostilities between them inconceivable. For if the logic of deterrence failed, the result would be a catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude.

In Canada, there was an acute awareness of the dire consequences of a nuclear confrontation. Indeed, by the time the Cuban missile crisis thrust itself on the international agenda, the Diefenbaker government was in the midst of a heated debate on whether it should honour its commitments to the United States and arm Canada's military forces with atomic weaponry.<sup>126</sup> It was certainly not an easy issue to resolve, and would eventually contribute to the demise of the Progressive Conservative government.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, there emerged a public consciousness in Canada of nuclear weapons and the moral and strategic dilemmas they posed. More and more, people began to "...think about the dangers of nuclear war and to question the assumptions undergirding the policy of deterrence."<sup>127</sup> Anti-nuclear organizations were formed, giving voice to the ground swell of concern over the new weapons and the military strategies they engendered.<sup>128</sup> Groups such as the Voice of Women, the Canadian Committee for Nuclear Disarmament, and the Canadian Peace Research Institute argued against a nuclear role for Canada.<sup>129</sup> They were not without support. In 1961, the Committee for the Control of Radiation Hazards secured the signatures of one hundred and forty-two thousand citizens in its petition against nuclear arms.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, a March 1962 poll revealed that 34.4 per cent were absolutely opposed to

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Soviet Union from considering a preemptive knock-out strike. *Ibid.*, 757-758. However, it was implicit in strategic thinking before 1964. See the previous footnote.

<sup>126</sup> See "Survival in the Nuclear Age," *Globe & Mail*, (October 23, 1962); "Silence on Nuclear Arms Question," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>127</sup> Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking," 38. See Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989), 100; Bothwell, *Canada and the United States*, 77.

<sup>128</sup> English, *The Worldly Years*, 244; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 88-89, 100.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

Canada having nuclear weapons in any circumstances. The same poll also revealed that a slim majority were "...against the establishment of American atomic bomb bases in Canada."<sup>131</sup> As for the media, *Le Devoir*, the *Star*, the *Globe & Mail*, and *Maclean's* were among the many publications strongly opposed the acquisition of nuclear warheads.<sup>132</sup>

In Ottawa, too, most politicians evinced a general aversion to joining the nuclear club. Leading up to the crisis, all three opposition parties were firm in their advocacy that Canada maintain its nuclear virginity.<sup>133</sup> Faced with growing public opposition, and unsure of his support in the House of Commons and in Cabinet, Prime Minister Diefenbaker temporized on his previous commitment to use atomic weaponry in defense of North America and Europe.<sup>134</sup> For the time being, he adopted the position that so long as disarmament was pursued internationally, Canada would have no nuclear arms in peacetime.<sup>135</sup>

Canada's nuclear dilemma would not be resolved until 1963, when the incoming Liberal government would make arrangements to acquire the controversial warheads, having earlier in the year reversed its weapons policy. However, the nuclear debate served to heighten the public's consciousness of the ramifications of a nuclear war. So, when President

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<sup>131</sup> Peter Stursberg, "Murky Policy on Nuclear Weapons," *Saturday Night*, (March 31, 1962). While most people opposed nuclear weapons from a moral standpoint, there was also opposition to Canada's acquisition of nuclear weapons because Canada could never truly own them. As such, Canada's defense would be subject to an American veto. See Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 84.

<sup>132</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 86-87, 89.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 114; "Nuclear Arms for Canada Opposed by Three Candidates," *Vancouver Sun*, (May 30, 1962); Robert A. Spencer, "External Affairs," 106-107; H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 131, 228.

<sup>134</sup> There was a significant split in Cabinet, with Harkness arguing in favour of Canada fulfilling its defence commitments, and Green arguing passionately against nuclear weapons, especially in Canada. Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 105-106; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 191-192; H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 204, 207.

<sup>135</sup> Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 90, 106; Ghent-Mallet, "Deploying Nuclear Weapons, 1962-63," in Munton and Kirton, eds., *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 104; Robert A. Spencer, "External Affairs," 89. Spencer summarized the Diefenbaker government's nuclear position by saying: "With an election in prospect, and believing that acquisition of nuclear warheads would win few votes and undoubtedly lose many, the government moved with a caution that entailed confusion and ambiguity." See also Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 25-26. "Lose the Issues -- Win the Election," *Saturday Night*, vol. 77, no. 3, (June 23, 1962).

Kennedy made his fateful speech of October 22, 1962, everyone was well aware of the possible repercussions of a major confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the Canadian press reaction, there was no doubt about the deeper implications of the crisis. The *Winnipeg Tribune* observed on Tuesday October 22, that "...both sides seem to be set on a collision course. If there is no deviation by one or the other, or both, the result will inevitably be a nuclear war of major proportions."<sup>136</sup> Similarly, the *Kingston Whig-Standard*, wrote that the crisis represented the "...most serious threat of world war since the fateful days of the summer of 1939."<sup>137</sup> Parallel sentiments were echoed in 'Canada's national newspaper,' the *Globe & Mail*.<sup>138</sup> More to the point, however, was the *Woodstock Sentinel-Review*, which asserted that if the Soviets failed to heed Kennedy's ultimatum, Canada "...would inevitably be a no-man's land of a global artillery duel."<sup>139</sup> The *Ottawa Citizen* offered this conclusion: "Certainly it is unthinkable that an intercontinental nuclear duel should be allowed to develop out of Moscow's misguided effort to sustain the sordid dictatorship of Fidel Castro."<sup>140</sup>

Canada's political leaders, too, were cognizant of the gravity of the Cuban situation. Following Kennedy's broadcast, Diefenbaker appealed for calm, stating his government's duty "...not to fan the flames of fear, but to do [its] part to bring about relief from the tensions, the great tensions of the hour."<sup>141</sup> Similarly, Pearson emphasized the need to

<sup>136</sup> "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>137</sup> "Newspaper Editorial Opinion Split on Cuba Blockade," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>138</sup> "Canada and the Crisis," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962). The *Toronto Star*, too, had "...the gravest misgivings over the wisdom of President Kennedy's..." quarantine measures. It wrote that "the peril of nuclear war has never been so acute." See "Kennedy Plays with Fire," *Toronto Star*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>139</sup> "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>140</sup> "The Commons United," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>141</sup> *Debates*, 22 October, 1962, 806. Diefenbaker continued: "Canada knows the meaning of war. Canadians want peace, as do all free men in all parts of the world. My prayer this evening is that those who have the responsibility of statesmanship will always have in mind the need for doing everything that can be done to assure peace."

prevent the shock of the President's announcement from "...resulting in either a feeling of despair and helplessness on the one hand or panic on the other."<sup>142</sup> The Liberal leader then offered the support of his party in helping Canada take the necessary steps "...to prevent [the Cuban] situation from deteriorating into the indescribable horror of nuclear war."<sup>143</sup>

As the crisis deepened, the Social Credit party and the NDP would also demonstrate a keen awareness of the risks involved in a nuclear exchange. On Wednesday, October 24, H.W. Herridge demanded Diefenbaker's assurance that "...the Canadian government is doing everything possible to halt this race toward international suicide."<sup>144</sup> For his part, Robert Thompson cautioned his colleagues that "as we try to solve our problems...let us remember we are doing so on behalf of millions of people whose lives mean as much to them as do ours to us."<sup>145</sup>

Perhaps the most revealing statement made in Parliament during the crisis, however, was the passionate outburst by Conservative backbencher Terry Nugent. Interrupting a debate on the economy, Nugent expressed his dismay at Kennedy's actions, questioning not only his motives, but also their legality.<sup>146</sup> The Edmonton-Strathcona M.P. was particularly apprehensive about the US quarantine measures, suggesting that they might "...constitute an act of war." Concluding his emotional appeal to the House of Commons, Nugent said:

...I suggest that it is the duty of our government to bring this salient feature to the attention of President Kennedy, to ask him to stay his hand, to not precipitate a fight. I am afraid that the other side will not back down in the face of unprovoked aggression -- and where it stops, no one knows.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 807.

<sup>144</sup> *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 885.

<sup>145</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 916. Pearson was concerned that the Cuban crisis "...could easily explode, resulting in dislocation and catastrophe not only for the western world but for the world as a whole." *Debates*, 29 October, 1962, 1005.

<sup>146</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 852-854.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 853.

While Nugent's statements drew widespread applause, including from the Liberals and the NDP, and caused a stir in the media,<sup>148</sup> they were never officially endorsed by the Diefenbaker government. Nonetheless, they did demonstrate the very real fear of nuclear war that gripped all of Canada's parliamentarians during the crisis.

Indeed, every major party in Canada used the international predicament as an opportunity to champion the cause of peace and nuclear disarmament. Speaking for the government, Diefenbaker expressed the hope that "...some good come out of the present dangerous situation." He then affirmed that the dismantling of the bases in Cuba "...would represent a first practical step on the road to disarmament."<sup>149</sup> A.B. Paterson pursued a similar tack, offering Social Credit's unequivocal support for Green's efforts in Geneva and elsewhere.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, the Liberals and the NDP reiterated their advocacy of a ban on atomic weaponry. Pearson and Herridge also used the crisis as an opportunity to reaffirm their opposition to Canada's acquisition of nuclear warheads. Pearson proposed that all non-nuclear countries agree to a self-denying ordinance in the United Nations to stop the dangerous expansion of the nuclear club.<sup>151</sup> Herridge went even further:

It is abundantly clear that the security of Cuba has been seriously harmed by the installation of nuclear bases, and that the threat to peace has been immensely increased. This is precisely the result which the New Democratic party has foreseen [and] would inevitably follow the spread of nuclear weapons [to Canada].<sup>152</sup>

The Cuban crisis did not resolve the nuclear dilemma in Canada. Rather, it served to crystallize opinion even further. Opponents of the bomb were terrified by the near brush with disaster, and redoubled their efforts to stop the spread, if not elimination, of atomic weapons. By

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<sup>148</sup> "Tory MP Strongly Criticizes Blockade of Cuba," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962); "29 Telegrams Back PC's Blast at US," *Toronto Telegram*, (October 25, 1962); "Indiscreet and Silly," *Edmonton Journal*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>149</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 913.

<sup>150</sup> *Debates*, 29 October, 1962, 1005.

<sup>151</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 913.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 917.

the same token, proponents of a strategic deterrent were outraged by the apparent impotency of Canada's defences<sup>153</sup> during the crisis, and were now even more determined that the Diefenbaker government acquire the necessary nuclear warheads for its armaments -- and soon.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> It was soon evident to the general public that "Canada's Bomarc missiles had stood unarmed throughout the period of continental alert, and ...Canada's Voodoo interceptors had lacked the nuclear weaponry which their American counterparts possessed." Ghent-Mallet, "Deploying," 101. Haydon speculates, however, that there may actually have been nuclear weapons in Canada. "Under the political climate prevailing in the autumn of 1962, that situation would have been a time bomb." Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 198.

<sup>154</sup> There was a debate as to whether it was necessary for Canada to use nuclear warheads in its defences. There were no conventional warheads for the Bomarc 'B', which Canada had purchased, but conceivably these could have been developed. It was generally accepted, however, that Canada's weaponry would be more effective if nuclear equipped. The question was whether such effectiveness was worth Canada joining the nuclear club. Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 81-86; Don Munton, "Going Fission: Tales and Truths About Canada's Nuclear Weapons," *International Journal* LI, no. 3 (Summer 1996), 514-517.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: ROLE, APPROPRIATENESS, AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

Having characterized the nature and circumstances of the Diefenbaker government in Autumn 1962, and having explored the momentous socio-political issues brought to a head in Canada by the Cuban crisis, this thesis will now examine the events of October 22-25 from a theoretical perspective that highlights the societal impact on the decision-making process. Specifically, discussion will centre on how considerations of role and appropriateness acted to constrain and compel Prime Minister Diefenbaker and his Cabinet colleagues in their response to the crisis. The argument is premised on the notion that, when embroiled in the calculus of policy-making, politicians are influenced not only by an awareness of their role as leaders of society, but also by the important issues and expectations engaged by a particular decision. As pointed out in chapter one, they "...need to communicate to their observers that the decisions they make are legitimate."<sup>1</sup> In short, they need to establish that their choices "accomplish appropriate objectives" and are "made in appropriate ways."<sup>2</sup>

##### 1. THE INITIAL HESITATION: OCTOBER 22-25

As a Member of Parliament, John Diefenbaker was always very mindful of his obligations to his constituents. As Prime Minister, he was acutely conscious of his duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all Canadians.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in a nuclear age, he was painfully aware that decisions he undertook in the name of Canada could have the

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<sup>1</sup> James March and Johan Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Interviews with H. Basil Robinson on 9, 14 August, 1995; Interview with John Hilliker 9 August, 1995; Erika Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking About Nuclear Weapons and Canada's Defence Policy," in Donald C. Story and R. Bruce Shepard, eds., *The Diefenbaker Legacy: Politics, Law, and Society Since 1957* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1998), 45; H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 312.

possible repercussion of deciding the fate of millions.<sup>4</sup> Most certainly this burden of responsibility weighed heavily on him when, on October 22, he was presented by the Americans with a request for political and military support for their quarantine measures. Commenting on the dilemma facing his administration, Diefenbaker would later write:

It was up to the Canadian government to decide where its first responsibilities lay. Certainly, we wanted the Soviet missiles removed from Cuba; but not,<sup>5</sup> if there was an alternative, at the price of global destruction.

In deciding whether to back the United States, Diefenbaker had to be sure that this was the best possible course for Canada to take. Unfortunately, he and many others in Cabinet had doubts about the wisdom and the necessity of Kennedy's quarantine measures. A number of questions needed to be answered before his government could, in good conscience, endorse the American position and go to alert.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 1960s, many Canadians were anxious about the United States' preoccupation with Cuba.<sup>7</sup> With Fidel Castro's Havana Declaration of September 2, 1960, the tiny Caribbean island had become a national obsession in the US.<sup>8</sup> It even surpassed the Soviet Union and communist China as the primary target of American Cold War rhetoric. As such, Cuba figured very prominently in the political sparring between the Republicans and Democrats -- especially in the weeks leading up to the

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<sup>4</sup> Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking," 45.

<sup>5</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker -- The Tumultuous Years 1962-1967* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1977), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Thompson, leader of the Social Credit party, defended Diefenbaker's seeming hesitation, stating that the Prime Minister had "no alternative but to delay three days his policy statements on the crisis." "The Prime Minister," he said, "first had to ascertain whether there was a political motivation for the US blockade, and whether the US was justified in taking unilateral action." See "Gov't Blockade Stand Splits NDP, SC Heads: Thompson Supports Diefenbaker," *Calgary Herald*, (October 29, 1962).

<sup>7</sup> Peyton Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs: 1961-1963* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 32, 514-515; Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, "Canada, the United States, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Pacific Historical Review*, no. 18 (May 1979), 162.

<sup>8</sup> In the declaration, President Castro removed all doubts about his country's alignment with the Soviet Union. See Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 58-59.

crisis.<sup>9</sup> Spurred on by the approaching Congressional elections, American politicians were increasingly strident in their denunciations of Castro and his regime.<sup>10</sup> President Kennedy, in particular, faced considerable political pressure to "do something about Cuba,"<sup>11</sup> having been labeled by Republicans Richard Nixon and Barry Goldwater as weak and indecisive.<sup>12</sup>

Not surprisingly, when the crisis broke on October 22, there was widespread speculation that the President was "playing politics" by taking a hard line against Castro.<sup>13</sup> The *Montreal Star* exemplified this reaction when it wondered "...about what course would have evolved had the Congressional elections been out of the way instead of two weeks in the future."<sup>14</sup> In Ottawa, Liberal MP J.A. Byrne pressed Diefenbaker to respond to "...the suggestion...that President Kennedy's momentous decision...was motivated by domestic political considerations."<sup>15</sup> Although the Prime Minister declined to comment publicly on Kennedy's motives, they were the subject of considerable discussion in Cabinet.<sup>16</sup>

If there was anxiety over Kennedy's purposes in imposing the quarantine, there was also concern about the legality of the United States' position. First, as Conservative backbencher Terry Nugent

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<sup>9</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 283.

<sup>10</sup> "War Whoops on the Potomac," *Toronto Star*, (September 7, 1962).

<sup>11</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 284.

<sup>12</sup> "US Warhawks in Full Cry," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 10, 1962); Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy and the Missiles in Cuba," in Don Munton and John Kirton, eds., *Canadian Foreign Policy: Selected Cases* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1992) 81.

<sup>13</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 85; Green interview, 13; C. King, "Britain Swinging Firmly Behind Kennedy's Cuban Move," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 27, 1962), 17.

<sup>14</sup> "Sequence of Action Weakens US Case," *Montreal Star*, (October 24, 1962); the *Fredericton Gleaner* as cited in "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>15</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 822. On Monday evening, the Social Credit Party distanced itself from those in the press who were questioning Kennedy's motives. *Debates*, 22 October, 1962, 806.

<sup>16</sup> Public Archives of Canada (PAC), RG2/Vol. 6192, Record of Cabinet Decisions (hereafter *Cabinet Conclusions*) for 23 October, 1962, 1, 5; *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 7. Green would not comment publicly on the influence of American elections either. See DCCA, MG01/XII/C/120 Cuba, Transcript of CBC interview of Howard Green on Wednesday, October 24, 1962, 13. Diefenbaker, for his part, feared that Kennedy was grandstanding. Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 79-82.

observed in his impassioned speech to the House of Commons, there was the question of national sovereignty:

Cuba is an independent sovereign nation...and those of us who believe in the rights of sovereign states, as subscribed to in the United Nations charter, must concede that big or small, friendly or unfriendly, whether we like it or not, that country has the same rights we have. Cuba has the right to arm itself with whatever arms it can get. Cuba has the right to make any alliance that it wishes for its own defence, no matter how much we may dislike, disapprove or even fear that alliance.<sup>17</sup>

Second, as the *Toronto Star* reminded its readers, Cuba had not committed an act of aggression against the United States.<sup>18</sup> While there was no doubt that Khrushchev and Castro had acted provocatively, there was some debate as to whether the missiles in Cuba were intended to play an offensive role. After all, the basis of a nuclear deterrent is offensive capacity. The United States, in protecting Turkey and West Germany from Soviet aggression, was itself "...guilty of using foreign countries as bases for missiles aimed at the Soviet Union."<sup>19</sup> Trade and Commerce Minister Gordon Churchill, describing the feeling in Cabinet, would later assert that "...there was some dispute or some nervousness naturally about the whole situation. Was there adequate evidence that the Russians really intended to make a missile attack on the United States?"<sup>20</sup> Indeed, on the morning of October 24, Prime Minister Diefenbaker expressed his personal misgivings to his colleagues in Cabinet, stating:

Some years ago, when the USSR had complained about the establishment of US bases ringing the Soviet territory, the US had responded that they had been invited to establish these bases by the countries concerned. The U.S.S.R could now use a similar argument to justify the establishment of bases in Cuba...[I have] discussed the situation with the U.K. High Commissioner, who had

<sup>17</sup> *Debates*, 23 October, 1962, 852-853.

<sup>18</sup> "Kennedy Plays with Fire," *Toronto Star*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>19</sup> The *Kingston Whig-Standard* as cited in "Newspaper Editorial Opinion Split on Cuba Blockade," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962), 21. The *Peterborough Examiner* followed the same tack. See "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962). See also "Cuba and US Politics," *Globe & Mail*, (September 12, 1962).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Stursberg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Lost 1962-1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 16. In Cabinet, Diefenbaker said: "Of course, there were those who said that the US was doing wrong; among these had been Mr. T.C. Douglas." *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 2.

pointed out that it was difficult to classify weapons strictly as offensive or defensive.<sup>21</sup>

Compounding the dilemma facing the Canadian government was the quarantine itself. Blockades have traditionally been considered acts of aggression, if not war. Kennedy's quarantine, however, was something new altogether -- a selective blockade of sorts. While it very definitely involved search and seizure on the High Seas, such interference was limited to stopping the inflow of offensive weapons into Cuba. Moreover, the movement of non-strategic materials would not be hindered, nor would ships carrying contraband be seized or sequestered -- they would simply be turned back. Not surprisingly, there was considerable confusion about the legal implications of the quarantine.<sup>22</sup> For many, even a selective blockade was sufficiently aggressive to be worrisome. The *Ottawa Citizen* attacked the quarantine for its violation of the freedom of the seas, calling it "...a mild form of preventive war."<sup>23</sup> Terry Nugent, too, expressed the concern that Kennedy's blockade would constitute an act of aggression.<sup>24</sup> Crucially, nobody really knew with any certainty what was the legal status of the quarantine, or how the Soviet Union would react to it -- including the Diefenbaker government.<sup>25</sup>

Given the serious doubts that Diefenbaker and many of his Ministers had about the necessity and legality of Kennedy's quarantine measures, their hesitation to commit Canada to a course of action fully endorsing the American position is understandable -- especially when examining how they perceived the gravity of the crisis.

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<sup>21</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Green Interview, 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> "The Blockade of Cuba," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962). See "Montrealers Picket US Consulate," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 23, 1962).

<sup>24</sup> *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 853.

<sup>25</sup> DCCA, MG01/XII/C/120, vol. 56. Howard C. Green, *Memorandum for the Prime Minister: United States Quarantine Against Cuba*, (October 23, 1962). Diefenbaker asked Green to prepare a brief on the legality of Kennedy's selective blockade. On page five it concluded: "The quarantine decreed by President Kennedy would seem to be a *sui generis*. In consequence, while it would not be correct to assert categorically the legality of the United States move, it is impossible as well to conclude that it is illegal."

In his analysis of the events of October 1962, Peter Haydon writes that "...it looked as if the severity of the crisis had escaped Canadian politicians."<sup>26</sup> It would be more accurate to say that Canadian leaders, as a group, initially viewed the crisis with less alarm than the general public, and only later grew to have deep concerns. Indeed, following Kennedy's speech, Prime Minister Diefenbaker and significant number of his Ministers did not appear to see any imminent and overriding threat to Canadian security.<sup>27</sup> Thus, they did not think it urgent to mobilize the military and rush in -- especially when doing so could, in their eyes, destabilize the entire situation.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, the Canadian government felt obliged to take a few precautionary measures to ensure Canadian security. On Tuesday, Cabinet decided to deny Russia overflight permission for its planes, and ordered that Cuban, Czechoslovakian and other Soviet bloc aircraft bound for Cuba be searched for contraband material. Authorization, too, was given to improve the readiness of Army Headquarters and warning centres, as well as other key government departments.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, on Wednesday, October 24, Cabinet delayed the scheduled rotation of Canadian forces in Europe.<sup>30</sup>

However, beyond this, a significant number<sup>\*31</sup> of Cabinet members did not see the immediate necessity of increasing the level of military

<sup>26</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 136.

<sup>27</sup> Recalling his bad-tempered telephone conversation with Kennedy, Diefenbaker asserts that he told the President that Canadian forces "...would be ready if a real crisis developed, but that [he] did not believe that Mr. Khrushchev would allow things to reach that stage." Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 82. See also Pierre Sévigny, *This Game of Politics* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 253. There were Ministers, such as Harkness, who perceived a distinct threat to Canada. At least initially, they did not dominate Cabinet. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 128.

<sup>28</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 194. Haydon himself concludes that "...there was no reason at the start of the crisis to put Canada's defence forces on a warfighting alert." See *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 3, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 5-6.

<sup>\*31</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton suggest that a slim majority may have initially agreed with Diefenbaker's view of the crisis. Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 87-88. Peter Newman's account implies this as well. Peter Newman, *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963), 337. Knowlton Nash concurs with Newman and Ghent-Mallet,

vigilance for Canada's NORAD forces -- after all, the Americans had themselves not yet gone to full alert.<sup>32</sup> While Diefenbaker and Green were convinced of the existence of nuclear bases in Cuba,<sup>33</sup> they may not have viewed them as representing a significant change in the nuclear threat facing Canada.<sup>34</sup> At any rate, it was argued in Cabinet that the government should wait and see how other countries reacted to the United States' position, before committing to a particular course of action. Some Ministers suggested that

a decision to act or move into a more advanced stage of alertness could be put into effect so quickly that waiting a while would have no serious consequence. After all, the US had taken ten days to be sure they were right in their decision; surely 24 hours delay would not be unreasonable for Canada.<sup>35</sup>

If the Canadian government did not perceive an imminent threat to national security, it was well aware that the diplomatic situation hung in the balance, and could, if mismanaged, easily lead to a war of nightmarish proportions. The fear of aggravating the situation was very much a consideration for Diefenbaker in particular, and given the weight

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citing Waldo Monteith as saying "...a majority of cabinet swung over to backing Diefenbaker." Knowlton Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing across the Undefended Border* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 194. However, Patrick Nicholson asserts that "a majority favoured ordering [Canadian] forces to be alerted to DefCon 3." Patrick Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision* (Don Mills: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1968), 160. Similarly, Robert Reford suggests that a majority in Cabinet favoured an alert. Robert Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Ontario: Canadian Institute for International Affairs, 1968), 180. This thesis, in the absence of conclusive information, argues that it was possible that Diefenbaker's position enjoyed the support of the majority of Cabinet -- at least on Tuesday. After all, even Sévigny had some doubts about the necessity of an alert. The Associate Minister of Defence would later comment: "Up to a point [Diefenbaker] was right. After all, I mean, why mobilize everybody? ...Some people really exaggerated the importance of this thing, and then the press picked it up and the criticism started." Pierre Sévigny, as cited in Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Peyton Lyon cites an unnamed Cabinet source as suggesting that the government "declined to accept Mr. Harkness's demand for an immediate alert because [it] knew that the Americans had not yet placed their forces on the maximum alert." Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 196; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 38; Green Interview, 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 5.

of responsibility which he felt for the lives of individual Canadians, his caution was quite "...natural and understandable."<sup>36</sup>

In Cabinet, the Prime Minister expressed his concern that going to alert would not only cause unnecessary panic, but could destabilize the precarious international situation as well.<sup>37</sup> He and Green admonished against blindly following the United States, stating that "quick action brought quick judgement, and [that] it would be dangerous to have the present moves interpreted as offensive rather than defensive action."<sup>38</sup> Under the circumstances, it was not unreasonable to worry that the Soviets would be alarmed by rapid Canadian mobilization.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, it was argued in Cabinet that if Canada did not immediately follow the American lead, it might serve to calm Kennedy down a bit, and allow a greater chance for diplomacy to resolve the crisis.<sup>40</sup> If cool thinking did not prevail, Diefenbaker warned, the result would be nuclear war and nobody in Canada wanted that -- especially "Canadian mothers."<sup>41</sup>

One cannot forget that the overriding obligation of the Canadian government was to act in such a way that would best ensure the nation's security. There were numerous considerations which served to emphasize the need for caution, and which led to the initial Canadian hesitation to endorse the American quarantine and go to alert. However, insofar as

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<sup>36</sup> Reford, *Canada*, 205. See Thomas Hockin, ed., *Apex of Power: The Prime Minister and Political Leadership in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Ltd., 1977), 249.

<sup>37</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 124, 192; *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Diefenbaker was not alone among Western leaders in worrying about provocation. French President Charles DeGaulle, Harold Macmillan, and Supreme Allied Commander Lauris Norstad were all against an overt military alert. "As a result, European forces did not go on a higher state of alert." Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 195. Macmillan, in particular, thought an alert would be provocative. Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 171. Notably, Haydon suggests that Green and others in Cabinet may have erroneously associated an alert with the automatic release of nuclear weapons to advance positions in Canada. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 125-127. Undoubtedly, this would have heightened their fears about how provocative an alert would be.

<sup>40</sup> Diefenbaker and others in Cabinet saw Kennedy as the biggest threat to world peace. Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking," 38-42; Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 80. See also Stursberg, *Diefenbaker* 199.

<sup>41</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 159.

the Diefenbaker government did not perceive an imminent and overriding threat to Canada, decision-making during the crisis was also influenced by other priorities.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker was extremely sensitive to the domestic political ramifications of foreign policy decisions. At the same time, too, he was visibly concerned with maintaining his administration's legitimacy in the eyes of the public -- approval was most definitely important. As a consequence, considerations of appearance and appropriateness were never far from the political decision-making process.

During Cabinet deliberation of the risks of moving the Canadian component of NORAD to the equivalent of DefCon 3, there was some anxiety over the "...domestic political overtones in the US decision." It was argued that "...Canada should appear to be behaving normally and deliberately."<sup>42</sup> Without all the details of the actual conversation,<sup>43</sup> one can only speculate as to what was meant, but it seems that Cabinet considered it important that the public perceive the government to be acting rationally and responsibly, carefully weighing the pros and cons of the situation before acting. Given the political context of Kennedy's decision, and the repercussions of a misstep, it would not have been appropriate for Canada to rush in without first ascertaining "...whether there was a political motivation for the US blockade, and whether the US was justified in taking unilateral action"<sup>44</sup>

In the same discussion, the issue of Kennedy's disregard for the consultative provisions in NORAD was also raised.<sup>45</sup> Many Ministers, including Diefenbaker and Green, were quite indignant that the United

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<sup>42</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Cabinet conclusions are only general summaries of discussion, and are framed in such a way that the respective positions of individual ministers are not often identifiable.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Thompson as cited in "Gov't Blockade Stand Splits NDP, SC Heads: Thompson Supports Diefenbaker," *Calgary Herald*, (October 29, 1962).

<sup>45</sup> Newman, *Renegade*, 334; Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 176.

States government did not consult Canada before embarking on a course of international adventurism.<sup>46</sup> For this reason alone, some argued, Canada ought not back the Americans.<sup>47</sup> In debating whether Canada should follow Kennedy's lead, the point was made that the NORAD agreement

...provided for [an] independent decision to be made by the government with respect to the degree of participation by their personnel. In this instance, Canada should not appear to be stampeded.<sup>48</sup>

Undoubtedly, the government expected the general public to be as outraged by American indifference for Canadian sovereignty as it was.<sup>49</sup> Aware of rising Canadian nationalism, and of support for previous pro-Canadian foreign policy positions, Diefenbaker probably anticipated "...widespread support for independent action"<sup>50</sup> in the crisis. Certainly, this was a compelling consideration in delaying Canadian endorsement for Kennedy's quarantine measures. Moreover, having in previous years donned the mantle of vocal champion of Canadian sovereignty, the Prime Minister was in many ways trapped -- if he did not defend Canada's right to independent action in foreign affairs, he and his minority government would be subject to charges of satellitism and weakness from the other political parties in Canada.<sup>51</sup> So, when faced with a *fait accompli*, Diefenbaker found it very difficult to immediately back the American position.

At the same time, the growing nuclear debate complicated decision-making in the crisis even further. Paul Martin, who served in Liberal Cabinets before and after the Diefenbaker interlude, suggests that Diefenbaker withheld political and military support for the Americans because of the growing anti-nuclear movement in Canada.<sup>52</sup> While

<sup>46</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 88.

<sup>47</sup> Newman, *Renegade*, 334; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37.

<sup>48</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 88.

<sup>50</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 143. See also *ibid.*, 116; Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 88.

<sup>51</sup> Reford, *Canada*, 206.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Martin in Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 18.

obviously an oversimplification, there may be an element of truth to Martin's admittedly partisan analysis. There is no doubt that leading up to the crisis the Prime Minister was quite impressed by the force of anti-nuclear sentiment in Canada.<sup>53</sup> After all, it led him to temporize on his commitment to arm Canadian Bomarc and Voodoos with atomic warheads. Thus, it is plausible to suggest, as does Haydon, that Diefenbaker was loath to go to alert unless absolutely necessary because doing so "...would expose the full extent of civil defence and military deficiencies."<sup>54</sup> Given the polarization of opinion on the nuclear issue, and his government's minority position in the House of Commons, the last thing the Prime Minister wanted was to bring on a situation that would force his hand. He was well aware that if he articulated a policy either rejecting or embracing nuclear weapons, he risked alienating a large segment of the Canadian population, not to mention several members of his Cabinet.<sup>55</sup>

In summary, Diefenbaker's hesitation to go to alert and to back the Americans was influenced by a number of priorities. First and foremost was the responsibility to ensure the safety of Canada and Canadians. Initially, his government was convinced of neither the necessity nor the wisdom of supporting Kennedy's measures. There were doubts about the President's motives in imposing a quarantine, as well as the legality of the American position. Whether Canada should alert the NORAD component of its military was not immediately self-evident either. Many Ministers did not perceive an imminent and overriding

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<sup>53</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 204, 207; Reford, *Canada*, 167; Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 207.

<sup>54</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 193. Prior to the announcement of an alert, Liberal Defence critic Paul Hellyer was asking in the House of Commons whether Canada had armed its Bomarc squadrons with nuclear warheads. *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 885. Haydon speculates that there may already have been nuclear arms in Canada at the time of the crisis. This, if discovered, would have been a political nightmare for the government. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 195-198.

<sup>55</sup> Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 26. See also H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 204.

threat to Canadian security, and, further, there were compelling arguments that mobilization would actually be detrimental to a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Also contributing to the government's initial hesitation were considerations of appropriateness. Given Diefenbaker's leadership style, and his government's precarious position in the House of Commons, public support was most definitely a concern. Cabinet was of the opinion that the government had to be perceived by the Canadians as acting responsibly and deliberately during the crisis. Moreover, Diefenbaker and Green expected the Canadian electorate to applaud an independent approach to the crisis, especially in light of Kennedy's failure to consult Canada before embarking on his risky gambit. At the same time, too, it is likely that Diefenbaker did not want to take any action that would complicate his already difficult balancing act with regard to the acquisition of nuclear warheads.

## 2. DIEFENBAKER'S UN INSPECTION TEAM PROPOSAL OF MONDAY, OCTOBER 22

If considerations of role and appropriateness were important factors contributing to the Canadian government's hesitation to follow the American lead in the crisis, they also figured prominently in Diefenbaker's proposal for an independent UN inspection team to verify activity in Cuba. As reported to Washington by Livingston Merchant, Diefenbaker did not intend to remark publicly on the crisis until Tuesday afternoon.<sup>56</sup> Thus, when Lester Pearson telephoned him immediately after Kennedy's speech, asking that he comment on the international situation in the House of Commons that evening, Diefenbaker was caught unprepared. Yet he could not refuse Pearson's request. As a consequence, the Prime Minister went to Parliament without having had the opportunity to contemplate the merits and implications of

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<sup>56</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 286.

the only advice on the crisis he had yet received -- a memorandum from External Affairs.<sup>57</sup>

The memorandum, which Diefenbaker read following his briefing with Merchant, asserted that it could "...confidently be assumed that some international endeavour will be made to avert war and bring about a negotiated settlement." Making reference to how the UN was able to contribute the resolution of the Suez crisis, it went on to raise the question as to "...whether there is again a role for Canada to play."<sup>58</sup> Specifically, the memorandum suggested that

the only action which could be taken in a United Nations context which might avert measures which could lead to conflict, would be move in the Security Council to have a group of 'neutral' nations -- perhaps the 8 non-aligned members of the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee -- conduct an on-site investigation in Cuba of the USA Government's charge that that country has permitted the installation on its territory of offensive nuclear missiles. If vetoed in the Security Council or otherwise rejected by the Soviet Union and Cuba, the issue could be taken to the floor of the Assembly where an overwhelming vote in favour of such a proposal could be expected. Even if such a move failed to result in the admission of an investigation team to Cuba, it would at least have the virtue of confirming and exposing the aggressive designs which the USA maintains the Soviet Union has on North America.<sup>59</sup>

In view of the possible gravity of the crisis, and of his personal doubts about Kennedy and the legality of the quarantine measures, the Prime Minister probably thought the proposal for an inspection team was "...the wisest and safest course for the time being."<sup>60</sup> After all, he realized, it would impose a break in the escalating tension, and would serve to "...prevent any rash and hasty decision by the United States."<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, because of Canada's reputation as a "helpful fixer," the Prime Minister was under significant political pressure to do

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<sup>57</sup> The memorandum was intended for circumstances different from what actually evolved. Unfortunately, Diefenbaker did not have any other proposals, or any time to seek out other advice. Howard C. Green, "Memorandum for: The Prime Minister," 22 October, 1962, DCCA, MG01/XII/88/D/204.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson was the architect of this proposal.

<sup>60</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 167.

<sup>61</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada III*, 79. See also Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 189; Reford, *Canada*, 178-179.

something constructive to diffuse the crisis. He was well aware that the United Nations was the only arena in which his government could realistically hope to secure an independent and prominent role in the resolution of the conflict<sup>62</sup> -- a role Canadians expected it to play. And, as the memo from External Affairs implied, here was a golden opportunity for him to prove his mettle as a world leader. Most certainly, he did not want to pass up this rare chance "...to dispel once and for all the belief that Pearson was still the greater Canadian statesman."<sup>63</sup>

### 3. HESITATION NO MORE: GOING TO ALERT AND BACKING THE UNITED STATES

If initial considerations of role and appropriateness led the Diefenbaker government to hesitate to follow the American lead, the same considerations were also instrumental in later decisions to alert Canada's military and to offer unequivocal support to Kennedy's quarantine measures. From the outset of the crisis, Douglas Harkness was firm in his conviction that Canada should support the United States in confronting the Soviets over the missile bases in Cuba. Compared with Diefenbaker and Green, the Defense Minister articulated "...a very different view of the severity of the international situation,"<sup>64</sup> believing not only that Canada was under direct and imminent threat, but also that national security would be best served by precautionary military mobilization.<sup>65</sup> Notwithstanding Kennedy's failure to consult the Canadian government, the former lieutenant-colonel also believed that Canada had a moral obligation to alert its forces in concert with

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<sup>62</sup> Reford, *Canada*, 178. Moreover, United Nations Day was fast approaching, reinforcing the important symbolic status that the world organization held in Canada. Undoubtedly, this symbolism was not lost on Diefenbaker.

<sup>63</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 123. See also H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 287; Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane and Ross, 1995), 455; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 122-123.

<sup>64</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 128.

<sup>65</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 6. See Simpson, "New Ways of Thinking," 35.

its American ally.<sup>66</sup> As discussed earlier, much of Cabinet did not initially subscribe to Harkness' position. Consequently the government decided to watch events develop further before committing Canada to a particular course of action.

However, by Wednesday morning, with the implementation of the American quarantine measures, three-quarters of Cabinet was in favour of bringing the Royal Canadian Air Force to an alert equivalent to DefCon 3.<sup>67</sup> Describing the situation, Public Works Minister Davie Fulton would later say: "We had reason to resent the lack of consultation, but it would have been foolish not to temper it with an understanding of the situation."<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Diefenbaker and Green in particular, remained strongly opposed to an alert, still fearing that it would alarm the Soviets.<sup>69</sup> At this point, Diefenbaker told Cabinet about a telephone conversation he just had with Macmillan, in which the British Prime Minister supposedly "...urged that there be no additional provocative act because...[the crisis] was completely in balance and that war might come immediately, and anything that anything that upset the balance was unwise."<sup>70</sup> With that, the non-alert faction prevailed once again.<sup>71</sup>

However, that afternoon Harkness was informed that the Strategic Air Command and some of the US Navy and had moved to DefCon 2 -- "imminent enemy attack expected." The Defence Minister immediately approached Diefenbaker with this new information, stating forcefully that an alert could no longer be postponed. "With the American alert

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<sup>66</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 124; Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 11; *Cabinet Conclusions*, 23 October, 1962, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 176.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 166.

<sup>70</sup> R.A. Bell, as cited in Stursberg, *Diefenbaker*, 16. The *Cabinet Conclusions* read: "Fortunately, the United Kingdom was emphasizing the need for restraint." *Cabinet Conclusions*, 24 October, 1962, 7. See Ghent-Mallet and Munton, "Confronting Kennedy," 88; Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 165.

<sup>71</sup> Nicholson implies that Diefenbaker, using Macmillan's phone call urging non-provocation, was able to win over a majority in Cabinet. Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 166. Other accounts suggest that Diefenbaker simply overruled his colleagues. Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 177; Reford, *Canada*, 185; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 132.

increased and actual hostilities apparently so imminent, the question of nonprovocation seemed less important..."<sup>72</sup> to the Prime Minister, who told Harkness, with grudging resignation, to "go ahead."

Diefenbaker's decision, however, only resulted in a change in Canada's official position. The day before, believing that he had no choice, the Defence Minister had gone to the Chiefs of Staff without Cabinet's knowledge and ordered steps be taken in secret to effect a *de facto* mobilization of the Canadian military.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, it was Harkness' sense of duty and obligation to Canada and its allies that led him to defy the authority of the Prime Minister. So, in the final analysis, both he and Diefenbaker were motivated by the same weight of personal responsibility. Where they differed was in their perception of the threat facing Canada, and of how best to deal with it.

In the House of Commons that afternoon, the government did not apparently deem it wise or necessary to announce that it had ordered Canadian NORAD forces to go to alert.<sup>74</sup> It was quite evasive in answering questions from the opposition. In response to a query by Paul Hellyer concerning the state of Canadian military preparedness, Harkness offered only that Cabinet had "...taken certain precautionary measures which will have the effect of improving the capability of the armed forces to respond to any situation that may exist."<sup>75</sup> When pressed on the nature of such measures, the Minister of Defence replied: "I do not think, Mr. Speaker, it would serve the public interest or that it would be a good thing at this time to follow the course of action suggested by

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<sup>72</sup> Ghent, "Canada, the United States," 177.

<sup>73</sup> Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 128. H. Basil Robinson suggests, however, that Diefenbaker "had a pretty good idea of what was going on and preferred to let it happen in a less than formal way. Not much escaped the Diefenbaker antennae." H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 288.

<sup>74</sup> According to Lyon, when the Prime Minister gave Harkness permission to alert Canada's NORAD forces, he "...insisted... that there be no announcement until he could make one in the House the following afternoon." Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 45.

<sup>75</sup> *Debates*, 24 October, 1962, 884.

the hon. member."<sup>76</sup> Diefenbaker, too, refrained from answering questions concerning steps taken to improve defence readiness:

Mr. Speaker, I think this answer will apply to various questions that I know occur to hon. gentlemen at this time and which they have refrained from asking. I think that in these hours and days of international sensitivity all of us will endeavour to exercise a restraint in asking questions which under normal circumstances would be appropriate but which at this time might be considered as provocative and fear-producing.<sup>77</sup>

By all indications, the government was still being careful to avoid both provoking the Soviet Union, and unduly alarming the Canadian public. Most notably, it had yet to give any sign of whether it supported Kennedy's measures. Diefenbaker and Green still believed that a pro-Canadian, independent stance was the most appropriate position for their government to take. Certainly, in the interview with DePoe and Lynch later that evening, Green made no effort to offer forthright endorsement of the quarantine measures. For his part, the Prime Minister was quite happy with Green's performance, phoning to congratulate him after the interview.<sup>78</sup> Circumstances were changing, however, and would soon force the government to rethink its position on the American action.

As one Canadian official has since put it: "...the real lesson [of the crisis] was that when the US President chooses to psychologically mobilize the American people...the Canadian people will be drawn up in the process also."<sup>79</sup> Indeed, President Kennedy's televised address did reach Canadians, and it had a most profound effect on their perceptions of the situation.<sup>80</sup> Undeniably, the President's speech served to instill the fear that Canada was under imminent and direct threat from the missiles in Cuba, and that the West was at that very moment confronted with the preliminary stages of Soviet aggression. Thus, for many

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Reford, *Canada*, 194.

<sup>79</sup> As quoted in J.L. Granatstein, and Norman Hillmer, *For Better or For Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1991), 206.

<sup>80</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World*, 294.

Canadians, including much of the press, it was unthinkable that their government was not standing firm with its ally in such a time of uncertainty. On November 8, the national vice-president of the Progressive Conservative party, George Hogan, would give voice to their complaint:

There is a time to stand up to the Americans, and there is a time to stand by them; and I suggest that when the security of the North American Continent is menaced by the threat of nuclear attack, that is a time to stand by the Americans, clearly, swiftly, and unequivocally.<sup>61</sup>

By Thursday, October 25, it was obvious that the government's refusal to endorse the American quarantine measures was noticeably out of touch with both Canadian and world opinion. In Britain, Prime Minister Macmillan had announced his government's unequivocal support for the American position, and had wired to Diefenbaker a telegram "...emphasizing the need for America to act firmly if confidence in American support was to be maintained among her allies."<sup>62</sup> France, the night before, had announced its "...firm support for the American arms blockade."<sup>63</sup> West Germany, too, had earlier endorsed Kennedy's quarantine without reservations. Thus, among the United States' major western allies, Canadian support was increasingly conspicuous by its absence.

At home, Green's performance on the CBC interview with DePoe and Lynch was widely criticized, in and out of the Conservative party.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 463. See also "Testing Time," *Winnipeg Free Press*, (October 23, 1962). Of course, much of the hue and cry after the crisis was undeniably partisan. "It seemed clear (particularly now that the crisis was over, there had been no war, and Premier Khrushchev had backed down) that public opinion strongly supported President Kennedy's action." John Warnock, *Partner to Behemoth: The Military Policy of a Satellite Canada* (Toronto: New Press, 1970), 175.

<sup>62</sup> Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973), 205; Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*, 200.

<sup>63</sup> "Paris Backs US," *Winnipeg Free Press*, (October 25, 1962). While France immediately recognized Kennedy's right to meet the threat to America in whatever manner he deemed necessary, it did not initially endorse the quarantine measures. Moreover, because it was not consulted, the French government made it known that France would not become involved in a localized war between the US and Cuba. "Lack of Talks Annoy Paris," *New York Times*, (October 24, 1962).

<sup>64</sup> Nicholson, *Vision and Indecision*, 167; Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker*, 200-201.

Following the broadcast, Prime Minister Diefenbaker received several telegrams decrying both the interview and his government's apparent vacillation.<sup>85</sup> On Thursday, the morning press was overwhelmingly in favour of Kennedy's stance against the Soviets, and offered little support for independent Canadian action.<sup>86</sup> Topping things off, the Liberals had come out in public support of President Kennedy and his quarantine measures. Faced with pressure from Robert Bryce,<sup>87</sup> External Affairs, and several indignant Cabinet members, Diefenbaker decided "...that there was need to clarify the government's stance for the sake of understanding in his caucus, among the Canadian public, and in Washington."<sup>88</sup> More specifically, he realized that, given the enormous public support in Canada for the President's measures, he had to offer unequivocal endorsement for Kennedy's stance against communist aggression.<sup>89</sup> With the crisis having progressed to a stage where he could no longer hope to exert any influence, further delay would bring no result other than political debacle. Backing the Americans was now the entirely appropriate course of action.

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<sup>85</sup> One telegram, from the Drumheller Young Progressive Conservative Association, read as follows: "Canada has chosen to be one of the few leading nations of the western world who has failed to take an immediate and strong stand in support of our American allies on their current and vital Cuban action. Our suggested neutral inspection mission is an indecisive and impractical proposal which is unworthy of Canada and is an insult to President Kennedy, the American People, and the Free World." DCCA, MGO1/VI/8859.2 #425284. Another telegram said: "After having seen tonight's television appearance of your repeat your foreign minister with DePoe and Lynch I as a Canadian must protest to the inept and inaccurate and truly evasive and unCanadian attitude taken by Green. We as Canadians must take a definite step and back the United States in their action against the Communists...." DCCA, MGO1/VI/8859.2 #424836. Deane Finlayson, leader of the B.C. Progressive Conservative Party, phoned the PMO to register his dissatisfaction with the government's performance. DCCA MGO1/VI/vol. 173.

<sup>86</sup> "Canada's Press Views US Move," *Globe & Mail*, (October 25, 1962).

<sup>87</sup> Bryce was the clerk of the Privy Council and the secretary to Cabinet. An extremely able individual, Bryce won Diefenbaker's confidence, and became one of the Prime Minister's more trusted advisors. See Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 249.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, *Rogue Tory*, 461. See also Reford, *Canada*, 194.

<sup>89</sup> *Cabinet Conclusions*, 25 October, 1962, 16. In Cabinet that morning, the following points were raised: "It was for consideration whether Canada's position with respect to the US action was clear to the public. There had been discussion on television and the Prime Minister had made a statement in the House, but the public did not appear to be sure whether Canada fully supported the US action or whether it was neutral. This situation should be corrected. ...The Cabinet agreed that the Prime Minister should make a statement in the House later that day outlining what steps Canada had taken already and clarifying Canada's stand in support of the US action."

That afternoon, the Prime Minister spoke at length to the House of Commons. He acknowledged "...the direct and immediate menace to Canada" posed by the missiles, and announced his government's intention to "...support the United States and [its] other allies in this situation."<sup>90</sup> Reiterating that he was informed of the crisis only hours before Kennedy's broadcast, Diefenbaker justified his government's initial hesitation:

It has been necessary and will always remain necessary to weigh the risks both of action and inaction in such circumstances. I need not refer to the record of Canada in two world wars, in the NATO alliance, and in Korea as demonstrating the fact that Canadians stand by their allies and their undertakings, and we intend to do the same. On the other hand, we shall not fail to do everything possible to seek solutions to these problems without war. We shall avoid provocative action. Our purpose will be to do everything to reduce tension.<sup>91</sup>

He went on to outline the steps which had been taken to ensure Canadian safety. Before concluding his address, however, Diefenbaker offered comment on the motives and legality of the American stance:

There is a debate going on throughout the world regarding the legality of the quarantine measures which the United States has imposed. To my mind such arguments are largely sterile and irrelevant. We have a situation to face. Legalistic arguments, whatever they may be, cannot erase the fact that the Soviet Union has posed a new and immediate threat to the security not only of the United States but of Canada as well.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, Diefenbaker resolutely condemned Khrushchev's reckless and provocative attempt to secretly upset the nuclear balance, adding that "...we in Canada have shown responsibility in this connection in order to avoid the proliferation of these dangerous weapons throughout the world."<sup>93</sup> The Canadian government was now on-side.

Looking back at the events of October 22-25, Pierre Sévigny commented:

it would be unfair to say that John Diefenbaker deliberately acted in a way to prejudice the cause of world peace...But he did misjudge the seriousness of the situation, and he miscalculated the absolute determination of his followers to stand side by side

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<sup>90</sup> *Debates*, 25 October, 1962, 911-912.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 912.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 913.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

with their American neighbors in a combined effort to halt Communist aggression in the many continents of the world.<sup>94</sup>

As the former Associate Minister of Defence acknowledged, the Diefenbaker government certainly did not want to jeopardize the prospects for a peaceful solution to the crisis. Everyone in Cabinet was motivated by an overriding personal obligation to safeguard the security and well-being of the Canadian people. However, there was a serious split in opinion as to how this responsibility would best be discharged. Initially, the viewpoint put forward by Diefenbaker and Green prevailed, and the decision was made to wait and to watch events develop further. But the general population, as well as many Ministers, perceived a more imminent threat to national security than did the Prime Minister and his supporters within Cabinet. Thus, there emerged a significant divergence of opinion between the government and the public, which advocated offering immediate and unwavering support to the Americans in defending "...the vital interest of the western hemisphere."<sup>95</sup> Eventually, faced with rising international tension stemming from the implementation of the blockade, and the concomitant increase in American military vigilance, Diefenbaker could no longer justify a non-alert, and he acceded to Harkness' demands to mobilize the NORAD component of Canadian forces. It took the Prime Minister another day to realize, however, that an independent Canadian stand on the crisis was not a politically viable position for his government to pursue, and to offer his government's endorsement of Kennedy's measures.

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<sup>94</sup> Sévigny, *This Game*, 253.

<sup>95</sup> "Newspaper Editorial Opinion Split on Cuba Blockade," *Ottawa Citizen*, (October 24, 1962).

### CONCLUSION

In explaining the Canadian response to the October crisis, most analysts have focused, quite justifiably, on Prime Minister Diefenbaker and his personal impact on the decision-making process. After all, it was he who was at the apex of the political hierarchy in Canada, exercising considerable sway over his Cabinet colleagues. Undeniably, his predilections were crucial factors in determining how Canada would react to Kennedy's quarantine measures. Most accounts, too, have focused on Harkness and Green -- the two other individuals in Cabinet who played a strong role in policy-making during the crisis. As the respective Ministers for Defence and External Affairs, their personal views had an appreciable affect as well on the position adopted by the Canadian government. Indeed, insofar as they were the key decision-makers, this thesis does not contest that Diefenbaker, Green, and Harkness, and others in Cabinet, should figure prominently in any explanation of the governmental reaction to the crisis. Unfortunately, consistent with the statist tradition in Canadian foreign policy analysis, insufficient attention has been given to the socio-political context of the crisis, resulting in an oversimplified interpretation of the motives driving the Prime Minister and his colleagues. Important questions have been left unanswered by the existing literature on Canada's response to the Cuban crisis: What societal issues were engaged by Kennedy's quarantine measures? Were Diefenbaker, Harkness and Green just anomalous individuals acting purely according to personal preferences? To what extent did their perceptions of these issues buttress or weaken their individual inclinations towards action? When examining ordinary foreign policy activity, these questions are significant; when exploring crisis foreign policy decision-making, they are markedly so.

Using the theoretical perspective put forward by Patrick Stuart Robinson, this thesis has attempted to answer these questions, and in so

doing, inject some sense of balance back into the treatment of Canada's reaction to the Cuban missile crisis. It does not dispute that Diefenbaker's habit of postponing decisions, and his dislike of President Kennedy were major contributing factors behind Canadian hesitation to endorse the American measures. But it does suggest that important societal issues were engaged by the crisis, and appreciably affected the decision-making process during the long days of October 22-25. Specifically, it has shown that Diefenbaker and his Ministers were motivated primarily by considerations of their personal responsibility to safeguard and promote national well-being. This was equally the case in the initial hesitation to go to alert, in Diefenbaker's United Nations proposal, and in the later decision to mobilize Canada's navy and NORAD forces. At the same time, this thesis has shown that other priorities also affected decision-making during the crisis. Most certainly, Diefenbaker was driven by considerations of appropriateness when he called for an independent UN inspection team. Similarly, he, Green, and others in Cabinet were influenced by the rising tide of Canadian nationalism when they attempted to articulate a pro-Canadian independent position. Undeniably, too, Diefenbaker's eventual decision to offer unequivocal endorsement of the American position was a direct result of the ground swell of support in Canada for Kennedy's quarantine measures.

Having re-examined the Cuban missile crisis using an analytical perspective which highlights the socio-political dimension of foreign policy decision-making, a number of general points warrant comment. First and foremost, when using a framework such as that put forward by Robinson, it is necessary to remember that societal influence on the decision-making process arises out of the perceptions of its key actors. As Denis Stairs observes, "...the pressure of constituent opinions - or at least what are *perceived* as constituent opinions - will clearly limit

a policy-maker's practical freedom of maneuver."<sup>1</sup> Without a doubt, the Diefenbaker government's reaction to the events of October 1962 was greatly influenced by how it understood the crisis and its relevance to Canadian society. The eventual decision to support the American position, for example, was a direct result of changing perceptions of what the appropriate action was during the crisis -- by Thursday morning, Diefenbaker realized that further hesitation would be political suicide. He had come to find his 'practical freedom of maneuver' to be quite limited.

Second, societies are not closed environments. Just as the sovereign state is found only in abstraction, the sovereign society does not exist outside the realm of the ideal. Like states, societies are subject to considerable outside influences. Certainly, Canadian society during the late 1950s and early 1960s was no exception. During the Cuban crisis, American television, radio, and print permeated Canada, and contributed, in large part, to the strong public endorsement of Kennedy's hard line against the communists. Undeniably, Canadians were profoundly affected by President Kennedy's efforts to mobilize American sentiment in support for his quarantine measures, and any account of societal impact on the Cuban missile crisis must necessarily recognize this fact.

Third, advances in education and communications technology have increased the significance of considerations of appropriateness in the foreign policy decision-making process. Not only have Canada's external relations become more accessible to the general public, they have become more relevant on a personal level -- Canadians have come to develop a keen appreciation of how foreign policy affects their daily lives. Consequently, policy-makers have experienced a growing "sense of

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<sup>1</sup> Denis Stairs, "Public Opinion and External Affairs: Reflections on the 'Domestication' of Canadian Foreign Policy," *International Journal* XXXIII, no. 1 (Winter 1977-78), 132.

confinement" in determining foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, cognizant of the rising importance of foreign policy to Canadian society, politicians have often found it "...profitable to convert this increased popular attention into political power."<sup>3</sup> Diefenbaker, most certainly, was one such leader. Any account of foreign policy decision-making during his tenure as Prime Minister must reflect his acute sensitivity to the domestic political ramifications of external policy.

In closing, this thesis has served not only to supplement the existing literature on the Cuban missile crisis, but to illustrate the significance of society to foreign policy decision-making. Importantly, this case study has sought to demonstrate that the statist perspective of external affairs can sometimes contribute to an incomplete understanding of Canada's external relations. Foreign policy, one must remember, is best understood as "the extension abroad of national politics."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* "The [foreign policy] success of the 1940s and early 1950s, however, lay equally in the extent to which the general public, which was relatively uninformed about particular international issues, gave Canadian diplomats broad parameters in which to operate.... In the 1960s, however, this freedom vanished, as the model of public opinion formation which policy-makers effectively used in the golden age proved inadequate as a guide." Robert Bothwell and John English, "The View From Inside Out: Canadian Diplomats and Their Public," *International Journal* XXXIX, no. 1 (Winter 1983-84), 65.

<sup>3</sup> Franklyn Griffiths, "Opening up the Policy Process," in Stephen Clarkson, ed., *An Independent Foreign Policy for Canada?* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1968), 116.

<sup>4</sup> The 1970 White Paper on Canadian external relations defined foreign policy as "...the extension abroad of national policies." The Government of Canada, *Foreign Policy for Canadians* (Ottawa: Queen's Publisher for Canada, 1970), 9.

## APPENDIX I

### CHRONOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

- 14 Oct.      U2 photographs MRBM sites in western Cuba
- 15 Oct.      RCN/RCAF exercise (OTT4/62) scheduled for 15-24 Oct.  
cancelled due to weather, ships remain at sea close to  
Halifax.
- 16 Oct.      Kennedy informed of missiles. ExComm is formed.  
Khrushchev claims no Soviet offensive weapons in Cuba.  
Diefenbaker is asked in House of Commons if Cuba and Berlin  
issues have been referred to the UN. He denies the linkage.
- 17 Oct.      28 missile launch pads found in Cuba, many considered to be  
operational within a week.  
In the House of Commons, Lester Pearson and other opposition  
members ask if there will be any change in the position on  
nuclear warhead policy. Other defence policy questions  
asked.  
USN Admirals Taylor and Koch arrive in Halifax for  
operational discussions of "an urgent nature." Pacific fleet  
exercise CRABPOT ends but ships kept at sea in local areas  
for ASW exercises in response to concern over situation.
- 18 Oct.      USN and USAF begin relocating fighter aircraft. US agencies  
shorten warning time to 18 hours.  
Kennedy meets with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and  
Ambassador Dobrynin.  
Members of opposition (Hellyer and Berger) tackle  
Diefenbaker in House of Commons on nuclear weapons policy.  
Possible Soviet submarine contact detected some 300 miles  
(NM) southeast of Halifax, tracked by RCAF Argus and USN P2V  
until 20/21 Oct. (Designated B-27)

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<sup>1</sup> As excerpted from Peter Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 226-234.

- 19 Oct. Kennedy discusses crisis with JCS who recommend air strike on Cuba.  
 Opposition continue to ask questions in House of Commons on Cuban trade policy. Diefenbaker answers that the policy is under review "in light of recent events."  
 USN P2Vs join hunt for B-27. RCAF P2V from Comox on special surveillance task in Gulf of Alaska - recovered in Kodiak.
- 20 Oct. JCS alerts US military commands, worldwide, that crisis is imminent. US base in Guantanamo reinforced. USN units (INDEPENDENCE TG and ENTERPRISE) deploy to blockade area.
- 21 Oct. Decision to blockade Cuba made and announced to government officials, but media asked to withhold publication of speculative articles, yet New York Times has many such articles.  
 US Ambassadors Acheson and Dowling leave for Europe to brief NATO and heads of state. Kennedy sends Macmillan a personal telegram.  
 CINCLANTFLT issues "Quarantine Op Order." Soviet motor vessel "TEREK" detected in western Atlantic with possible submarine alongside.  
 Diefenbaker informed by telephone that Ambassador Livingston Merchant coming to Ottawa to brief him on crisis.
- 22 Oct. International Events:  
 US media speculates on impending crisis, reporting troop and aircraft movements.  
 NATO and allied leaders briefed by US ambassadors.  
 Kennedy speaks to the nation and the world at 1900.
- Canada:  
 Diefenbaker, Harkness (MND) and Green (SSEA) briefed by Ambassador Livingston Merchant at 1545 after being officially advised at 1000 that Merchant will be coming.  
 In the House that afternoon, opposition members ask question on nuclear overflights and on Canadian use of nuclear weapons; the answers [are] vague.  
 Diefenbaker speaks to Parliament at 2000.

22 Oct. After US forces placed on DEFCON 3 following Kennedy's speech, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff, Air Marshall Miller, goes to Harkness at 1900 to discuss Cdn military responses. Harkness agrees to initial preparations, but Diefenbaker declines to put Canadian air force units on similar status. Military staffs in Ottawa begin reviewing plans. CINCNORAD requests permission to arm USAF squadrons in Canada with nuclear weapons, to deploy USAF aircraft to Canadian bases, and for the RCAF to go to DEFCON 3. Canadian Atlantic fleet exercises are stopped that evening and ships return to Halifax to store for war. On west coast, RCAF P2V on special patrols "OYSTER" and "BARRACUDA" with two aircraft on task, while ships remain at sea.

23 Oct. International Events:

White House announces Proclamation on blockade to start at 1400 on 24 Oct., for "the interdiction of the delivery of offensive weapons to Cuba."

US Secretary of State Dean Rusk briefs OAS which then adopts US resolution condemning Cuba. OAS promises support to US and approves a resolution calling for the immediate dismantling and withdrawal from Cuba of all offensive missiles and other weapons, recommending individual and collective action including the use of force, and to inform the UN which should send observers as soon as possible.

USSR denounces the blockade as an "act of piracy" and an "unheard-of violation of international law," accuses the United States of "taking a step towards unleashing a thermo-nuclear world war" and reaffirms that the Soviet arms deliveries to Cuba are purely for defensive reasons. Leave cancelled for Soviet forces. Castro also denounces US actions.

UN Security Council meets at 1600 in an emergency session to consider US resolution.

NATO discreetly increases military readiness rather than mobilizing as request by Washington.

US SECDEF holds press conference to explain concept of operations. Canadian and other military attachés briefed on concept of operations.

23 Oct.

Canada:

Harkness and Chiefs of Staff meet at 1900 to discuss alert measures and response. Cabinet meets at 1000 and discusses Canadian military alert without reaching a conclusion. Canadian forces not put on formal alert, but several measures taken to increase national readiness. Harkness later orders COS to put forces on alert discreetly. Diefenbaker states in House that the Americans have failed to consult Canada properly and that his government has insufficient information upon which to act. He then makes short amplifying statement without supporting Kennedy. This draws much criticism including *New York Times* editorial comment: "It is worth noting, however, that neither the Prime Minister nor the Opposition Leaders said anything suggesting that Canada cut off her trade with Cuba or join any possible blockade or military action that might follow." Submarine ALDERNEY (on loan from RN) sails before first light for ASW Barrier position. Another possible submarine contact (designated B-28) detected that afternoon; two RCAF Argus put on surveillance. Atlantic fleet continues discreet preparations for emergency operations. Pacific fleet remains at sea.

24 Oct.

International Events:

Blockade of Cuba goes into force at 1000. Twenty-five communist-bloc ships believed to be bound for Cuba. Also, three Soviet submarines known to be in North Atlantic and probably bound for Cuba. US government releases photographs of missile sites in Cuba. Seventeen USN VP aircraft (P2V) and 10 USN submarines deployed for ASW barrier south of Grand Banks.

In the UN, intense "behind-the-scenes" activity by "uncommitted" countries to find a compromise. U Thant, in response to a plea from the seven-member committee representing those countries, sends identical letters to Kennedy and Khrushchev suggesting a truce for two or three weeks for negotiation during which the arms shipments and the quarantine should be suspended.

24 Oct. In Moscow, Khrushchev replies to message from Bertram Russell telling him that the Soviets would do everything in their power to prevent war from breaking out. Several OAS countries offer military support to the US.

Canada:

Cabinet meets at 1030, but Diefenbaker still does not put military on alert. Various other measures adopted to increase preparedness. At 1149 Federal Warning Centre informs RCAF Ops Centre that SAC went to DEFCON 2 at 1025 that morning. Harkness goes to the PM again after the Cabinet meeting and alert finally authorized. That afternoon, PM speaks in House but still does not openly support US, nor does he advise members of military measures taken. Howard Green interviewed on TV in controversial session.

RCN Atlantic Command and Maritime Air Group authorized to increase state of readiness to equivalent to DEFCON 3. The Chief of the Air Staff informs CINCNORAD at 1320 that RCAF would go to DEFCON 3. CINCNORAD places all NORAD regions on DEFCON 3C at 1334. Military staffs in Ottawa meet throughout the day to examine military preparations.

Ships out of Canadian areas recalled. Atlantic fleet begins to prepare for war at 1030. Surveillance of Soviet fishing vessels and off-shore area increased. Exercise BEAGLE II cancelled because USN forces withdrawn.

A Czech aircraft lands at Gander at 1817 en route to Cuba and departs at 2017 after being searched.

Canadian press contains several reports opposing US action, but most Canadians appear to support the Americans.

25 Oct. International Events:

Kennedy and Khrushchev reply to U Thants's message, essentially agreeing to open negotiations. Kennedy, however, establishes the removal of the weapons from Cuba as the key to finding a solution. The UN Security Council unable to make progress due to refusal of Soviet Ambassador to be specific about the weapons shipped to Cuba.

25 Oct.      Pentagon briefs Canadian military attachés. Comments made on lack of Canadian support for US actions. Some Soviet vessels turn back from blockade zone.  
In London, Macmillan gives public support to Kennedy and sends telegram to Diefenbaker requesting he do likewise.

Canada:

Cabinet Defence Committee briefed by Chiefs of Staff in morning.

Diefenbaker makes long statement in the House that afternoon supporting the Americans and giving details of actions taken by Canada. Green challenged by Paul Martin on his TV interview, particularly where Green dodges the questions and further probes and avoids having to admit his own lack of understanding of the NORAD system. Hellyer asks if the BOMARCs have been armed and is told that they have not been. Military headquarters staffs in Ottawa meet to examine measures to increase readiness and discuss NATO/US requests for additional support. Operational commands more active. All Atlantic fleet ships at immediate notice for sea and ready for immediate operations. One escort groups sails that evening for surveillance operations in vicinity of possible Soviet submarine. Pacific fleet task group (2nd Squadron) diverts to assist USN prosecuting possible Soviet submarine contact.

Wide coverage of events in Canadian media reporting on statements by Diefenbaker and Green and on the argument between Harkness and Hellyer. *Globe and Mail* editorial scolds Kennedy for ignoring the consultative machinery of NATO.

26 Oct.      International Events:

The crisis deepens. Kennedy claims Soviets continuing to establish missile sites and unwilling to stop work or dismantle them.

USN intercepts first ship.

British continue to express concern over status of UK ships trading with Cuba.

26 Oct. U Thant sends another message to Khrushchev after discussions with US and Soviet Ambassadors, and sends second message to Kennedy. His aim is to prevent a confrontation at sea that might lead to war. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev reply immediately. Khrushchev sends separate message to Kennedy.

Canada:

Only passing mention of crisis made in House. Atlantic fleet continues to deploy for surveillance operations and to disperse to secondary ports in case of surprise attack. Additional ships made ready for operations. Pacific fleet also remains at sea but at lower level of activity.

Canadian media contains wide round-up of public opinion on crisis and repeats criticism in Canada and the United States of Diefenbaker's tardy response. A *Globe and Mail* article links the crisis to the nuclear weapons issue while another claims that "Sources outside the House interpreted these remarks as an indication that Canada does not intend, in this current crisis, to give Canadian troops at home or abroad nuclear warheads for their weapons." The *Globe and Mail* editorial supports Diefenbaker and agrees that the full scope of emergency plans should be kept secret in order not to "make the threat appear even more serious than it is."

27 Oct. International Events:

Khrushchev sends second letter to Kennedy proposing way of resolving crisis. Kennedy replies to Khrushchev's first letter, reaffirming requirement to stop work on the missile sites as the first step in resolving the crisis. The White House also claims the Soviets have made several inconsistent and conflicting proposals while work still continues on the missile sites.

A U2 surveillance aircraft is shot down over Cuba. Soviet submarine count in Western Atlantic continues to rise. US increases requirement for open ocean surveillance. COMASWFORANT requests Canada take over Quonset ASW area. Consideration also given to moving ASW barrier north to Greenland-Iceland-UK Gap.

- 27 Oct.      Canada:  
 Canadian military remains on alert, conducting surveillance and confirming identity of new contacts. RCAF patrol aircraft assigned to USN ASW barrier.  
 With the level of tension declining Canadian media begins closer scrutiny of political and military response to crisis, partly in context of uncertain Tory defence policy.
- 28 Oct.      International Events:  
 In a third letter to Kennedy, Khrushchev states he has given orders for work to stop on the missile sites and for the dismantling of the missiles. Kennedy accepts proposals. US suspends blockade but keeps ships on station.
- Canada:  
 Naval and RCAF forces continue surveillance with ships not at sea remaining in their dispersal areas. RCAF Air Defence Command remains on alert.  
 USN establishes SUBAIR barrier across approach routes to North American waters.
- 29 Oct.      UN attempts to organize verification procedures for removal of missiles from Cuba. Castro balks, claiming he was not consulted in the deal made between Kennedy and Khrushchev. Statements by Diefenbaker and party leaders on end of crisis. Opposition questioning returns to nuclear weapons. Military staffs in Ottawa discuss future operational requirements. Atlantic fleet continues to analyze and criticize government response to crisis.

## APPENDIX II

### THE FIVE PHASES OF CANADIAN MILITARY PREPAREDNESS<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a "discreet" phase of **Military Vigilance** that increased the military readiness for operations without causing undue civilian concern (the Minister [of Defence] normally had authority to declare this phase without direct reference to cabinet);
- (2) a "ready" phase of **Military Vigilance** prepared the forces for deployment and to intensify security and surveillance operations (at this stage, public knowledge of an impending crisis was unavoidable);
- (3) a **Simple Alert** was declared only when there was credible indication that NATO was about to be attacked or "on the existence of international tension anywhere in the world on a scale that might have serious consequences to Canada";
- (4) a **Reinforced Alert** was ordered only when there was "conclusive indications that the outbreak of hostilities is imminent"; and
- (5) a **General Alert** was declared only when "an act of overt aggression takes place in the NATO area, or in any area where the consequences would affect Canada in the same way as an attack on Canada."

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<sup>1</sup> Reproduced from Peter Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), 94-95.

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<sup>1</sup> All newspaper and magazine articles are taken from this series.

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