

“Deterrence”

Prisoners of Reason

*Game Theory and Neoliberal
Political Economy*

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To András Rátónyi

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Deterrence

Rational deterrence is a highly influential social science theory. Not only has it dominated postwar academic thinking on strategic affairs, but it has provided the intellectual framework of Western military policy in the same period as well. The theory's success drives largely from its clearheaded logic, which is as persuasive as it is elegant.

The power of rational deterrence theory is conceptual, not mathematical. It derives from the underlying logical cohesion and consistency with a set of simple first principles, not from the particular language in which it is expressed. In consequence, the model has been astonishingly fecund, both for theory and policy.

No other theoretical perspective has had nearly the impact on American foreign policy . . . Far from being an abstract, deductivistic theory developed in a policy vacuum, rational deterrence theory has repeatedly taken inspiration from the most pressing policy questions of the day, from decision of bomber-basing in the 1950s to SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative] in the 1980s. It has set the terms of the debate, and has often influenced the outcome.

Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, 1989¹

So far we have seen that strategic rationality, which endorses the logic of consequences, accepts an underlying philosophical realism about value in the form of interpersonally transferable utility, and rejects joint maximization, seemed tailor made to address the as yet counterfactual hecatomb of waging

¹ Christopher Achen and Duncan Snidal, "Rational Deterrence Theory: Comparative Case Studies," *World Politics* (1989) 41:2, quotes at 143, 153, 164. Achen and Snidal argue that rational deterrence theory supports escalation equivalence. Robert Jervis makes the same point, associating "deterrence by denial" with the views of the proponents of nuclear utilization targeting strategy who include Albert Wohlstetter, Colin Gray, and Herman Kahn," in "Security Studies: Ideas, Policy, and Politics," in *The Evolution of Political Knowledge: Democracy, Autonomy, and Conflict in Comparative and International Politics*, ed. by Edward D. Mansfield and Richard Sisson (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), 100-126, at 115.

nuclear war.² Thomas Schelling had sought to defend mutual assured destruction (MAD), reminiscent of reciprocal security under classical liberalism, by modeling a high-stakes nuclear security standoff with the recalcitrant Prisoner's Dilemma game. Given the existential reality of assured destruction in a nuclear war among superpowers, and the shared goal of avoiding Armageddon, by all counts MAD should have won the theoretical security debate and prevailed over US nuclear strategy.

Yet, with hindsight, observers may now be tempted to conclude both that the nuclear security debate vindicated nuclear utilization targeting selection (NUTS) theoretically and helped the United States win the Cold War in practice. Readers may thus wonder, "Why revisit the nuclear security debate, especially given the successful denouement of the superpower standoff?" The choice of adopting orthodox game theory as the exhaustive statement of coherent action necessarily pronounces escalation dominance logically superior to reciprocal deterrence, despite the fact that maintaining nuclear ascendance over another superpower is impossible. Opting for a policy of disproportional deterrence instead of mutual assurance marks a clear rupture with the classical liberal resolution of a security dilemma. These implications have gone far beyond security itself into the interstices of civil society and the social contract.

This chapter follows how the least likely of US presidents to exercise national sovereignty through wielding nuclear threats, Jimmy Carter, took the biggest step by making NUTS official US strategic policy in his Presidential Direction 59 in 1980.³ Against the grain of his initial commitment to deescalate the Cold War arms race at least maintaining minimum deterrence consistent with assured destruction and possibly even through progressive disarmament, Carter left office having signed into effect the US preparedness to wage and prevail in prolonged nuclear conflict. Carter's presidency culminated the consequential and yet widely unknown MAD vs. NUTS debate. In brief, Thomas Schelling had used game theory to defend the posture of mutual assured destruction by first assuming that both the United States and the USSR sought peaceful coexistence rather than strategic dominance. However, given the high stakes of nuclear confrontation and the uncertainties regarding the other's intentions, Schelling concluded that the nuclear security dilemma is most accurately modeled by the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD) game instead of an assurance game. He presented a solution of minimal deterrence through each side maintaining secure second-strike capability to mount a devastating counterattack. He established the PD logic that normalized that security seekers most prefer to sucker others because in the Prisoner's Dilemma, every actor will defect even if the other actor cooperates. Furthermore, he initiated the familiar PD pedagogy suggesting that self-defense warrants the pursuit of ascendance and coercive

² Neal J. Roese and James M. Olson, *What Might Have Been: The Social Psychology of Counterfactual Thinking* (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995).

³ PD 59 is available as RAC Project number NLC-132-23-8-29 and NLC-12-37-4-8-6 at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCPL).

bargaining. However, as this chapter argues, Schelling's defense of MAD necessarily failed because of the logical structure of strategic rationality. From within the paradigm of rational deterrence, the only means of resolving the paradoxical Prisoner's Dilemma of mutual mishap was to move away from assuring peace for peace and war for war to a posture of deterrence through demonstrating the intention and capability to prevail in military conflict at all levels including even prolonged nuclear war.

This chapter focuses on the nuclear security dilemma that offered the initial proving ground for game theory. Theorists viewed the Prisoner's Dilemma game as analytically equivalent to the paradox of nuclear deterrence: in both cases, the intractable paradox resides in promising an action that, at the time of its enactment, violates instrumental rationality because at that moment of causal intervention, the action has no power to realize the protagonist's preferences. In the case of nuclear deterrence, mutual assured destruction relies on a promise to destroy the other nation once deterrence has already failed, and no purpose could be served other than to murder countless innocent civilians. In the case of the Prisoner's Dilemma, given that both actors most prefer an outcome of unilateral defection, even in view of any commitment to carry through on an agreement made, once the other agent cooperates, the protagonist has no reason to likewise cooperate.

This chapter makes clear the parallel structure of MAD and the PD arises if actors concede that strategic rationality, which upholds consequentialist logic, expected utility theory, and individualistic maximization, necessarily governs all coherent choice. We can understand nuclear strategists' concern to address the toughest case of national security, and hence their tendency toward accepting a *realpolitik* approach to international relations. This chapter analyzes the logical basis for ignoring the factual reality of mutual assured destruction in favor of pursuing security through adopting a nuclear war fighting posture. Thoroughly understanding how strategic rationality inevitably sustains the counterfactual NUTS approach to deterrence through demonstrating the capability and intention to wage nuclear war is important in itself.⁴ Moreover, this exercise further helps us confront the implications of extending the domain of strategic rationality beyond nuclear politics into social contract theory. The result has been social scientists' inadvertent embrace of strategic combat as the basis for organization at all levels of interaction throughout the interstices of civil society, markets, and governance. Rather than exit a state of nature, strategic rationality views all social and civilizational order to be built up from acts of individual choice to secure fungible gain irrespective of its repercussions for other actors. This envisioned social order, consistent with orthodox game theory, reflects nuclearized sovereignty. The commitment problem

⁴ For illuminating discussion of how a war fought with 100 or 1000 nuclear weapons would likely be indistinguishable, and how one nuclear weapon alone could alter the significance direction and purpose of all the rest, see Daniel Volmar, PhD dissertation, "Command and Control," Harvard University, work in progress.

defying the credibility of exercising an immoral deterrent threat of mass destruction came to challenge the coherence of moral promises and agreements once theorists accepted the all-encompassing reach of strategic rationality. Hence, whereas game theory relies on the logic of consequences, single criterion valuation, and individualistic maximization to be operationalized, extending this method to all types of relationships and interactions entails stripping them of any type of significance or coherence not susceptible to expected utility theory and individualistic choice despite others.

This chapter first discusses the 1970s US nuclear strategy and James R. Schlesinger's long-term role in securing escalation dominance and flexible response. The next section follows President Carter's conversion from initially pursuing disarmament to finally leaving office having fully embraced his Presidential Direction 59 (PD 59), which placed the United States on a nuclear war-fighting stance.⁵ The third section examines Carter's security dilemma, which uniquely issued from his scrupulous moral countenance: no one could believe him possible of presiding over the massive nuclear retaliation on which the deterrent posture of MAD relied. The fourth section discusses the counsel available to Carter in the late 1970s from moral philosophers, who began analyzing the nuclear security dilemma through the lens of rational decision theory. This section clarifies how only NUTS could satisfactorily resolve the nuclear security dilemma once it was modeled by orthodox game theory. The fifth section explores what amounts to a tacit theoretical alliance between the offensive realist school of international relations theory and standard game theory. The concluding section relies on philosophical exposition in the early 1980s to show how the way out of the nuclear security dilemma modeled using the Prisoner's Dilemma is to clearly perceive that adopting strategic rationality as the final statement of purposive agency rules out alternative modes of action. These types of action include the logic of appropriateness and legitimacy, in addition to incommensurable domains of value and solidarity. Where deterrence relies on issuing negative sanctions, classical liberal assurance builds on mutual recognition, self-ratified norms, and voluntary compliance with agreements made.

NUTS SIGNALS THE TRIUMPH OF PRISONER'S DILEMMA LOGIC

Despite both the US and the Soviet development of sufficiently powerful nuclear weapons that could withstand a first strike by the late 1960s, and the ensuing agreement to SALT I, which resolved any trace of a Prisoner's Dilemma, military hard-liners continued to press for the replacement of assured destruction with

⁵ See memo from Fritz Ermarth to Jasper Welch and Victor Utgoff, subject "Countervailing Strategy and the Targeting Policy," March 20, 1980, and attached report "Countervailing Strategy for General War," "3/80-4/80," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library (JCPL), esp. p. 2 of 4 of the latter outlining "the credible capability of the US to wage general war of any plausible scope or duration."

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escalation dominance.⁶ Fearing the incredibility of deterrence predicated on recognizing an inherent limit on the constructive purposes of thermonuclear weapons, US leaders were not satisfied to have nuclear or conventional military parity. Rather than accept the obsolescence of large-scale war in light of the reciprocal fear of uncontrollable escalation into mutual annihilation and the increasing superfluity of perpetrating violence at other levels of engagement, the United States sought to preserve the prerogative to engage in effective armed combat at all levels of conflict. By 1980, President Carter solidified the US policy as maintaining escalation control, or escalation dominance, not just in prolonged nuclear contestation but also amid all military rivalry.

Carter's adoption of the countervailing strategy can be traced back to National Security Defense Memorandum 242 (NSDM-242), which PD 59 mentions and supersedes.⁷ This earlier document, signed by President Nixon, with James R. Schlesinger at the helm of his Department of Defense, on January 17, 1974, directed that further plans "for limited employment options which enable the United States to conduct selected nuclear operations" be developed and formally incorporated into the Single Integrated Operational Plan (SIOP). While the public debate over NSDM-242 focused on its "reemphasis" on counterforce targeting, the SIOP had, since 1962 and including the period when assured destruction became avowed US policy, already contained most of these targets. Strategists acknowledge that the novelty of the NSDM-242 lay in "the notion of targeting those Soviet assets that would be critical to Soviet postwar recovery and power."⁸ This meant that even though the pro-nuclear-use strategy seemed to win the moral upper hand by removing civilian populations from nuclear targeting, the intention was, in fact, to place these population centers on hold for ultimate extermination if warranted to undermine the Soviets' prospects of recovery.

The strategic rationale for the decision at the core of NSDM-242 not to give priority to population centers as targets was the concept of "escalation control," defined as the maintenance of "our capability to effectively withhold

⁶ Douglas P. Lackey, "The American Debate on Nuclear Weapons Policy: A Review of the Literature 1945-85," *Analyse and Kritik* 9 (1987), S. 7-46, 24-30; note that Lackey draws his conclusion even in view of MIRVs and ABMs.

⁷ Both Gregg Herken and Fred Kaplan concur that Carter's acceptance of the countervailing strategy was prefigured by and wholly consistent with the Schlesinger doctrine of flexible response underlying NSDM-242, Herken, *Counsels of War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 300; Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 384. The term "countervailing" seems to be Harold Brown's, although it is clear from the archival record that its expression of flexible response and escalation dominance was introduced by Zbigniew Brzezinski, whose team states that the term "comes from Harold's own pen"; memo from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, quote p. 4 of 5, see also p. 3, "5/80-1-81" (filed out of sequence), Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL. See the language of PD 59, NLC-12-37-4-8-6.

⁸ Desmond Ball, "The Development of the SIOP, 1960-1983," in *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, ed. by Desmond Ball and Jeffrey Richelson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 73 (both quotes).

attacks from additional hostage targets vital to enemy leaders, thus limiting the level and scope of violence by threatening subsequent destruction.”⁹ Operational planning for this new guidance meant providing the National Command Authorities (NCA) the ability to execute options in a controlled and deliberate manner, to “hold some vital enemy targets hostage to subsequent destruction,” and to control “the timing and pace of attack execution, in order to provide the enemy opportunities to consider his actions” so that “the best possible outcome” might be achieved for the United States and its allies.¹⁰ For these purposes, NSDM-242 introduced the concepts of “withholds” and “non-targets.” Centers of Soviet political leadership and control, for instance, would be withheld from destruction for the purpose of interwar deterrence and bargaining, whereas “population *per se*” had now been exempted absolutely from targeting – oddly enough, given that the definition of assured destruction rested on the ability to wipe out 33% of the Soviet Union’s population in a second strike.¹¹ The capitulation of MAD to NUTS, therefore, depended on finding the stance of reciprocal deterrence incredible because massive retaliation would be immoral and thus pointless in the case of deterrent failure. However, retaliation could be moral in case it was intended as a constructive remedy on the path to US victory. Surely, strategists concluded, the United States could increase its chances of recovering more quickly than the Soviets.

Driven by the new reality of rough strategic equality, the United States changed its formal targeting criterion for Assured Destruction from the destruction of Soviet urban-industrial centers to the prevention of the Soviet Union’s gaining any advantage from a nuclear exchange, that is, from recovering, economically or militarily, more rapidly than the United States after a nuclear war. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown later expressed in 1981, according to the logic of this new strategic plan, American strategic nuclear forces were designed to cripple the military and political power of the Soviet state, not strictly its industry and people.¹² The US military planners refused to concede a reciprocal deterrent footing with the Soviets. They openly pursued a stance of ascendancy consistent with both the Prisoner’s Dilemma model of security and the arms race and the Chicken game representation of bargaining. Even though moving the United States to a footing that accepted entering into and winning a

⁹ Senate Armed Forces Committee, Authorization for Appropriations for Fiscal Year, 1980, 1437 (cited by Ball and Richelson, eds., *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, 1986).

¹⁰ Ball, “The Development of the SIOP,” 1986, 73.

¹¹ This change in targeting policy was first announced by Secretary of Defense Elliot Richardson, who testified in April 1973: “We do not in our strategic planning target civilian population *per se*.” Quoted in Ball and Richelson, eds., *Strategic Nuclear Targeting*, 1986, 241. Of course, given the collocation of population and industry, any attack designed to cripple Soviet recovery would produce massive civilian casualties. Late Carter administration documents confirm that civilian populations remained targets; see, Memo, Harold Brown to The President, undated, “Nuclear Targeting Policy Review,” “8/78-4/79,” Box 35 (PD 59), Brzezinski Collection, JCP.

¹² Warren C. Schilling, “US Strategic Concepts in the 1970s: The Search for Sufficiently Equivalent Countervailing Parity,” *International Security* (1981), 6:2, 60, 65.

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protracted nuclear conflict drawn out over “weeks or months” was a decisive extension of the flexible response originally implemented by Schlesinger, still its logic was entailed in NSDM-242.¹³

CARTER’S CONVERSION

Carter’s presidency offers a pivotal case study of how the NUTS military stance came to win the intellectual and policy debate. Of all presidents, we would expect Carter to maintain a deterrent posture consistent with the classical liberal stance of peace for peace and war for war, defying the Prisoner’s Dilemma model of the nuclear security dilemma. In the PD model of the security dilemma, each actor assures the other of his intention to pursue dominance even if guaranteed the other’s peaceful cooperation. In his monograph *Carter’s Conversion: The Hardening of US Defense Policy*, Brian Auten investigates Carter’s transformation from being opposed to fighting the Cold War via military might to openly embracing this hard-line position.¹⁴ Auten argues that Carter’s defense team members came to appreciate the wisdom of NUTS and a combative defense policy because, over their time in office, they learned to grasp the strategic realities validating the offensive neorealist approach to international relations.¹⁵ According to Auten, Carter’s team came to comprehend the actual constellation of power dynamics and material facts comprising global security and shifted its defensive posture accordingly. Although Auten is correct that an offensive realist perspective came to dominate Carter’s White House, the source of this transformation was not factual and logical truths but rather James R. Schlesinger’s doctrine, as his flexible response, escalation control, approach is referred to.

As a seasoned chief executive officer with prior experience leading the US Department of Defense, Schlesinger had the ability get this perspective heard and implemented.¹⁶ Schlesinger’s approach has signature features consistent with strategic rationality. In 1967, he argued that the United States must assert

¹³ For discussion see Herken, *Counsels of War*, 1985, 300; Carter administration documents confirm; memo, William E. Odom to Zbigniew Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, “Draft PD on Nuclear Targeting,” 1-5 at 4, 5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

¹⁴ Brian Auten, *Carter’s Conversion: The Hardening of US Defense Policy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Most academic international relations “realism” is “neorealism” because it accepts that there are structures beyond individuals’ control that are important to understand in analyzing global affairs. The two main schools of neorealism are “offensive” and “defensive.” Throughout this chapter, I use “realism” as a shorthand designation for neorealism and modify the term by its offensive or defensive variant as required (see David A. Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Schlesinger articulated his position on RAND’s brand-name systems analysis and planning-programming-budgeting (PPB) as a means of bureaucratic administration in “Uses and Abuses of Analysis,” US Senate Memorandum, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 1968, published in *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* (1968) 10:10, 334-342; for discussion, see Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy*, 2003, 62-75.

hegemony over its allies.¹⁷ Of course he had already played the pivotal role in implementing the flexible response nuclear posture as President Nixon's secretary of defense. He advocated the single criterion means of appraising value consistent with rational choice theory and was well aware of how it departed from the constrained maximization characterizing neoclassical economic theory.¹⁸ And as a RAND analyst, he was thoroughly familiar with war-gaming simulations that applied strategic rationality in the way anticipated to guide actual decision making in time of war. The simulated war game buttressing the Carter administration's rationale for moving decisively beyond MAD to NUTS, called the "Red Integrated Strategic Offensive Plan Version-5C," stated this claim outright: "The RISOP is built on an annual basis as a hypothetical Soviet counterpart to the SIOP . . . The RISOP is not a lightly disguised version of the real thing. It is the result of an operational planning exercise in which we apply capabilities in ways in which we believe to be in their best interests."¹⁹ The memorandum putting forward the implications of this simulation demonstrates the need for a new, land-based ICBM system, states that assured destruction is equivalent to a "1914 war plan," calls for war-fighting capability in case deterrence fails, and demands crisis bargaining capability.²⁰ In preparing to engage in nuclear warfare, the simulations provided the basis for the actual strategies that would be implemented.

Archival documents reveal Schlesinger to be a key figure in Carter's administration. Corroborating the view that Schlesinger's strategic perspicacity was only possibly eclipsed by his administrative acumen, President Carter had initially hoped to appoint Schlesinger to be his incoming secretary of defense. However, he soon realized that Schlesinger would not pass muster among his more liberal cabinet nominees and advisors. He thus chose to appoint Schlesinger to head the Department of Energy (DOE), which he created in August 1977. Like the Department of Defense, the DOE was responsible for managing atomic secrets and materials. Regarding the DOE's role, despite any congressional attempts to limit it, Schlesinger observes, "They are going to continue to produce nuclear fuel, and only the government can do that. They are going to produce a hell of a lot of nuclear weapons and do the research and development on nuclear weapons and the national labs are going to stay within the Department of Energy."²¹

¹⁷ "European Security and the Nuclear Threat since 1945," RAND Report P3574, April 1967. Duncan Snidal discusses hegemonic stability theory based on a Prisoner's Dilemma analysis in "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability," *International Organization*, (1985) 39:4, 579-614.

¹⁸ "Systems Analysis and the Political Process," RAND Report P3464, June 1967.

¹⁹ Report is called "The Red Integrated Strategic Offensive Plan Version-5C," the office is Studies, Analysis and Gaming Agency; it is in, "4/24/79," Box 35, "PD 59," Brzezinski's collection, JCPL.

²⁰ Memo from Vic Utgoff, William Odom, and Fritz Ermarth, to Zbigniew Brzezinski and David Aaron, April 24, 1979, "Targeting Student SAC," "4/24/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, page 1 of 2.

²¹ "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," Carter Presidency Project, Miller Center of Public Affairs, July 19-20, 1984, 109; available at JCPL, and <http://millercenter.org/president/carter/oralhistory/james-schlesinger>, accessed June, 2014.

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Whereas Carter was attracted to Schlesinger because of his former tenure under President Nixon as secretary of defense and had a general idea of his strategic view of international affairs and military security, he was likely unaware that Schlesinger had been a virtual fellow traveler with the ultra-hawks of the Committee on Present Danger (CPD): Paul Nitze, Albert Wohlstetter, Richard Pipes, and Colin Gray.²² This privately organized circle of defense analysts would burden Carter's attention throughout his term in office. In 1976, Schlesinger had ties to this pro-nuclear-use advocacy alliance, yet he determined that maintaining his distance from this organization gave him more independence as a government official and freedom from branding that could compromise his effectiveness by mere association.²³ Schlesinger's particular form of pro-nuclear strategy took the linguistic form of escalation control, instead of escalation dominance, although the two positions are indistinguishable once implemented.²⁴

Thus, close inspection thus verifies that a prominent member of Carter's cabinet with extraordinary bureaucratic sagacity was a leading proponent of flexible response.²⁵ Schlesinger noted that "unlike most of the people in the Cabinet," he had a relationship with Carter characterized by a "degree of intimacy . . . and rapport" and that the president "tended to regard [him] as a universal authority."²⁶ Indeed, on exiting Carter's administration, Schlesinger openly expressed both his incredulity at the "weak and parochial" nature of Carter's incoming White House staff and his assessment that he stood head and shoulders above everyone with respect to his own experience, knowledge, and Washington connections.²⁷

²² There have been at least two incarnations of this group, in the 1950s and 1970s; see Jerry S. Sanders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: South End Press, 1999).

²³ For Schlesinger's association with the CPD, see CPD mailing list dated October 14, 1976, "Master Copy of List of Possible Board Members," p. 6, folder "CPD: Board Names," Box 284, Collection, "Committee on the Present Danger," Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University. There is a second document in this folder also bearing Schlesinger's name as a potential member.

²⁴ On this latter point, see Charles Glaser, "Why Do Strategists Disagree about the Requirements of Strategic Nuclear Doctrine," in Lynn Eden and Steven E. Miller, eds., *Nuclear Arguments: Understanding the Strategic Nuclear Arms and Arms Control Debates* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989). For discussion see Lackey, "American Debate," 1987, section titled "Schlesinger and the Rise of Counterforce," 31-35.

²⁵ Brezinski's papers contain the academic paper, "The Nuclear Warfighting Dimension of the Soviet Threat to Europe," by Joseph D. Douglass Jr., and Amoretta M. Hoerber, in the *Journal of Social and Political Studies* (1978), 3:2, which makes clear "Schlesinger's Strategy" is consistent with nuclear war fighting, p. 141, NLC-12-58-2-5, JCPL. Brezinski's files also find the typed document, "P[residential] D[irective] Questions," no date, with exacting discussion of the demands of maintaining "escalation equivalence," and mention of NSDM-242, NLC-31-220-4-1-8, JCPL.

²⁶ "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, "September of 1976, I thought that Jimmy Carter had this immensely quick intelligence, and that he would quickly learn – reasonably quickly learn – what he needed to know for the job, because he seemed to have judgment and quickness of mind. That may have been my own self-flattery because he responded so well to the advice that I tendered. But in any event that was my

Additional archival evidence further suggests that Schlesinger's fingerprints are on the contents of PD 59. Carter's closest cabinet confidant and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski relied on his military assistant and crisis coordinator, General William Odom, to consult with Schlesinger as a "source of support."²⁸ Brzezinski personally wrote to Carter stating, "The basic direction toward more flexibility was set by the Schlesinger effort in 1974 which led to NSDM-242."²⁹ And perhaps the most telling archival evidence is that not only did Brzezinski's staff denigrate Secretary of Defense Brown, but that it was the national security advisor who drafted PD 59, and not Secretary Brown as is typically assumed because of the auspices of his office.³⁰ The internal Carter administration documents reveal that behind Carter's back, Brzezinski "dragged Brown along on this PD [59]."³¹ Brzezinski's team referred to

view early on, and it did not change in the . . . let's say, for the first six or seven months that I knew him. After a while it became clear to me, regrettably, that the lack of experience that I had initially undervalued just was very important, and could not be rapidly repaired even in the Presidency," p. 9.

²⁸ E.g., William Odom, March 17, 1978, NLC-12-53-5-12-2, JCPL; see mention about "kibitzed with Jim on PRM-38"; Fritz Ermarth's report to Brzezinski, October 5, 1978, NLC-17-51-1-7-9, JCPL, p. 2 of 4, note this memorandum covers a lot of key areas of nuclear policy; another memorandum from David Aaron to Brzezinski, July 25, 1978, reports "Hunter consulted with Vic and Jim on PRM-38," p. 1 of 1, NLC-10-13-6-9-1, JCPL. Schlesinger, "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 58.

²⁹ Brzezinski's memorandum to President Carter urging him to endorse PD 59 makes clear that this directive is directly continuous with NSDM-242, July 24, 1980, subject "Nuclear Targeting Policy," "5/80-1/81," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

³⁰ This attribution acknowledges that it seems inconsistent with Brown's views stated throughout his role in Carter's administration, Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, 1983, 382-386; Herken, *Counsels of War*, 1985, 298-302. Regarding Brzezinski's hands-on involvement with crafting PD 59, see Memo, Harold Brown, to the President, Subject: "Nuclear Targeting Policy Review," date unclear, pp. 1-4; "8/78-4/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; Special Coordination Committee Meeting Notes, April 4, 1979, pp. 1-9, "8/78-4/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; and Brzezinski's memorandum to the President, date unclear, but providing a synopsis and action plan based on the Special Coordination Committee, with specific reference to "(1) stable deterrence? (2) stable crisis bargaining? And (3) effective war management?" "8/78-4/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; a memorandum from Vic Utgoff to Brzezinski, April 5, 1979, "8/78-4/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, makes clear what guidance Brzezinski's team was providing to Harold Brown. As well, Brzezinski had discussions among his staff on drafts of PD 59 on how to proceed with winning its acceptance by Carter as well as the specific wording to be used in the text of the presidential directive; see William E. Odom to Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, "5/80-1/81," Box 35; note also strategy document by Fritz Ermarth to Jasper Welch and Victor Utgoff, on the subject, "Countervailing Strategy and the Targeting Problem," March 20, 1980, seeking "a concept for dealing with its [strategic competition] worst contingency," with respect to how to get PD-59 past Brown and signed by Carter, "In my view, this more comprehensive approach would move the doctrinal process across a broad front at a time when we are unlikely to get Harold Brown or the President to sign on to a directive that is broad enough and innovative enough to generate real progress. If we take this comprehensive approach now, then we may be ready for a real PD in early 1981." Page 1 of 2, "3/80-4/80," Box 35, Brzezinski collection, JCPL.

³¹ Memo from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, July 24, 1980, "Targeting PD Briefing for the President," notes that "flexibility," "targeting categories," and "acquisition policy" sections reflect Brzezinski's nuclear strategy perspectives and not Brown's.

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“Brown’s view of our defense posture a rudderless ship piloted by a bland [sic] man.”³² Brzezinski’s staff clearly drafted PD 59 and strategized to gain Secretary Brown’s and the President’s final approval for the directive.³³ By the end of Carter’s term, offensive realism, in the form of NUTS, would become official policy.³⁴

The differences between Secretary of Defense Brown’s strategic stance and that of Secretary of Energy Schlesinger and National Security Advisor Brzezinski are vivid and apparent in drafts of the ensuing presidential directive and the US nuclear targeting policy. Brown held that “a full-scale thermo-nuclear exchange would constitute an unprecedented disaster for the Soviet Union and for the United States,” and that there could be no guarantee whatsoever that even a “tightly controlled use of the strategic forces for larger purposes could be kept from escalating to a full-scale nuclear war.”³⁵ Brzezinski’s team redrafts the presidential directive to further its goals. It seeks the flexibility and “ability to design nuclear employment plans on short notice in response to the latest and changing circumstances” not limited by (1) stipulated “pre-planned options,” (2) prior attack, or (3) potential collateral damage.³⁶ Thus, it views engaging in nuclear conflict as thinkable and winnable, retains the first-right to engage in nuclear warfare, and seeks leverage to bargain acceptable terms in favor of the United States. It rejects Thomas Schelling’s limited nuclear option

³² The entire section reads, “Today I saw for the first time a copy of Brown’s posture statement in its final form. I was staggered by it. Last year it marched to the tune of PD-18. From this year’s version it is impossible to infer the existence of PD-18. Not only does it lack a coherence which only a national and military strategic [stet] can import, but many of its meandering sections are anti-strategy and anti-doctrine musings. I don’t know who cleared the thing on our staff but he did not bring the outlines of PD-18 to bear on it. If I were a member of Congress, I would call Brown’s view . . .,” memo, William E. Odom, to Brzezinski, Jan. 29, 1979, NLC-12-21-9-11-4, JCPL, p. 2 of 2. See also, memo, from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, July 24, 1980, “3/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; note that Odom states that Brown’s reticence was not revealed to Carter. Furthermore, it is clear that Brzezinski had Odom working on a draft of PD 59; memo from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, subject “Draft PD on Nuclear Targeting,” see p. 3 of 5 with additional discussion of strategy to bring Brown on board the directive, at p. 5, “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

³³ See Memo from William E. Odom and Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, March 25, 1980, subject, “Nuclear Targeting Policy,” and follow-up memorandum by same authors to Brzezinski, March 26, 1980, subject, “Targeting Policy”; “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL. Indeed, Brown’s role was merely to suggest some revisions on Brzezinski’s draft of PD 59; see memo from William Odom and Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, April 17, 1980, Subject, “Draft PD on Nuclear Employment Policy,” one-page memo, with nine pages of draft and commentary; “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

³⁴ Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, 1983, 384–385.

³⁵ Chapter 5, “The Nuclear Capabilities,” draft of “Targeting Policy,” p. 69, attached to memo from Brzezinski to the secretary of defense, undated, but requests a response by April 4, 1980, and a cover memorandum is dated April 9, 1980, “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

³⁶ These three points are numbered 3, and 6, 10, pages hand labeled 7E 1 and 2, attached to memo from William E. Odom and Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, dated March 25, 1980, “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; April 4, 1980, “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

of achieving controlled escalation through “psycho-political effects,” which in its view characterized NSDM-242 rather than to uphold “the First Principle of War. . . that is, destroy the enemy’s army or its ability to fight” in view of our “scarce [and vulnerable] . . . nuclear weapons” over “days, and weeks . . . or months” to ensure destruction of our opponent and vie to secure US survivability and recovery.”³⁷ Additionally, whereas the benefit of NUTS, at least from the perspective of prospective public evaluation, had been to take innocent populations out of harms way, the Brzezinski plan clearly “retain[s] this city-busting opinion in the pre-planned options section,” which was intentionally redacted from PD 59’s release to make it more palatable for those who question its superiority to assured destruction.³⁸

Carter’s postponement of the neutron bomb project in March 1978 further substantiates the narrative that he came into office supporting Schelling’s nuclear strategy of assured destruction relying on retaining counterstrike capability through submarine-based missiles.³⁹ This action makes obvious Carter’s aversion to the militant hard-line position consistent with NUTS strategic doctrine of flexible response, which treats nuclear weapons as conventional weapons and seeks to maintain escalation control. Carter’s action went against the advice of all his national security advisors, individually and collectively.⁴⁰ Carter shocked and dismayed his national security team by standing against this anti-populace, building-preserving, nuclear warhead. The president’s national security corps thought that Carter had no grasp of military strategy, and they felt disrupted, stymied, and embarrassed by what to them seemed to be his uncomprehending and solo intervention.⁴¹ The neutron bomb was crucial to Schlesinger’s strategy of flexible response that treated nuclear weapons as conventional arms, and it was particularly suited to achieve extended nuclear deterrence to afford Europe protection from a potential Soviet invasion. Here the concepts underlying MAD and NUTS differ on how to maintain effective deterrence, with the former looking

³⁷ Point 1, *ibid.*, 7E.; for explicit rejection of Schelling’s style limited nuclear options, and the rejection that political control versus strategic control should oversee nuclear targeting, see memo from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, “Draft PD on Nuclear Targeting, p. 2, “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL; see also pp. 2-4 of this same document.

³⁸ On the city-busting stipulation in the pre-planned options section, see notes combined with memo from Odom and Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, March 25, 1980, “Nuclear Targeting Policy,” “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, point 1, on page hand labeled #7E; on the careful redaction of the city-busting feature of PD 59’s Pre-planned options, see memo from Odom to Brzezinski, January 7, 1981, “Distribution of PD-59,” with attached and redacted copy of PD 59, NLC-12-37-4-8-6.

³⁹ Schlesinger makes this point, “Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger,” 1984, 72. For internal Carter administration discussions, see Jim Thomson to Brzezinski, February 22, 1979, “8/78-4/79,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection JCPL, “The most significant setback would have to be the neutron bomb affair.”

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, “Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger,” 1984, 58.

⁴¹ Schlesinger states this in his exit interview, and it is evident in the aftermath of Carter’s indefinite postponement of the neutron bomb in Folder “2-4/78,” Box 17, National Security Affairs Collection, JCPL.

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to manipulating the risk of engaging in nuclear war, and the latter treating force as well calibrated with predictable consequences.⁴²

Schlesinger referred to this as “the neutron bomb fiasco” and stated that the president was “kind of blind on natural security problems.”⁴³ Clear about his impact on Carter’s administration, Schlesinger states that in his role overseeing the Department of Energy, “ultimately, in November of ’78, I got presidential approval – it was announced – of the production of the components of the neutron bomb,” meaning that in fact “although you don’t have a prompt neutron bomb capability, you are six hours away from having neutron bomb capability.”⁴⁴ Schlesinger was well aware of his active perpetuation of flexible response, which this enhanced radiation weapon exemplified. He further observes,

I have been a patron of enhanced radiation warheads since my days at Rand, subsequently my days at the Atomic Energy Commission, and I called for deployment when I was Secretary of Defense, and ultimately produced the components as Secretary of Energy, so I have a consistent, although in the eyes of some, a somewhat checkered career on this subject.⁴⁵

Even after Schlesinger left Carter’s administration in August 1979, he “worked with [Senator] Sam Nunn to put to use the President’s expenditures from the administration on national security.”⁴⁶

PRESIDENT CARTER’S DILEMMA

Carter’s early approach was characterized by classical liberalism and its promise of peace for peace. However, the exercise of either promising to support a

⁴² Robert Jervis discusses the difficult problem of extended deterrence, and how Schelling’s and Schlesinger’s approaches differ with the former relying on manipulating risk, and the latter depending on incurring tangible punitive military damage consistent with escalation dominance, see “Security Studies: Ideas, Policy, and Politics,” in *The Evolution of Political Knowledge: Democracy, Autonomy, and Conflict in Comparative and International Politics*, ed. by Edward D. Mansfield and Richard Sisson (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2004), 100–126, especially fn 34, p. 126. Jervis notes that Schelling’s deterrence via manipulating risk that depends on demonstrating the irrational stance of being prepared to go down the slippery slope of engaging in suicidal war which “even if true, ‘is a dead end’” because preparing to accept ultimate devastation as a means of securing stable peace signifies abandoning strategic rationality, “Security Studies,” 2004, fn 34, p. 126, Jervis quotes Lawrence Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981, 400. Here Jervis acknowledges the conclusive incoherence of MAD if strategic rationality is one’s sole means of addressing security. Jervis himself is aware that a deterrence situation viewed as a Chicken game characterized by “competition in risk taking” is best exited by offering the *reassurance* that “the state will not punish the adversary if it behaves in the desired way” by cooperating; first quote is from Robert Powell’s commentary on Jervis’s essay “Security Studies,” 2004 called “Nuclear-Deterrence Theory: Where We Left Off When the Berlin Wall Came Down,” 2004, in the same volume, 131–136, at 133; second quote is from Jervis “Security Studies,” 2004, at 111.

⁴³ Schlesinger, “Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger,” 1984, 62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 71–72.

nuclear deterrent counterstrike or effectively engaging in Schelling-style bluffing seemed out of reach for Carter. In Robert Jervis's words, "Making either threats or promises credible is difficult enough, doing both simultaneously is especially demanding . . . President Carter probably succeeded in convincing the Soviets that he would cooperate, but he also tempted them to exploit him."⁴⁷ Thus, President Carter faced the dilemma of how to credibly threaten the USSR with a devastating counter strike that would serve no purpose besides killing millions of hapless Soviet citizens. As a devoted man of conscience, maintaining the credibility of this deterrent threat and immoral promise was outside Carter's reach.

Behind-the-scenes conversations offer one insight into what led President Carter to sign Presidential Directive 59, which put the US military on a footing treating nuclear weapons as conventional forces, planned to fight a protracted nuclear war, and incorporated the offensive MX missile system. However, understanding the broader intellectual and political climate is also important. Thomas Schelling and Robert McNamara terminated their active engagement with arms control by the late 1960s at the same time that Albert Wohlstetter, Herman Kahn, Colin Gray, Paul Nitze, and Edward Teller initiated a vocal public campaign to promote a pro-nuclear-use policy.⁴⁸ Jervis defended mutual assured destruction, initially in his 1976, 1978, and 1984 publications, and then more effectively in *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* in 1989.⁴⁹ Carter was counseled by hawkish Secretary of State Zbigniew Brzezinski; his Secretary of Defense Harold Brown; and his Secretary of Energy James R. Schlesinger.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Robert Jervis, *Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 58. James R. Schlesinger makes this direct observation of Carter, "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 60261.

⁴⁸ George Kennan was a prominent arms control advocate who was not a defense rationalist. Jervis, by contrast, fully engaged rational deterrence theory, even if he ultimately pushed beyond its confines in finding it limited for leaving the debate stuck with unilateralist and escalating deterrence; for the best statement of this acknowledgment, see Charles Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics* (1997), 50:1, 171-201, at 193; see also Achen and Snidal's comment on Jervis's position, "Rational Deterrence Theory," 1989, at 155. Freedman, too, though thorough in his knowledge of rational deterrence theory, ultimately concludes that it was not able to defend the saner policy of MAD (see, esp., pp. 377-400). Note that Schelling continued to publish in the area of arms control, e.g., Thomas Schelling, "A Framework for the Analysis of Arms-Control Proposals," *Daedalus* (1975) 104:3, 187-200.

⁴⁹ See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976; "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* (1978) 30:2, 167-214; *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); and *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 1989). For perhaps the most succinct and effective overview of the strategic debate, see Glaser, "Why Do Strategists Disagree," 1989, 109-171. It is clear that Glaser, too, though sympathetic to MAD (see esp. p. 161 acknowledging that the "punitive retaliation [MAD] school holds the strongest positions on the disputed issues," yet fails to carry the debate).

⁵⁰ James R. Schlesinger, the author of the "Schlesinger Doctrine," and longtime RAND researcher, served in Carter's cabinet alongside Harold Brown from October 1977 to July 1979. The Schlesinger Doctrine promoted limited nuclear options (LNOs) from small tactical nuclear

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Carter would face considerable foreign policy challenges, most notably the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At the same time, MAD was facing increasing scrutiny for holding innocent civilians hostage for the good behavior of their government. Its common features with NUTS in this regard were overlooked as the United States shifted its focus from assuring the USSR of its peaceful intention unless provoked into war as a last resort to securing the capability and resolve to prevail at all levels of armed conflict. This seemed to be the only means to solve the Prisoner's Dilemma riddle of avoiding mutual defection by having the wherewithal to maintain a credible punitive threat.

All are agreed that the nuclear arms race was angst ridden.⁵¹ Carter had entered office amenable not only to arms control but also to disarmament. He made his intention clear in Presidential Directive 18, which directed that the United States should “take advantage of our relative advantages in economic strength, technological superiority and popular political support’ *both* to seek Soviet cooperation in resolving conflicts, renegotiating arms control agreements, and constructively dealing with global problems *and* to counterbalance adverse Soviet influence in key areas of the world.”⁵² His apparent lack of adequate concern for defense frightened the pro-nuclear-use contingent of policy analysts. He wrote in his personal diary in August 1977:

Met with the Committee on Present Danger, Paul Nitze, Gene Rostow, and others. It was an unpleasant meeting where they insinuated that we were on the verge of catastrophe, inferior to the Soviets, and that I and previous presidents had betrayed the nation's interests. I told them I'd like to have constructive advice, balancing all factors with at least the possibility considered that the Soviets did want a permanent peace and not suicidal nuclear war . . .

In Congress, Senator [Scoop] Jackson was the core around whom the most vitriolic anti-Soviet forces coagulated. Their premise was that the Soviets were enormous ogres who were poised to take over the world. This group looked on me as weak and naïve because I argued that the Soviet Union was rotten to the core and that over time our promotion of peace, human rights, and accommodation on arms control would be detrimental to the Soviets and beneficial to our nation.⁵³

weapons to weapons of catastrophic destruction and sought to “control . . . the level of violence in any conflict”; see Lawrence Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 377–392, quote from 384. There can be no doubt that the Schlesinger Doctrine seeks defense in maintaining the relevance of violence to control outcomes in conflict situations by maintaining the asymmetric policy of escalation dominance.

⁵¹ The *Bulletin of American Scientists* kept a constant barometer on their members' estimation of the likelihood of nuclear war; for discussion, see Herken, *Counsels of War*, 1985, 105, 125, 185, 192, 247, 303.

⁵² This is quoted from Brzezinski to President Carter, subject, “Capitalizing on Our Economic Advantages in U.S.-SU Relations,” undated, NLC-29-11-2-3-3, JCPL, Brzezinski Collection, declassified 2008/04/09, p. 1 of 2.

⁵³ President Jimmy Carter, *White House Diary*, August 4, October 25, 1977, published 2010.

Carter worried some US defense analysts because he seemed to accept that the Soviets had benign intention, and that the United States and the USSR could work together to ensure peaceful coexistence. The Soviet's 1979 invasion of Afghanistan strengthened their belief that the Soviets intended to extend their empire using military force.⁵⁴ Notwithstanding that MAD was a fact and not a policy, defense rationalists themselves were hard pressed to defend it against the NUTS plan to prepare to fight and win a nuclear war.⁵⁵

Since analysts conceded that the Prisoner's Dilemma best characterized nuclear security dilemma and arms race, a policy of mutual assured destruction could no longer be rationally sustained. Whereas classical liberals offered the assurance of cooperation, MAD offered the assurance of destruction as a punitive threat to unlock the perceived Prisoner's Dilemma, which was derived from an Assurance Game (Stag Hunt) under conditions of significant risk. Not only did they agree that the United States most preferred unilateral defection in a nuclear standoff, coercive bargaining, and an arms race but more importantly, the signature feature of applied PD logic stipulated that these openly hostile preferences were wholly required for self-defense, even though the United States really preferred to get along amicably. By 1988, even Jervis, perhaps the most prolific and steadfast supporter of MAD throughout the 1970s, observed that "a central question for the work on anarchy is how cooperation is possible when actors are in a Prisoner's Dilemma."⁵⁶ However, the Prisoner's Dilemma model in particular clearly signifies that each actor hopes to gain by exploiting the other. Jervis makes this point in no uncertain terms: "Each is driven by the hope of gaining its first choice – which would be to exploit the other."⁵⁷

Schelling introduced the initial ambiguity of accepting that a Stag Hunt Assurance Game transforms into the more virulent Prisoner's Dilemma as a function of uncertainty about others' intentions. Hence, he gave rise to a characteristic Prisoner's Dilemma pedagogy that sanctioned the idea that a predatory stance is wholly legitimated by and consistent with benign intent. Schelling's analysis was accepted by strategists who felt compelled to address the "worst contingency" security dilemma, which everyone seemed to concede

⁵⁴ John Gaddis has since concluded that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan followed from their characteristic support of an internal security risk to the Marxist regime; *The Cold War: A New History* (London: Penguin, 2006), 220.

⁵⁵ On the status of MAD as a fact and not a policy, see Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 1989, 46–73. On the inability to provide a rational defense of MAD as a policy, see, e.g., Patrick Morgan, "New Directions in Deterrence," in *Nuclear Weapons and the Future of Humanity*, ed. by Avner Cohen and Steven Lee (Totawa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1986), 169–190. See also Glaser, "Why Do Strategists Disagree," 1989, 162.

⁵⁶ Robert Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," *World Politics* (1988), 40:3, 317–349, at 322; throughout his writings, Jervis reserves the PD game for contexts in which actors have predatory intent and reserves the Stag Hunt, or Assurance Game, for actors who have the first preference of cooperating with others, see, e.g., "Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma," *Journal of Cold War Studies* (2001), 3:1, 36–60.

⁵⁷ Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," 1988, at 318.

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resembled the disconcerting PD.⁵⁸ The general acceptance of the widespread applicability of the Prisoner's Dilemma and PD logic of gain without regard for others is a direct result of the development of rational deterrence theory entangled with evolving nuclear policy. Consider security analyst Charles Glaser's defense of Prisoner's Dilemma logic and asymmetric deterrence. In the PD model of the security dilemma, derived from an assurance situation, the United States adopts the preferences of a predator in self-defense. Glaser notes that even though the United States adopts a predatory stance, its leaders still assume that other nations recognize that it is actually a peace seeker: "This line of argument plays a central role in the 'deterrence model,' which rejects the security dilemma completely, albeit implicitly, by assuming that the adversary knows the state [United States] is a pure security seeker." The science of deterrence opposes aggression, hence combining the US reflection of predatory preferences "with the assumption that the adversary is greedy, the deterrence model calls for highly competitive policies and warns against the dangers of restraint and concessions." The upshot of the Prisoner's Dilemma approach to superpower security entailed that "in describing the cold war competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, the deterrence model held that the Soviets were bent on expansion for entirely greedy reasons and knew that they had nothing to fear from the United States."⁵⁹ Whereas the competitor is viewed as an aggressor, one's own action, although directly opposing the other's interests, is viewed as inherently peaceful. Thus, analysts continuously tended to insist that the United States represented the "good guys" with upstanding values, failing to recognize the deepening chasm between their resolution of nuclear security and classical liberalism.⁶⁰

It was standard to view the high-stakes nuclear superpower standoff in terms of a single-play Prisoner's Dilemma, which is the default in game theory as a result of emphasis on tangible outcomes, which even in an assurance standoff (Stag Hunt) with sufficient uncertainty necessarily transforms into the intransigent PD.⁶¹ However, the PD formalization of the security dilemma and

⁵⁸ "Worst contingency" is quoted from Brzezinski's staff member Fritz Ermarth to Jasper Welch and Victor Utgoff, "Countervailing Strategy and the Targeting Problem," March 20, 1980, "3/80-4/80," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, p. 1.

⁵⁹ This and preceding two quotes from Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, 1997, at 193. Note that in his 2001 "Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma?" Robert Jervis points out that during the Cold War, the United States "sought to thwart any potential rivals and open the world to American capitalist penetration" (43) and had the officially stated aim "To reduce and power and influence of the USSR," quoting NSC 20/4, in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1948) 1:2, 662-672 at 667. Hence, Jervis speaks of a "deep security dilemma" suggesting that fear for security drives one to have essentially expansionist goals.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Michael Doyle's contrasting understanding of the post-World War II nuclear peace, *Ways of War and Peace* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 301-311.

⁶¹ See, e.g., quote by Don Ross at the head of the Chapter 3, Assurance; "Game Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006. For example Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Options* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation,

wholesale adoption of strategic rationality without a doubt shifted the challenge from assuring the other of one's benign intent to motivating cooperation through one's wherewithal to issue credible threats of harm. Thomas Schelling had found the PD game useful for capturing a security dilemma in which each actor prefers peace to conquest yet adopts the preferences of an aggressor as a function of uncertainty. Schelling reasoned that even in this worst-case scenario in which actors pursue goals inconsistent with each other's security, peaceful coexistence could be achieved if each actor could threaten the other from beyond the grave using devastating retaliation. If both nations have nuclear-armed submarines that can withstand a first strike, then each nation has the power to strike back, and it is in neither nation's interest to marshal a first strike.⁶²

Schelling's strategically rational defense of MAD looks plausible but was found to have three fatal flaws attributable to its PD structure: immorality, incredibility, and irrationality. Were the United States to be hit by a Soviet all-out first strike and the only recourse was to strike back to wreak similar damage on the Russians, not only would this counterattack be immoral, but it stood indicted for lacking any causal power to serve US interests after deterrence had failed and, thus, any credibility to deter in the first place.⁶³ Defense rationalists, consequently, reasoned that MAD rested on an immoral, incredible, and therefore irrational threat to strike back when such an act can only seal its own doom: "It is perhaps a central tension in deterrence . . . that its ultimate threat is to engage in a senseless act of total destruction."⁶⁴ Without any contingency plan in place to fight rather than admit defeat, MAD further seemed effete.⁶⁵ The immorality of the threat of massive retaliation was the undoing of MAD because it signified the incredibility of following through, thus rendering deterrence inconsequential. Additionally, MAD could be accused of being suicidal if the act of following through on a counter strike would provoke additional Soviet missile strikes on America.⁶⁶

September 1977); Jervis, "Security Under the Security Dilemma," 1978; Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981. Of course, Thomas Schelling's *Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960) had started this practice.

⁶² The question of whether the Soviets had the capability to detect US submarines was raised in the famous Team B Report that concluded that the fact there was no evidence of such technology provides sufficient reasoning that it may exist; Anne Hessing Cahn, "Team B: The Trillion-Dollar Experiment," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (1993), 49:3, 22, 24-27.

⁶³ Jervis addresses this point, following Patrick Morgan in noting that "if people were totally rational, deterrence in a world of mutual assured destruction would not work. To carry out your threat would mean the destruction of your own society; so, if the other side thinks you will retaliate, it assumes you are less than rational Robert Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics* (1979) 31:2, 289-324, at 299).

⁶⁴ Quoted from *ibid.*, 300.

⁶⁵ Discussed by Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981, 395.

⁶⁶ This was Schlesinger's concern; see his US Senate testimony, "Uses and Abuses of Analysis," 1968, 340.

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Moreover, in the continual contest of wills between the Soviets and Americans all too evident in Carter's daily log of White House events, MAD suggested a posture of "better Red than Dead" and did not provide a strong position from which to bargain.⁶⁷ The nuclear security dilemma modeled as a Prisoner's Dilemma transformed into a Chicken game once both sides faced the fear of potential mutual devastation yet still vied for supremacy.⁶⁸ Without continually maneuvering to at least achieve mutual cooperation rather than unilateral submission, it seemed that even if MAD did prevent a nuclear war, it would grant the Soviets a victory in the Cold War.

It was a signature belief of the defense rationalists that the threat of violence could be calibrated and applied to either compel or deter actions of the other side.⁶⁹ Both Schelling and Kahn advanced this view. For Schelling, the idea had been to manage risk in mobilizing threats, whereas for Kahn, the plan was to manage military application of force to achieve escalation dominance. In either case, politics and war became indistinguishable.⁷⁰ The recalcitrant Prisoner's Dilemma game, in which each person in pursuing his best interests mires both in a suboptimal outcome, was accepted in deference to the need to prepare for the worst case in which one's own defense threatens the security of the other.⁷¹ According to the PD analysis of the nuclear security dilemma, nuclear weapons signify that defense must take the form of offensive action from which no one can be invulnerable. Even though mutual vulnerability is inescapable, the voices that clamored for proactive preparation to wage war, rather than those counseling the acknowledgment of reciprocal vulnerability, prevailed.⁷²

NUTS seemed suited to address each of the signature weaknesses of MAD.⁷³ First, it signals the unwavering intention to counterattack if attacked at any

⁶⁷ Discussed by Jervis, "Deterrence Theory Revisited," 1979, 301-302; on the difficulty of applying nuclear strategy in its MAD or NUTS form to strategic bargaining, see Glaser, "Why Do Strategists Disagree," 1989, 168.

⁶⁸ On strategic bargaining in a nuclear Chicken game even in the context of MAD, see Jervis, *Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 1989, 40-41.

⁶⁹ Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict*, 1960; see how the ability to control the outcome of violence is necessary to defend the strategic policy of NUTS and escalation dominance; Glaser, "Why Do Strategists Disagree," 1989, 150-51.

⁷⁰ "In particular, Schelling's ideas on tacit communication and the manifestation of signals make it clear that the players are involved in bargaining as much as fighting"; Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 173-174.

⁷¹ This is a central theme in Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 1979.

⁷² For an alternative resolution of the nuclear security dilemma see, e.g., Edward F. McClennen, "The Tragedy of National Sovereignty," in Cohen and Lee, eds., *Nuclear Weapons and the Future of Humanity*, 1986, 391-406.

⁷³ Note that Carter's team working under Brzezinski was clear that "the Republican platform includes a lot of nuclear war-fighting doctrine," and that part of the mission of PD 59 was to clarify their policy "and leave no room for confusion." Memo from William E. Odom to Brzezinski, July 24, 1980, "Targeting PD Briefing for the President," "5/80-1/80," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, p. 1 of 1.

rung of engagement.⁷⁴ Second, it has a plan if deterrence fails: to fight for victory no matter what.⁷⁵ Third, it recommends “firing demonstration shots to show resolve.”⁷⁶ Fourth, it accepts the challenge of a nuclear Chicken contest of wills, providing the strongest position from which to bargain.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, NUTS rests on the fallacy that it is possible to meaningfully engage in nuclear conflict, and it ignored the Soviets’ promise to retaliate against *any* use of nuclear weapons and lost sight of the fact that “the primary objective of nuclear strategy is to avoid wars, not to fight them.”⁷⁸ NUTS openly adopts a one-sided posture on defense in the full knowledge of the fact that achieving strategic dominance is more important than reassuring the other actor of one’s benign intent.

President Carter had entered office exemplifying a classical liberal security posture. The classic liberal resolution of the security dilemma for both international relations and civil society, articulated in some form by Samuel Pufendorf, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Benedict Spinoza, John Locke, Adam Smith, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, Isaiah Berlin, and Friedrich Hayek, rests on a several key pillars.⁷⁹ Since self-preservation is basic for every actor, and the

⁷⁴ Escalation control is linked to flexible response under the reasoning that deterring, or preventing further, acts of Soviet aggression depends on having the flexible capability to prevail at any level of conflict. Of course, the debate is arrested on the point of whether introducing nuclear weapons into a conventional conflict would entail “escalation . . . [that] would still become uncontrollable”; pointed discussion of this debate is in “Senate Foreign Relations Committee Paper on PD 59”; the paper is attached to a memo from Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, September 11, 1980, report is dated September 9, 1980, from San Sienkiewicz, p. 3 of 8, “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

⁷⁵ The plan is “To assure the survival of the US as a functioning independent nation, capable of political, economic, and military recovery,” stated in “Countervailing Strategy for General War,” attached to a memo from Ermarth to Welch and Utgoff, March 20, 1980, “Countervailing Strategy and the Targeting Problem,” memo two pages, report p. 1 of 4, “3/80-4/80,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

⁷⁶ Quoted from William Odom memorandum to Brzezinski, “Draft PD on Nuclear Targeting,” March 22, 1980, p. 4 of 5, “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL (note that document is out of temporal sequence in its placement in the file folder).

⁷⁷ The ability to bargain, especially in crisis setting, is mentioned in the memorandum leading up to PD 59, e.g., Special Coordination Committee Meeting, April 4, 1979, direct reference to “crisis bargaining,” as a key topic for discussion, “Summary of Conclusions”; “8/78-4/79,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL. Hollis and Smith provide a helpful discussion of the paradoxes embattling MAD from the perspective of defense rationalism, *Explaining and Understanding in International Relations*, 1990, 173–174. For a thorough analysis of the Schlesinger Doctrine’s contribution to the puzzles of deterrence via MAD, see Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981, 374–395; Glaser, “Why Do Strategists Disagree,” 147–148. Note that Schlesinger accepted that the Soviets’ behavior would be based on their perception of the credibility of the US deterrent, which he interpreted as a rationale to further buttress US credibility to engage in nuclear war because he worried that the Soviets perceived the United States as benign; hence, Jervis’s *Perceptions and Misperceptions in International Politics*, 1976.

⁷⁸ For discussion, see Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981, 379, 391, 385.

⁷⁹ Richard Tuck’s *The Rights of War and Peace: Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) explains how liberal

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motive of self-preservation pertains to all actors, actors can peaceably coexist only if they concede to each other the right to exist and therefore voluntarily desist from harming others. This way of interpreting amicable relations among nations or individuals reduces to the pledge of “peace for peace” and the threat of “war for war.”⁸⁰ Where liberalism views a state of nature as the return to the unconstrained natural right to all things, and civilization as a rarefied state organized by self-adopted rules and commitments, neoliberalism views the achievement of order as a function of equilibria arising from actors’ unconstrained aspirations. Liberalism views the recourse to violence as a breakdown of social order; neoliberalism views social order as derived not from promises, but from credible threats of violence.⁸¹

To understand the transformed approach to mutual security, we must grasp how the Prisoner’s Dilemma was used to motivate MAD, and identified as an inescapable logical puzzle mirroring MAD in the inevitable outcome that deterrence relies on an irrational threat.⁸² The incredibility of the MAD deterrent threat was subject to ongoing attention by defense rationalists.⁸³ The strategic analyst Lawrence Freedman captures the dilemma of nuclear deterrence: “Yet the question of how nuclear weapons could be used in war remained and continued to nag at responsible officials as well as academic strategists. Once one openly admitted that the nuclear arsenal was unlikely ever to be activated then the deterrent lost all credibility.”⁸⁴ MAD seemed arrested by paradox: if

international relations theory predicated on the no-harm principle anteceded the civil model for liberal governance. Michael Doyle is particularly insightful on the classic liberal tradition in international relations, *Ways of War and Peace*, 205–314. Obviously, classic liberalism would come under attack on many fronts in the late twentieth century; see, e.g., Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), but its eclipse did not need to result in Prisoner’s Dilemma logic of aggressive self-defense regardless of others.

⁸⁰ For a succinct discussion of this tradition as it was initially articulated by Grotius and Hobbes, see Richard Tuck, *Hobbes: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 26–29; note how far neoliberalism is from liberalism given that in its day the latter was considered “illiberal” for condoning voluntary slavery and absolute monarchy; at least it established a normative order by uniting might with right instead of permitting might to establish right; on the latter, see Russell Hardin, “Does Might Make Right,” in J. Roland Pennock and John William Chapman, eds., *Authority Revisited* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 201–217.

⁸¹ This is a central theme of Thomas Schelling’s research, see *Strategy and Conflict*, 1960; the idea is that both threats and promises are levied to achieve an end that would rather be obtained without needing to take the act as either threatened or promised.

⁸² For an emphatic statement of this, see Jervis, “Deterrence Theory Revisited,” 1979, 300.

⁸³ This concern had been articulated by Brennan and the pro-nuclear-use strategists as early as the late 1960s as assured destruction was renamed mutual assured destruction, or MAD; James R. Schlesinger refers to the “suicidal implications” of assured destruction; “Uses and Abuses of Analysis,” 1968, 340; Harold Brown admits assured destruction’s incredibility deriving from the fact that “it is at least conceivable that the mission of assured destruction would not have to be executed at all in the event that deterrence failed,” although it is important that any “potential enemy” not be led to believe this possible; Harold Brown, “Report to Congress 1979 Budget, FY 1980 Authorization Request, and FY 1979–1983 Defense Programs,” January 23, 1978, 57.

⁸⁴ Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1984, 392–393.

nuclear armaments would only be used to seal the end of civilization, then there could be no conceivable plan for their use unless one embraced mass destruction and reciprocal suicide. However, if one held the nuclear arsenal with no intention of ever deploying it, then it could not stand as a credible deterrent threat.

Freedman thus goes on to explain, “If weapons had to be designed for operational use then some sort of guidance was necessary, which required stating a preference for one form of nuclear employment against another.”⁸⁵ Freedman identifies a puzzle over what makes deterrence work, capturing the standard application of the Prisoner’s Dilemma model to represent the puzzle of deterrence.⁸⁶ Without second-strike ability, each side was vulnerable to the other’s initiation of a first strike; the introduction of second-strike capability neutralized the other’s unilateral advantage, but only if one would actually follow through on a massive counterattack, or at least was believed that it would do so. Insofar as the strategic policy of MAD kept weapons in their silos until devastation was already certain, American nuclear arms would serve no function. To strategic planners, it seemed necessary to stipulate an operational use for nuclear weapons so that they could serve a constructive causal purpose furthering national goals.⁸⁷ If one started with the premise of striving for strategic dominance, even if ultimately the fact of MAD results in a game of nuclear Chicken, at least one clearly signals the intent to prevail rather than settle for submission.

Whereas MAD took seriously the inability to constructively wage nuclear war, and the Soviets’ continual assertion that any use of nuclear force would lead them to counter with massive retaliation, NUTS was wholly dedicated to developing the meaningfulness and possibility of waging nuclear war and to acquiring weapons accordingly.⁸⁸ The difference between the two perspectives is clear in a brief exchange between Brzezinski and Brown. Brzezinski points to three major points of discussion in moving forward with PD 59: (1) the requirements of stable deterrence, (2) “requirements of stable crisis bargaining,” and (3) “requirements of effective war management.” Brown, following the logic that escalation control and war management are extremely unlikely, especially in prolonged conflict, said that “it is important to have our planning for all out

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 392.

⁸⁷ Clearly stated in Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Nuclear Ethics* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1986).

⁸⁸ On strategists’ acknowledgment of the Soviet statements to this effect, see “Information Memorandum,” Council of Foreign Relations, September 11, 1980, “It is also doubtful that the Soviets have only a massive strategic nuclear attack option in their war plans, although they often imply that by asserting the inevitability of their massive retaliation or of controlled escalation should they be attacked,” p. 6 of “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL. On the escalation control, flexible response weapons acquisition policy that was designed to link budgeting outlays directly to strategic planning beyond the limits of weapon employment and acquisition necessary for MAD, see pp. 4 and 7 of this document in addition to William E. Odom’s clear statement to this effect in his memo to Brzezinski, March 22, 1980, p. 4 of 5, in “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

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nuclear war well in hand because all out spasm war is the most likely possibility, given the unlikely possibility of nuclear war in the first place.” In other words, nuclear deterrence is sufficient to prevent the escalation into nuclear conflict, and the emphasis should thus be on preventing conflict in the first place. Once nuclear conflict is initiated, he reasons, fighting meaningfully misses the main point of deterrence to avoid war altogether. However, holding out the hope of being able to successfully prevail in prolonged nuclear combat, Brzezinski offers the countering thought that “the very likelihood of all out nuclear war is increased if all out spasm war is the only kind of nuclear war we can fight.”⁸⁹

Additional discussion makes clear that the Carter administration abandoned the MAD footing both as an acquisition policy and as an employment policy, notwithstanding the overall recognition, as Jervis repeated throughout his career, that “MAD as a condition with which we and the Soviets are stuck, has obtained at least since the late 1960s.”⁹⁰ Thus, it is impossible to exit the reality of mutual assured destruction. Nevertheless, the flexible response, countervailing policy was gradually and continually introduced both as the guideline for purchasing weapons systems and for their employment. The MX missile system controverts MAD, which is based on accepting mutual vulnerability. Flexible response plans to employ nuclear weapons as a natural escalation from conventional warfare, with the plan of capping escalation; however, in reality, it cannot guarantee escalation control any more than MAD can guarantee deterrence. In 1980, as PD 59 was moving through the approval process, US government defense analysts observed that “MAD as an employment doctrine has never really been in force, thus PD 59, which would be a dramatic departure had that been so, is rather just another step in a gradual and long-run policy evolution.”⁹¹ This is because the so-called Schlesinger Doctrine had been inherent in strategic rationality from the 1960s. From McNamara onward, the SIOP had targeted almost every Soviet concern worth targeting. Still, of course, Carter’s endorsement of the policy to procure and deploy powerful first-strike weapons and his commitment to having the power to engage in lengthy nuclear war was wholly unprecedented.⁹²

⁸⁹ This exchange is in the minutes to the Special Coordination Committee Meeting of April 4, 1979, p. 2 of 9, “8/78-4/79,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

⁹⁰ “Information Memorandum for United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations,” September 9, 1980, attached to memo to Brzezinski from Jasper Welch, September 11, 1980, quote from p. 6 of 8, “5/80-1/81,” Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

⁹¹ Information Memorandum for United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Sept. 9, 1980, attached to memo to Brzezinski from Jasper Welch, Sept. 11, 1980 Ibid., quote from p. 7 of 8, *ibid.*

⁹² Strategists agree that escalation control requires escalation dominance to be successful; see Freedman, *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, 1981; Glaser, “Why Do Strategists Disagree,” 1989. For the smooth continuity between the Schlesinger Doctrine and Harold Brown’s development of PD 59, see Glaser, “Why Do Strategists Disagree?” 1989, 139, 147-148, 155. Glaser repeatedly argues that escalation equivalence must be escalation dominance for it to make any sense, see his “Why Do Strategists Disagree,” 1989, 153, 163, 167. It is clear that Brzezinski and

THE INESCAPABLE IRRATIONALITY OF MAD

In the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, some philosophers and strategists tried to counter the argumentative ground and policy stature gained by NUTS.⁹³ However, strategists had widely come to accept game theory as a statement of orthodox instrumental rationality, and the puzzle of nuclear deterrence as isomorphic to the Prisoner's Dilemma.⁹⁴ Even moral philosophers were not able to successfully defend MAD despite its steadfast commitment to avoiding nuclear war because the moral agent necessarily views the pointless killing of noncombatants that would occur after deterrence fails to be unconscionable. The Prisoner's Dilemma model of nuclear security, which refused resolution by MAD, was only logically solvable by NUTS.⁹⁵

President Carter was especially susceptible and accountable to moral reasoning, a manifest fact amplified by his solo disapproval of the neutron bomb.⁹⁶ In 1978, Gregory Kavka, one of the first moral philosophers to become captivated by game theory, argued that deterrence in various forms of punitive retaliation, including massive nuclear retaliation, must be inherently immoral because it depends on taking an action that is evil, the wanton destruction of innocent people.⁹⁷ Kavka poses three questions. First, given the immorality of the contemplated retaliatory act, can it be reasonable to act on such an intention at the moment when deterrence has failed and all that remains is gross carnage?

like-minded strategists fully viewed PD 59 to be consistent with the gradual and persistent movement to NUTS from MAD mainly overseen by Schlesinger; for contemporary acknowledgment of this point, see "Information Memorandum for United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations," Memorandum from the Committee of Foreign Relations Meeting, September 9, 1980, p. 1 of 8, memorandum attached to memo from Jasper Welch to Brzezinski, Sept. 11, 1980, "5/80-1/81," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL. To see how procurement could be divorced from employment, see David Lewis, "Buy Like a MADman, Use Like a NUT," in his *Papers in Ethics and Social Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 219-228.

⁹³ Jervis, "Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation," 1988; *Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 1989; see also Paul M. Kattenburg, "MAD (Minimum Assured Deterrence) Is Still the Moral Position," in Charles W. Kegley Jr., and Kenneth L. Schwab, eds., *After the Cold War: Questioning the Morality of Nuclear Deterrence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 111-120.

⁹⁴ See, e.g., David Gauthier, *Morals by Agreement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), and especially his earlier "Deterrence, Maximization, and Rationality," *Ethics* (1984), 94:3, 474-495; on the relationship between the puzzle of nuclear deterrence and the Prisoner's Dilemma, see, e.g., Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution*, 1989, 129-133; and Gregory Kavka, *Moral Paradoxes of Nuclear Deterrence*, 1987, esp. 46-47.

⁹⁵ This historical record is clear that the moral scrutiny MAD received from philosophers who also used game theory, most prominently Gregory Kavka, first pointed out the immorality of even forming the intention to retaliate through a massive counter strike, see his "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* (1978) 75:6, 285-302.

⁹⁶ James R. Schlesinger makes clear both Carter's uncompromising moral character, which took a Kantian position on promises made, and his discomfort with nuclear weapons in "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 60-61, 72.

⁹⁷ Kavka, "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," 1978, 288, see also 286; one of the earliest expositions on game theory through the lens of moral theory is R. B. Braithwaite, *Theory of Games as a Tool for the Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955).

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Second, if it is clear that following through on such an intention must be immoral at the time of its enactment, then is it not the case that the mere formation of the deterrent intent of massive punitive harm is itself immoral? Third, in recognition of the patent immorality of both following through on the act and even the mere formation of the intention to implement the action, must it not be impossible for a moral agent to form such a deterrent intention?

According to this reasoning, deterrence via the threat of assured destruction is immoral. At the behest of President Carter, this deterrent threat must then be contrary to moral judgment, and as it contravenes Carter's bona fide moral preferences, it must be irrational. Enacting MAD once deterrence had failed would be patently immoral and contradicted the commander in chief's humane values. Hence, acting on this threat both failed to further US interests and entailed irreverence for human life and must therefore be irrational, and hence incredible. An incredible deterrent threat is less than worthless.

Schlesinger offered NUTS, or deterrence via strategic dominance, as the ideal antidote to this worrisome forfeit of national security. Despite its mismatch with strategic realities underlying superpower parity, NUTS demonstrated the willingness and ability to wage not only nuclear war but conflict at any level through the introduction of limited nuclear options (LMOs) that blurred the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons. It circumvented the immorality of MAD by threatening escalation control for any military engagement, proposing all forms of military action as means to prevail, rather than as the final desperate act of a defeated nation. The demonstrated intention was thus considered to be crucial, even more important than the actual feasibility in maintaining effective deterrence.

The tall order of escalation control, however, faces two challenges. First, not only are there no guarantees of capping nuclear confrontation, but "the amount of damage from a 'small' nuclear war might be so great that the damage caused by a small nuclear war might approach tha[t] expected in a full scale nuclear war."⁹⁸ Second, the pursuit of supremacy itself has destabilizing implications ensuring a Prisoner's Dilemma arms race at best and all-out war at worst. This point was raised at the Special Coordination Committee Meeting addressing a Memorandum for the President on the 1979 report "Nuclear Targeting Policy Review." With respect to the pursuit of strategic dominance, David Aaron noted that "stability at one level can be the enemy of deterrence at another level." He explained, "For example, overall strategic superiority may create a very stable situation with respect to deterring Soviet military initiatives, but be very destabilizing in the degree to which it encourage[s] Soviet efforts to improve and expand their forces."⁹⁹ Countervailing strategists viewed that worst-case scenarios entailed enemy aggression and not accidental or erroneous

⁹⁸ Lackey, "American Debate," 1987, 37.

⁹⁹ Special Coordination Committee Meeting, April 4, 1979, Detailed Minutes, along with the Top Secret Secretary of Defense Memorandum to the President on "Nuclear Targeting Policy Review," "8/78-4/79," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL.

misapplication of nuclear devices, proliferation, or the sheer destabilizing impact of mimicking a military posture consistent with preemptive attack.¹⁰⁰

Carter's dilemma was distinct from that of the counterforce supporters who came to predominate in his administration. Whereas they were content to offer war for war and war (or strategic dominance) for peace, Carter sought to maintain the stance of war for war and peace for peace, as was consistent with classical liberal bilateral assurance of cooperation, and mutual deterrence against pathological hostility. During his early days in office, Carter said that "a single Poseidon boat was enough retaliatory power, that it really can by itself destroy the Soviet Union, and we really don't need any more."¹⁰¹ Thus, while those promoting the Schlesinger Doctrine accepted the Prisoner's Dilemma model of nuclear security and arms race, Carter's position reflected Schelling's original question: how does a classical liberal or prospective cooperator deter a predator?¹⁰² Here is Carter's riddle as assessed by Kavka:

Let us call situations of the sort that nation N perceives itself as being in, Special Deterrent Situations (SDSs). More precisely, an agent is in an SDS when he reasonably and correctly believes that the following conditions hold. First, it is likely he must intend (conditionally) to apply a harmful sanction to innocent people, if an extremely harmful and unjust offense is to be prevented. Second, such an intention would very likely deter the offense. Third, the amounts of harm involved in the offense and the threatened sanction are very large and of roughly similar quantity (or the latter amount is smaller than the former). Finally, he would have conclusive moral reasons not to apply the sanction if the offense were to occur.¹⁰³

Carter initially sought to maintain the openness of offering cooperation in exchange for cooperation and demonstrating the unequivocal greatness of Western institutions of market freedom and democratic self-governance. The challenge before him was to deter a predator without becoming one and to maintain the attitude of seeking mutual assurance of cooperation while still having the wherewithal to deter invasion.

Writing in 1978, Kavka had little wisdom for Carter because he finds that "in an SDS, a rational and morally good agent cannot (as a matter of logic) have (or form) the intention to apply the sanction if the offense [military attack] is committed."¹⁰⁴ According to Kavka, the only way around this conclusion is to tie one's decision making to a mechanical device, adopt a corrupted character, or defer to those actors whose character is morally ambiguous. Neither of the first two was possible for Carter. Therefore, NUTS advocates embodied the

¹⁰⁰ For pointed discussion, see Lackey, "American Debate," 1987, 36-37.

¹⁰¹ Statement by Schlesinger, "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 72.

¹⁰² Accepting the PD model of the nuclear security dilemma, of course, entails all the steps from the initial Stag Hunt modified by uncertainty, viewing the threat of MAD incredible, yet also accepting the Chicken game model of brinkmanship in which each prefers to be the sole defector.

¹⁰³ Kavka, "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," 1978, 286-287.

¹⁰⁴ "Ibid., 292.

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third possibility, and they conceded the PD preference ranking for unilateral defection.¹⁰⁵ Schlesinger certainly maintained that the United States should maintain dominance among competitors and hegemony over allies.

The victory of NUTS over MAD is logically unassailable if one accepts the Prisoner's Dilemma representation of mutual security and the comprehensive reach of strategic rationality. As a result, President Carter exchanged the opportunity to emphasize the mutual assurance of amicable coexistence in favor of the United States demonstrating the predilection and capacity for unilateral defection in striving for ascendance. This posture seemed to solve the nuclear Prisoner's Dilemma game, if the main worry were issuing a credible deterrent threat and having a plan to engage in violence for every conceivable Soviet action. However, if one's main anxiety were to reduce chances for potential conflict as a shared responsibility or if one worried that the capability to dominate, even if not exercised, still maintains the potential to exercise asymmetric advantage, NUTS is unsatisfactory because it risks inviting the adversary to preemptive engagement and flirts with multiplying the dangers of accident and proliferation, not to mention that it stockpiles more weapons than could reasonably fulfil a meaningful destructive purpose.¹⁰⁶

THE TACIT ALLIANCE BETWEEN OFFENSIVE REALISM AND GAME THEORY

It may seem like a bold claim to assert that applying game theory to solving the problem of nuclear deterrence, and to the more general international relations challenge of anarchy, not only sets up MAD to lose to NUTS but also results in a predatory defense posture. However, if it is generally accepted that game theory is the gold standard of instrumental rationality, then it becomes apparent that the boldness of the assertion does not lie in claiming too much authority for game theory. Instead, it resides in the implication that game theory structures decision making in a manner that restricts agents from utilizing resources and logics of action outside its scope. When stated in this way, most rational choice theorists would likely agree that decision theory represents the state-of-the-art approach to sound action, and that rationales for judgment outside its scope are not only unsubstantiated but also invalid.¹⁰⁷ Jervis observes that "In micro-economics, SEU [subjective expected utility] theories can be both descriptive

¹⁰⁵ Lackey reads Kavka to conclude that it is OK to issue the deterrent threat, so long as one does not, as a moral actor, implement it in the case that deterrence fails, but Kavka is clear that this is not a possible position for the rational and moral actor; Lackey, "American Debate," 1987, 40.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Pettit argues that even if another actor has the power to dominate but does not act on it, this still implies the less powerful agent is subject to domination; "Keeping Republican Freedom Simple," *Political Theory* (2002), 30:3, 339–356.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., Robert Nozick, *The Nature of Rationality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); for an opposed view, see Jean Hampton, *The Authority of Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

and prescriptive because of the argument that only those who behave in accordance with them can flourish.”¹⁰⁸ Game theory buttresses offensive realism by equating sound judgment with the eschewal of “irrational” or metaphysical considerations consistent with idealism, social constructivism, or naivety.¹⁰⁹ Insofar as offensive realism can boast of being consistent with game theoretic strategic rationality, then its pedigree and policy proposals seem credible beyond dispute.

In his recent defense of defensive realism against its offensive alternative, Tang directly states that his argument rests on acknowledging that “ontological reason must take priority over instrumental reason” in appraising the security dilemma.¹¹⁰ This idea of straying from instrumental rationality to marshal a defensive realist national security protocol is not reassuring to those who view the world from the perspective of *realpolitik*. Yet, ahead I show how the originators of a classical liberal perspective that rests on a reciprocal stance of not harming others believed they were advancing a strict pragmatism to solve the security dilemma. Recall the elementary theoretical commitments structuring game theory. Only ends, and not the means by which they are obtained, register in payoffs. This assumption rejects the no-harm principle, fair play, the internalization of norms, and commitment to agreements made, unless decision rules not limited to individual optimization are introduced.¹¹¹ Payoffs in many game contexts, specifically those that are repeating or involve multiple actors, are assumed to reflect an intersubjectively obvious resource over which actors vie as a criterion of success within their environment.¹¹² Solidarity and team reasoning are contrary to the individualistic maximization deemed consistent with instrumental rationality. Altruism, although possible in principle, is either too difficult to track mathematically or even more likely too costly.

Each of these assumptions is consistent with a *realpolitik* approach to international relations. From this perspective, the *raison d'état* supersedes principled action and norm-governed conduct.¹¹³ It stands to reason that instrumentally astute states will acquire the scarce natural resources necessary to project power through causal efficacy. Maximin logic of strategic independence demands acting so as not to be dependent on any other actor. Solidarity and altruism

¹⁰⁸ Jervis, “Rational Deterrence: Theory and Evidence,” *World Politics* (1989), 41:2, 183–207, at 188.

¹⁰⁹ In his *Nuclear Ethics* (1986), Nye argues that a “realist-Cosmopolitan” synthesis is necessary to ensure the incorporation of humane values into international relations beyond pure instrumental means, 34–41; see also Michale W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace* 1997, 205–300.

¹¹⁰ Shiping Tang, *A Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time: Defensive Realism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 50.

¹¹¹ Nye argues that to be effective nuclear deterrence should encompass both a purely rational set of considerations and nonrational considerations that provide the overall significance of national identity and existential ethos; *Nuclear Ethics*, 1986, 106–107.

¹¹² On realism’s deferral to fungible value, see Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 1997, 47.

¹¹³ Tuck argues that this concern was fundamental for the originators of classical liberalism; see *The Rights of War and Peace*, 1999, esp. 1–15.

are easily rejected by the realist, the first because it is contrary to reason, and the latter because only the altruism that pays is worthwhile.

To understand the contrast between strategic rationality and offensive realism on one hand and defensive realism and classical liberalism on the other, let us consider four questions. First, how is self-preservation defined, and what are its imperatives? Second, what is the source of value that affords instrumental power? Third, what is the source of power that enables purposive action among other purposive actors? Fourth, what steps are necessary to deter a predator? These questions offer insight into how strategic rationality offers a perspective on the character of purposive action that forecloses on the possibilities for cooperation anticipated by classical liberalism and defensive realism. Awareness of game theory's predisposition toward offensive realism provides actors with a vantage point from which to evaluate which position makes more sense.

Self-Preservation

Game theory shares with offensive realism the view that an actor's identity is defined by the actor's preferences and opportunities. From the perspective of rational choice, no natural boundaries to personal or national identity define a perimeter, which if transgressed, represents harm. From the perspective of offensive realism, "there is no possibility of drawing a sharp line between the will-to-live and the will-to-power."¹¹⁴ This means that the survival of a state in anarchy depends on the continual augmentation of power, regardless of the effect on other states. Hence, resonating with Schlesinger's strategic wisdom, offensive realist John Mearsheimer recommends the policy of hegemony to secure the immediate survival and long-term prospects of a powerful state.¹¹⁵

It is not immediately obvious that rational choice theory tacitly endorses the pursuit of hegemony among states, or the exercise of domination among individuals.¹¹⁶ Certainly, the PD preference matrix accepts that every actor will cheat the other, even if that party already cooperated. Both offensive

¹¹⁴ This is quoted from Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960 [1932]), 42 by Tang, *Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time*, 2010, 19. Note that Tang suggests that all realists endorse Niebuhr's view, but Tang subsequently goes on to explain why the defensive realist does not view that self-preservation depends on expansionist or revisionist goals, essentially suggesting that there is some boundary condition, or threshold condition, demarcating the dictates of security that is not equivalent to unconstrained maximization of power, see, esp., 43–58.

¹¹⁵ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001); for discussion, see Tang, *Theory of Security Strategy for Our Time*, 2010, 58.

¹¹⁶ However, it is possible to surmise this from the Prisoner's Dilemma analysis of international relations hegemonic stability theory, Duncan Snidal, "The Limits of Hegemonic Stability Theory," *International Organization* (1985), 39:4, 579–614; and state of nature underlying social contract theory, Michael Taylor, *Anarchy and Cooperation* (New York: John Wiley, 1976).

realism and game theory accept that actors would if they could without negative repercussions seek resources without limit, despite the impact on others, and therefore will tend to express PD preferences that track fungible rewards. Strategically rational individuals have preference orderings that by design rule out side constraints, fair play, and commitment, which evaluate the appropriateness of action choices based on procedural considerations. They therefore do not recognize or uphold a threshold demarcating self-preservation distinct from the conquest of others. Hence, the theoretical structure of game theory presupposes an offensive realist orientation to interactions among states and people.¹¹⁷

The classical liberal who views the security of selfhood, whether of a corporeal person or physical territory, in terms of maintenance of the status quo, is able to differentiate between harming others and self-defense. Acting on the principle of no-harm requires both striving to understand how to enact the concept and constraining one's actions accordingly.¹¹⁸ Rational choice theory renders it difficult to express the idea that perpetuation of selfhood is not equivalent to unconstrained preference satisfaction. Consequently, the game theoretical perspective of agentive identity is at odds with the classical liberal commonsensical intuition that it is possible to define self-preservation without encumbering it with expansionist intention or unavoidable cross purposes against others.

Source of Value Enabling Purposive Agency

Offensive realism and game theory both presuppose the existence of raw value, or sources of power in the world that are both necessary for manifesting purposive action and have value prior to and independent from institutions and social practices.¹¹⁹ This approach to value is appealing in international relations because the idea of anarchy among nations builds on the assumption that instrumental efficacy is independent of qualities of relationships between

¹¹⁷ For discussion, see Philip Green, *Deadly Logic: Theory of Nuclear Deterrence* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1966), 213–253.

¹¹⁸ Note that international relations neoliberal institutionalists and defensive realist theorists declare that the bright-line distinction between their position and that of offensive realists is their focus on “absolute gains” versus “relative gains.” Robert Powell, “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations,” in Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, 1993, 209–233; Duncan Snidal, “Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation,” in *ibid.*, 170–208. However, I dispute that this is a sufficient criterion to defend classical liberalism. Even a focus on absolute gains in a PD game accords to actors the predilection to seek unilateral gain at others' expense, and the determination of the PD payoff structure will be deduced from preferences tracking fungible sources of value, e.g., Andrew Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁹ This game theoretic presupposition for standard operationalization is most evident in Roger Myerson, *Game Theory: Analysis of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3, 22–26; it is outrightly stated by Shaun Hargreaves Heap and Yanis Varoufakis, *Game Theory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 209.

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states. Therefore, the source of value underlying the power of nations by definition preexists sociability.¹²⁰

This standpoint is also incorporated into the foundations of game theory. The original understanding of games anchoring the mathematics of its prodigious founder, von Neumann, was that payoffs tracked an ontological property of the world. Interpersonally transferable utility is necessary for zero-sum games, the original focus in *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*.¹²¹ Von Neumann's perspective presumes that value tracks a quality such as temperature in physics, suggesting that utility as the source of value is similar to energy states that are the underlying cause of temperature. In zero-sum games, the payoffs are intersubjectively precise and are not a function of individual's subjective interpretation.¹²² Many games of interest in international relations and political economy identify payoffs relying on a direct statement of tangible resources.¹²³ If actors compete over scarce resources conveying the instrumental power to achieve goals, then any encounter with another actor potentially has the Prisoner's Dilemma structure in which every actor has the first preference for suckering the other and taking all the disputed resources.

The other avenue of defining utility, permitting it to be subjective, such that the payoffs to games are a psychological property of actors that does not necessarily track any specific ontological feature of the world, renders that uncertainty about the intentions of the other actor is perpetual. However, expected utility theory must be applied, and this theory will default to tracking fungible value.¹²⁴ Here, again, offensive realism and game theory reach the same conclusion.¹²⁵ Even if there is a good objective reason, based on interpersonally transferable utility, to model a security dilemma as an Assurance Game, it is wise for the security strategist to accept that actors may interpret the significance of outcomes according to some idiosyncratic means of judgment

¹²⁰ This position is inconsistent with Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), a point I explore in the next chapter.

¹²¹ For discussion, see Nicola Giocoli, "Do Prudent Agents Play Lotteries: Von Neumann's Contribution to the Theory of Rational Behavior," *Journal for the History of Economic Thought* (2006), 28:1, 95–109.

¹²² It is not without irony that the only way to obtain precise value for von Neumann in most contexts was to default to relying on cash value, which is the product of complex networks of interaction, yet he treated it as though it were like temperature in physics; John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1944), 23.

¹²³ Von Neumann Morgenstern utilities that track an interpersonally transferable source of value can be subjectively modified by an affine translation without slipping into a more individualistic and encompassing subjectivity, von Neumann and Morgenstern, *Theory of Games*, 1944, 23–29; for the assumption of interpersonally transferable utility, see Thomas Schelling, who employs this vocabulary in "Hockey Helmets, Concealed Weapons, and Daylight Saving: A Study of Binary Choices with Externalities," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1973) 17:3, 381–428.

¹²⁴ Myerson, *Game Theory*, 1991, 3, 22–26.

¹²⁵ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 1997, 47.

that is forever opaque to each actor. This is Schelling's argument that permitted the nuclear security dilemma, which he assumed best resembled a Stag Hunt, to be translated into a Prisoner's Dilemma game on the basis of irreducible uncertainty, which he quantified as 80% risk.

The initial and crucial step in understanding the difference in approach between offensive realism and defensive realism is to see that the latter is confident that there are potential sources of value and power to act that transcend those raw resources that are available in an anarchic state of nature. The argumentative move taken by classical liberals is to note the common ground all actors have in confronting the proverbial state of nature; this offers as much epistemological confidence as does instrumental rationality's acceptance of cause and effect.¹²⁶ Whereas for the rational strategist, the only intersubjectively accessible and causally efficacious value is interpersonally transferable utility, for the classical liberal, value is created on the basis of finite resources by establishing practices predicated on mutual toleration and shared expectations that depend on relinquishing the intent to harm others.¹²⁷

The first of these sources of value is the prospect dividend, or the value of resources to their owner who can be confident in their possession, which results from the mutual tolerance facilitating self-preservation. Whether or not it is agreed that mutual toleration is a viable practice, it is at least possible to agree that, in principle, if actors did not threaten each other, then the classical liberal world carved into distinct property rights would yield value over and above the value of the extant raw resources.¹²⁸ Security in possession is worth more than simple possession. Actors would pay more to keep what they already own than its fungible value, which means that no actor has the ability to pay for the conditions of his livelihood as subjectively valued with all of his resources actually on hand. Prospect theory reveals that goods in hand are worth more than their replacement cost. Therefore, security in possession is worth more than the fungible value of all the resources available to purchase replacement and supersedes its base material resource value.

Already then the classical liberal sees a source of value that is not available to the offensive realist: security of possession. Another source of value is that gained through sociable forms of interaction, either in institutions or through normative conduct. Maritime law, finance, aviation, science, and technological innovation provide sources of value that are not possible in a state of nature.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13.

¹²⁷ Note the temptation for international relations theorists to presume that a devotee of realism and *realpolitik* must track sources of value commensurate with the laws of physics; see, for example, Randall Schweller, *Maxwell's Demon and the Golden Apple: Global Discord in the New Millennium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

¹²⁸ Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* (1979) 47:2, 262–292.

¹²⁹ This is a central point for Hobbes in *Leviathan*, Chapter XIII [in passage with phrase, "life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.]"

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The neoliberal school of international relations makes the case for the value of institutions and the possibility of cooperation but tries to derive this social capital from the purely strategic considerations of rational choice.¹³⁰ However, as I argue, it is ultimately impossible to rescue classic liberalism from within the confines of game theoretic strategic rationality. On this point, the offensive realist school agrees, arguing that liberalism necessarily tends toward some form of idealism or passivism.

Source of the Power to Act in the World

For the offensive realist and rational strategist, there is one source of power to act in the world: marshaling the instrumental means to threaten other actors.¹³¹ Domination is the means of successful exploitation. In the nuclear era, as Schelling recognized and emphasized, threatening to harm others is often sufficient, even without actually following through. Within international relations, for the offensive realist and according to the game theoretic approach pioneered by Schelling, it follows deductively from the view of self-preservation and of value that applied violence is the currency of purposive action. Tang describes this position: “[Glen] Snyder explicitly argues that an imperialist state will pursue both conquest and intimidation (Snyder 1985, 165), and Mearsheimer emphasizes that an offensive realist state is not a ‘mindless aggressor’ (Mearsheimer 2001, 37), thus also implying that intimidation is a tool of an offensive realist state.”¹³² Conveniently, as Schelling observed in 1960, the threat of applying pain to the opposition is often sufficient, without actually needing to perpetrate violence. Tang continues,

Hence, seeking to establish hegemony with intimidation, although perhaps more palatable for the victim, is still a form of intentionally threatening other states. As a matter of fact, intimidation is an especially “wise” strategy when the aspiring hegemon still lacks the material power to impose its will, or it is simply too costly to impose hegemony by force, because it allows the hegemon to be viewed as not “excessively” aggressive.¹³³

Violence must be calibrated and prescribed in doses to achieve its greatest effect. The proponents of the nuclear war plan of NUTS stood united with game theorists in perceiving that social order, understood to be the achievement of an actor’s way in the world among other strategic actors such that favorable stability arises, is the product of knowing the oppositions’ preferences and leveraging the threat of punishment to influence their choices. Rewards also

¹³⁰ This approach is articulated by Robert Axelrod and Robert O. Keohane, “Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy: Strategies and Institutions,” in Baldwin, ed., *Nerealism and Neoliberalism*, 1993, 85–115.

¹³¹ Technically, positive incentives may be used as well, but coercive threats are more typical in the arena of national security; Thomas Schelling, “War without Pain, and Other Models,” *World Politics* (1963), 15:3, 465–487.

¹³² Tang, *Theory of Security Strategy*, 2010, 58.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

function as incentives and can be perceived as the removal of harm or the threat to harm.

The ability to rationally threaten harm in precisely measured doses is both what enables actors to realize goals and the force producing the social order that exists. Social order, such as it exists, is produced out of anarchy by vying for sources of raw power that are independent from sociability. Under the best of circumstances, strategic competition results in regular patterns, as opposed to the unpredictable chaos that could be expected in a perpetual state of war. Where strategists understand perceptions to influence judgment, the most cautious interpretation of others' intentions is employed in strategic analysis.

The classical liberal and the defensive realist do not dispute that natural resources, subject to the laws of physics, convey the instrumental power to act in the world. However, they depart from strategic rationality in holding the opinion that the ability to act among other purposive agents relies on shared expectations and norms and a tacit or explicit system of rights. These arise from proposing a different reconciliation of the security dilemma that perplexes the offensive realist and the game theoretic approach to security.¹³⁴ This alternative resolution rests on viewing the requirements of self-preservation to be built up from reproducing patterns of sustainability that respect the status quo rather than reflect an unbounded maximization of expected gain. It pivots on retracting the threat of harming others, in direct contrast to offensive realism and strategic rationality. Classical liberalism proposes pursuing mutual viability and even cooperative exchange through reassurance that one's intention is not to exploit or dominate others.¹³⁵ According to this view, agents bear responsibility for not compromising others' security to pursue their own. A classical liberal could in self-defense act on strategic imperatives, but this would be an aberration rather than the rule.¹³⁶

By adopting this approach to the security dilemma, the classical liberal and the defensive realist are poised to capitalize on three sources of value that transcend the raw power the offensive realist and rational strategist pursue. These are the prospect dividend, social capital resulting from shared ventures, and unbounded good will and civility that arise from sociability and mutual respect.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ For Kydd, whether a security dilemma is a Prisoner's Dilemma in which every actor seeks to sucker others is strictly determined from a calculation of fungible rewards; *Trust and Mistrust*, 2007.

¹³⁵ See, e.g., Tang, *Theory of Security Strategy*, 2010, 70.

¹³⁶ For discussion, see Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1983) 12:3, 205-235, notice Immanuel Kant's allowance for asocial sociability.

¹³⁷ This source of value is achieved by the manifestation of circumstances conveying value to their experiencers that far outpaces the value of the scarce and tangible resources giving them corporeal existence. See, e.g., Seth Godin, *Lynchpin: Are You Indispensable?* (New York: Penguin, 2010). It builds on the insights of Amartya Sen, who argues that with respect to the social capital of human resources, the experiential value and productive power of capability and

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Like the prospect dividend, social capital, or commonly held institutions and infrastructure, is dependent on resources. Yet it too embodies value beyond the raw power to instrumentally achieve goals or strategically intimidate others, through yielding the right to harm others by maintaining a formal or informal set of mutual expectations. This system of tacit or explicit rights is not the product of violent threats and de facto possession. As Hobbes argues, such a system requires the threat of force to assure participants and to thwart rouge predators but otherwise relies on voluntary compliance.¹³⁸

The neoliberal, offensive realist approach flagrantly contradicts this understanding of a shared world of purposive agency by insisting that the rational actor recognizes no limitations to preference satisfaction and the will to power other than incentives. From this perspective, both oneself and others pursue self-defense and self-gain in a self-help system without exit. The classical liberal calls on two modes of action that the rational strategist disregards for being irrational. The first is voluntarily constraining one's actions so as not to harm or threaten others. The second is following the norms of a system that provide the extra social capital value over and above raw resources valuable in anarchy. The first may be thought of as side constraints to action that facilitate a universal system of individual, or national, rights to self-preservation.¹³⁹ The second has the characteristics of fair play, pointed to by both Adam Smith and John Rawls as fundamental to enacting a capitalist system predicated on realizing exchange value beyond the raw power of natural resources that served as the criterion of value under mercantilism.¹⁴⁰

For the purposes of classical liberalism and defensive realism, it is worth pointing out, but not dwelling on, the other additional source of value available once the security dilemma has been resolved through a system of mutual expectations and rights built up from reciprocal respect rather than the perpetual deployment of threats to harm. Whereas the prospect dividend and social capital discussed earlier are linked to scarce resources, and therefore remain a finite source of value, there is the potential for unbounded positive sum value that may accrue from amicable social relations in the form of friendship, aesthetic beauty, good will, understanding, healing, trust, and esteem that of course remain dependent on the incarnation of ontologically existing properties yet convey potentially unlimited subjective value. The offensive realist and

functioning outpace the sheer financial wherewithal to capture value that must be inherently finite; see *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999), and *Rationality and Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002).

¹³⁸ Discussed in Chapter 5.

¹³⁹ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 1997, 205–314; this has its parallel in civil society, articulated as side constraints that permit the practice of property rights; see Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974).

¹⁴⁰ Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 1997, 230–250; see also Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); for commentary, see S. M. Amadae, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); John Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1970), chaps. 5 and 6.

neoliberal approaches, which both instrumentalize and commodify all value, cannot recognize unbounded sources of value because the single criterion metric useful for strategic manipulation cannot stray too far from raw power without taking on the aura of transcendent or metaphysical value.¹⁴¹

Classical liberals and defensive realists stand confident on three points. First, they perceive that the sources of value and the power to act among purposive agents derive from mutual respect over and above raw resources. Second, whereas strategic rationality treats others as mere means to achieve goals, purposive action for the classical liberal is characterized by self-knowledge and the acknowledgment of like-minded agents who see relationships as a way to achieve mutual goals. To prosper is to create constructive channels of mutual exchange based on the right to exist as an end in oneself, rather than a mere means.¹⁴² Third, classical liberals see the dictates of their own self-preservation as compatible with others' like imperatives, and they have the self-knowledge to be certain that they will cooperate if guaranteed or assured that others will do so as well.

Of course, no reassurance can be offered to an offensive realist to obtain mutual cooperation because the offensive realist views the requirements of self-perpetuation as inherently mutually antagonistic. A strategic rationalist could, however, accept that the security dilemma is a Stag Hunt. Let us suppose with game theorist Andrew Kydd that a state calculates that it is in its best interest to cooperate.¹⁴³ If this calculation tracks raw resources over which actors compete, then the classical liberal must always be wary that the rational strategist may at any moment calculate that aggressive expansion is the best policy.¹⁴⁴ If this calculation is predicated on subjective factors, then perceptions remain forever opaque. Furthermore, the rational strategist does not admit or act on the perception that mutual respect, rather than a combination of raw power and calibrated incentives some violent, is what enables purposive actors to be the most effective in realizing value. The offensive realist and the rational strategist thus remain perplexed by the Prisoner's Dilemma model of the national security

¹⁴¹ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (New York: Routledge, 2011, reprint edition), presents a clear argument for how bourgeois capitalism permits the development of value beyond both zero-sum division of tangible resources into allotments bounded by de facto or legal possession and security of possession to the aesthetic products of culture in the arts and humanities.

¹⁴² Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, 1997, 205–214.

¹⁴³ See how Kydd defines states' security prerogatives based on whether they view their requirements with respect to a PD or Stag Hunt sheerly as a matter of calculation, *Trust and Mistrust*, 2005, esp. 7–8. Note that with respect to resource dilemmas and the social contract, it is generally accepted that the PD model applies with Brian Skyrms' *The Stag Hunt and the Evolution of Social Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) being the exception; on the game theoretic analysis of whether Hobbes's state of nature is best represented by a PD or Stag Hunt, see Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁴ Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust*, 2007, 7–8, makes clear that forming a relationship with a rational strategist depends on always identifying when it may be in that actor's interest to exploit one's interests.

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impasse. For them, self-help and anarchy cannot be exited or transcended. By making the concessions to the PD payoff matrix and the exhaustive reach of strategic rationality, the offensive realist ends up trapped in the Prisoner's Dilemma. The focal remedy then is the hope that the situation is indefinitely and exactly repeated, so that incentives are endogenous to the interaction.¹⁴⁵

So far, the difference between the two realisms and two liberalism hinges on a difference of opinion about what makes action intelligible and meaningful, with the offensive realists and neoliberal political economists placing their reliance on a single model of instrumental agency, and the defensive realists and classical liberals having a broader scope.¹⁴⁶ In looking to mutual respect instead of credible threats to bootstrap out of a state of nature, classical liberals endorse the no-harm principle as the source of the prospect dividend. They understand that fair play is the basis of social capital. They also comprehend that commitment to agreements made is not only fundamental to the prospect dividend and to social capital but further provides the basis for realizing unbounded sources of value in friendship, justice, trust, good will, and fulfillment.

The classical liberal further rejects the idea that all value can be measured on a single scale. A scale tethered to tangible resources of central interest to realists is insufficient to adequately capture the manner in which cooperative ventures that grow out of the no-harm principle, mutual respect, and commitment generate more value than the total allotment of physical attributes permitting them to exist. Game theory purports to acknowledge the same insight by claiming to offer a comprehensive science of decision making. However, the mathematically tractable default of using cash value for payoffs makes it in principle impossible to reflect even the prospect dividend. Agents' appraisal of value must ultimately be demonstrated by their willingness and *ability* to pay for goods. As actors' de facto ability to pay for goods cannot exceed their goods on hand, there is no practical way for any agent to express, or accordingly register, that the value of their lives or property exceeds the raw resources granting their existence.

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

The paradox of nuclear deterrence, like the Prisoner's Dilemma, seems to require that conditions necessary for a satisfactory solution contradict the aims and preferences of the actor seeking to deter. Whereas the United States is a nation whose public image is based on the fundamental values consistent with classical liberalism, deterring the potentially aggressive Soviet Union seemed to require abandoning a position of offering cooperation for cooperation and military

¹⁴⁵ Axelrod and Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy," 1993; the repeated Prisoner's Dilemma and its idealized unstable equilibrium is discussed in Chapter 11, "Tit for Tat."

¹⁴⁶ Note, for example, how Nye, *Nuclear Ethics*, 1986, 27-41, suggests that realism could be compatible with a cosmopolitan approach to world politics; however, his discussion implies that cosmopolitanism adds considerations above and beyond a strictly realist approach.

engagement for aggression. Even though moving to the footing of NUTS contradicted the material fact that the world was not large enough to accommodate useful detonation of all the accumulated thermonuclear warheads, still strategists concluded that maintaining deterrence must rely on pursuing the bid for nuclear supremacy and credibly sustaining the intention to wage nuclear war if necessary.

However, in taking this path, strategists underplayed the threat of nuclear mishap through error, accident, or escalation and ignored the common ground of Earth's inhabitants shared not just by the Soviet Union and the United States, but also by other nations, of living in a habitable environment. Leaving aside for the moment the difficulty of the puzzle of solving nuclear deterrence, we can conclude that by the 1980s the game theoretic approach to nuclear security stood as "normal science," to invoke Thomas S. Kuhn's paradigmatic language.¹⁴⁷ The game theorist Steven J. Brams published a comprehensive treatment of superpower conflict that modeled deterrence as a Chicken game and the arms race as a Prisoner's Dilemma.¹⁴⁸ He concludes that "we may wish the strategic problems the superpowers face were not so obdurate, but, in a curious way, their obduracy forces the players to come to grips with the haunting dilemmas, especially involving the use of nuclear weapons, to which these game give rise."¹⁴⁹ The puzzle of nuclear deterrence and the need to exercise sovereignty by deploying nuclear weapons coevolved with coming to view game theory as the canonical statement of purposive rationality. Quoting the political theorist David Gauthier, Brams finds, along with the nuclear strategists sustaining credible deterrence and game theorists more broadly that "the alternative to eschewing all threat behavior, in the bluntest terms 'can only be the willingness to accept victimization, to suffer passively a nuclear strike, or to acquiesce in whatever the potential striker demands as the price of its avoidance.'" ¹⁵⁰ Thus Brams finds that both the exigencies of nuclear deterrence and the recommendations of strategic rationality necessitate moving to a stance of threatening harm as a vital means of self-defense.

In 1980, the moral philosopher Kavka revisited the morality of deterrence and identified a firmer deference for MAD that denied both the Prisoner's Dilemma structure of the problem and the all-inclusive reach of strategic rationality.¹⁵¹ In his essay, Kavka provides a glimmer of clarity for the defensive

¹⁴⁷ Thomas S. Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 50th anniversary edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Steven J. Brams, *Superpower Games: Applying Game Theory to Superpower Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 36, quote from David Gauthier, "Deterrence, Maximization, and Rationality," *Ethics* (1984) 94:3, 99–120, 494. Brams's quotation from Gauthier shows the tight relationship between the philosophy of deterrence, rational choice theory, and game theoretic analysis of superpower strategy.

¹⁵¹ Gregory Kavka, "Deterrence, Utility, and Rational Choice," *Theory and Decision* (1980), 12, 41–60. Kavka's earlier work, discussed in "The Inescapable Irrationality of MAD" section is "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," 1978.

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realist and classical liberal who seek to assure others of their cooperative orientation yet have sufficient influence to deter predators. Dovetailing his analysis with rational decision theory and John Rawls's appropriation of von Neumann's minimax principle to secure his second principle of justice, Kavka performs a rigorous utilitarian analysis of whether rational choice most supports (1) unilateral disarmament, (2) counter value deterrence via MAD, or (3) counterforce deterrence via NUTS.¹⁵² In this second paper, Kavka concludes that, indeed, the position most consistent with nuclear strategic realities and utilitarian ethics is that of minimal deterrence via MAD. Disarmament is too likely to lead to Soviet domination. Counterforce targeting is too destabilizing for mimicking preemptive weaponry and granting such capability, and it perpetuates arms racing.¹⁵³ Kavka solves his earlier problem, which President Carter faced, of issuing a credible deterrent threat by focusing on the overall beneficial implications of maintaining deterrence. Kavka argues that his worries articulated in "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence" may be overcome along the lines of Schelling's invocation of chance: so long as the Soviet Union is not 100% certain that there will be no retaliatory consequences for its attack on the United States, deterrence is sufficiently plausible given the catastrophic nature of nuclear warfare.¹⁵⁴

The most interesting feature of Kavka's proposed resolution of the nuclear security dilemma with MAD is that he takes up Schelling's burden of answering the offensive realist's challenge of how to deter an aggressor signified by accepting the PD model. Kavka observes, "One view of the balance of terror is that it results from each side selfishly pursuing its national interests, rather than adopting a moral posture and seeking to promote the interests of mankind as whole."¹⁵⁵ In other words, no adequate resolution of the nuclear security dilemma can ignore this worry that either the United States or the Soviet Union seeks success through exploitation and risks annihilating both nations and more countries besides. Kavka concludes that given the impossibility of sufficiently reducing uncertainty about the other's intentions, maintaining deterrence as opposed to disarming, for the time being, is essential for national security. Not only does Kavka reject NUTS in favor of MAD, but he also proposes that the long-term solution to dissolving the nuclear standoff will only arise from altering the other's perceptions by assuring that party of one's own cooperative intention. Thus, he recommends "changing U.S. and Soviet *perceptions* of each other and gradually building mutual trust between the two nations and their governments."¹⁵⁶ Here, Kavka

¹⁵² John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 1970.

¹⁵³ Kavka, "Deterrence, Utility, and Rational Choice," 1980, 55–56.

¹⁵⁴ Even in reading and rereading Kavka's "Some Paradoxes of Deterrence," 1978, and "Deterrence, Utility, and Rational Choice," 1980, essays, the philosopher remains unclear on how deterrence can be defended by the purely moral and perfectly rational actor; this is my most charitable reading to render his overall conclusion intelligible.

¹⁵⁵ Kavka, "Deterrence, Utility, and Rational Choice," 1980, 58.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

rejects offensive neorealism by suggesting that neither nation is inherently aggressive and proposes that each build trust, and he invites us to question the overarching reach of strategic rationality.¹⁵⁷

Thus, Kavka's proposed reconciliation of Cold War nuclear tensions offers a means to solve the problem of issuing a credible threat, accepts the challenge of a PD model for the security dilemma and arms race, yet recommends building trust over time by assuring the other of one's reciprocal cooperation. His philosophical work, which gained acknowledgment in the 1980s, seems to suggest that one can successfully defend MAD against NUTS even within the paradigm of strategic rationality.¹⁵⁸ However, in his 1980 defense of MAD, Kavka circumvents Schelling's two admissions. He first insists on acknowledging uncertainty about the intentions of the other, ultimately suggesting that the countenance of cooperation befits a superpower with appropriate moral values. Of course, the problem here is that once a superpower stipulates that it prefers mutual cooperation over mutual defection, then it will be flat footed in both the Chicken game of nuclear deterrence and bargaining in the overarching arms race. However, given that the common interest in avoiding nuclear war outpaces that of maintaining a bid for nuclear ascendance, the exercise of nuclear sovereignty invites placing national integrity consistent with defensive realism and classical liberalism on the highest level of priority. Hence, second, Kavka opens the door to recognizing trust as a category of action on par with reciprocal no-harm that exceeds the standard operationalization of strategic rationality.

In conclusion, some points are evident:

1. By 1980, Prisoner's Dilemma fulfilled multiple functions: it captured the toughest case security dilemma as well as more mundane ones besides, it reflected the arms race, and thus it came to represent the state of anarchy and the puzzle of emerging from it.
2. The PD is a core logical puzzle at the heart of noncooperative game theory and it is reinforced by game theorists' assumption that actors pursue fungible scarce resources in competition with each other, and the fact

¹⁵⁷ This is a key point that will be discussed in full in the introduction to Part II: Government. Is moral agency wholly consistent with strategic rationality, or must strategic rationality displace some views of moral conduct? The philosopher who addresses this question most directly in conjunction with nuclear deterrence, no less, is David Gauthier in "Deterrence, Maximization, and Rationality," 1984; Joseph S. Nye Jr., in *Nuclear Ethics*, 1986, concludes that the United States must have motives that transcend strategic rationality to maintain the integrity of its values. Brams, *Superpower Games*, 1985, suggests wholly working within the confines of strategic rationality, but it is difficult to surmise if he takes a position that would support MAD vs. NUTS; no rational deterrence theorist appears to have offered a sound defense of MAD over NUTS within the context of the 1970s nuclear security debate.

¹⁵⁸ Lackey, "American Debate," 1987, 40-41. It is improbable that Carter was aware of Kavka's papers, but of all the contemporaneous literature discussing nuclear security, Kavka's reasoning was most pertinent to Carter's orientation.

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- that insecurity in an Assurance Game appears indistinguishable from a Prisoner's Dilemma to external observers.
3. The PD representation of the paradox of nuclear deterrence reinforced the view that deterring an aggressor requires threatening punitive force that mimics suckering the other actor by defecting, recommends coercive bargaining to ensure one's most favorable settlement, and transposes the exercise of ensuring one's own cooperation into threatening sanctions on others to secure their compliance.
 4. Within the paradigm of strategic rationality, NUTS must win the nuclear security debate because it sustains the practice of issuing credible threats, engaging in coercive bargaining, and using flexible nuclear forces to exert escalation dominance. MAD relies on the manifest fact of essential equivalence, building a common recognition of the futility of full-scale thermonuclear war and the high probability of escalation into this situation should nuclear confrontation break out, and it deters via counter-attack instead of flexible escalation using evolving nuclear options.¹⁵⁹
 5. Viewing relations through the lens of noncooperative game theory, which itself carries the claim of exhaustive validity over all decision making and renders focal the Prisoner's Dilemma by its own theoretical structure, necessarily negates categories of action that have alternative means of legitimation. President Carter's conversion from MAD to NUTS demonstrates how offensive neorealism consistent with noncooperative game theory secured a logical victory for escalation control and flexible response that attempted to defy the "life condition" of mutual assured destruction by enacting the intent and capability to prevail in prolonged nuclear conflict and to secure flexible nuclear military capability to address varying levels of conflict.¹⁶⁰

James Schlesinger stands witness to Carter's moral stance evident in his maintaining that, "Why, of course, if we made the promise to them we have to enter into an agreement to fulfill another administration." Even at Schlesinger's prompting that renegeing on an agreement with allies could give the United States extra bargaining leverage, Carter replied that, "Of course we have given our word."¹⁶¹ However one evaluates the exigencies of international

¹⁵⁹ These distinctions are clear from comparing Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's "Report to Congress 1979 Budget, FY1980 Authorization Request, and FY 1979-1983 Defense Programs," January 23, 1978, see esp. pp. 56-59, to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski's team "Draft PD on Nuclear Employment Policy," materials attached to memo from William Odom and Jasper Welch, April 17, 1980, and "PD on Nuclear Force Employment Proposed Revision," April 15, 1980, "3/80-4/80," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, esp. p. 7E (hand marked).

¹⁶⁰ The acknowledgment of the inescapable "life condition" of MAD is in the "Information Memo" from Stan Sienkiewicz to All Members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, September 9, 1980, "5/80-1/81," Box 35, Brzezinski Collection, JCPL, p. 5 of 8.

¹⁶¹ "Interview with Dr. James R. Schlesinger," 1984, 59-60.

politics, we can recognize that strategic rationality contradicts the practice of making agreements and keeping them and recommends building social order out of threats, coercive negotiation, and individual maximization without regard for others instead of reciprocal respect and assurance of one's cooperative intention.

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