

Prisoners of Reason

*Game Theory and Neoliberal
Political Economy*

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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.

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. Hoeber, 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. Bzezinski's files also find the typed document, "P[resident] 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.

“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 thermonuclear 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, “5/80-1/81,” 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, 60z61.

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

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 (Totowa, 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.

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 Ermath 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.

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. McClenen, "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

motive of self-preservation pertains to all actors, actors can peacefully 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 antecedes 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, FY1980 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.

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 contests 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

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.

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. Hoeber, 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. Bzezinski's files also find the typed document, "P[resident] 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.

“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 thermonuclear 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, “5/80-1/81,” 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.

Deterrence

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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, 60z61.

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

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 (Totowa, 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.

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 Ermath 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.

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. McClenen, "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

motive of self-preservation pertains to all actors, actors can peacefully 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 antecedes 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, FY1980 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.

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 contests 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