Nuclear Crisis Project

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Fainsod Room
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Guest Speakers: Thomas Schelling and Alan Ferguson

Joseph Nye: Today our guests will be Tom Schelling and Alan Ferguson who will speak to us about nuclear war gaming during the Berlin crisis. Tom, of course, needs no introduction as he is well-known to us here at the Kennedy School. Alan, on the other hand, joins us today from Washington where he is president of AFE Corporation, a private consulting firm, where he is also an economist. Tom and Alan worked together at the RAND Corporation and their relationship goes back as far as graduate school. Today they will share some of their escapades in the changing relations with Berlin in the early 1960's. I will turn then to Tom and Alan to start our discussion.

Thomas Schelling: I will speak first for a few minutes.

Let me begin with what motivated the games. I spent some time at the RAND Corporation where there was a very elaborate war-gaming facility. RAND was studying limited war. I was very interested in these games. However, the limits were always decided in advance (i.e. what weapons were within the limits, what weapons were without limits). There was no process of escalation, no process of feeling around for what the other side might accept or reject. I had always felt during the Korean War that one of the most interesting aspects of that war was the way the limitations were, you might say, discovered, during the course of the war.

I thought we should try some games in which what was permitted was wide open, in which the concept of restraint on behavior would arise within the game itself rather than being imposed from the outside. I worked out red and blue teams at MIT and developed a format for a new kind of game.

This game would essentially be a game of military maneuver, a game in which most of the decisions and actions were military but in which the driving considerations would be profoundly diplomatic.

We built such a game and tried it out in the Iranian context at MIT. By coincidence, Walt Rostow was present in that game. This was a game in which there was no role playing. Many of the previous diplomatic and political exercises had involved people assuming roles. (For example, I would be the ambassador of India to Iran or you would be the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, etc.) I wanted no role playing, but rather people deeply engaged in the decision-making process, in which they were taking full responsibility for their decisions, not simply asking themselves "what would I say now if I were so-and-so."

Therefore, the teams were essentially teams of homogeneous responsibility, with five to eight people and a captain or chairman. The main

function of this leader was to facilitate reaching a consensus. With this exception, everyone was an equal participant.

The fourth of July, 1961, one year later, I was on my way to the RAND Corporation with my family for the summer and we went by way of Washington, D.C. to visit my parents-in-law. My wife and I went to the home of Charlie Hitch where he had Walt Rostow for dinner. For some reason, the conversation turned to the gaming in which Walt Rostow had particpated and he and Charlie Hitch got the idea that we should do the same type of exercise for the Berlin situation. They were then wholly preoccupied with this crisis and they asked me to spend the summer in Washington. I said I had to go to California. However, I would see whether I could work out the Berlin games there.

Arriving at RAND, I explained to the people who had invited me what I wanted to do and they were enthusiastic about the prospect. I said I needed a partner. They suggested Alan Ferguson. We spent the entire summer putting together the information that would be needed by the players in the game and developing a scenario which would be the take-off point for the game itself. The scenario had to be something which provoked immediate dissention on both teams and demanded their attention.

There were two teams: blue and red. We had to get things going in and around Berlin in a manner which was plausible to both sides and which put both sides in a kind of an emergency situation. In this case, something that the Soviets had done which would be feasible to the red side. (We could not, for example, ask the red team what they would do next if they had just done this and "this" was something they never would have done.)

Each team took this scenario and made its decisions for the immediate future (i.e. the next few hours or days of game time). After about four hours of doing this, each team submitted its documents to the control team and they, in effect, spliced these together, asking if the blue team did what it said it was going to do and the red team did what it said, where would they be 12, 24, 36, or 48 hours later? Secondly, they asked, what can we plausibly introduce if necessary, such as accidents or acts of God, misunderstandings or miscommunications, or faulty observations or faulty exercises in command and control which will keep the crisis going rather then letting it fade out.

Typically, we would play the game for at least three, sometimes, four or five such stages. At each stage, the control team would splice these together along with the feedback of the two teams and the extension of the original scenario. Then, at some stage, either because time ran out at the end of the weekend or because the game had gone as far as it was going to go, we would declare termination and we would hold a post mortem before which the red team got all the blue team documentation and the blue team got all the red team documentation. Each then could see what the other had been thinking, had been expecting. Each could see how the other read itself (i.e. the blue team could see what the red team <u>thought</u> the blue team was trying to do, and vice versa). Each could also see what impact its actions had on the perceptions of the other side.

The first time we did this was up at Camp David. We got some people from the White House (Carl Kaysen was one of them) and the State Department. These were relatively low-level personnel who took part in the first two games as compared to some of the later games. At the first and second Berlin game, we had people mostly on the deputy assistant secretary level.

There are a few things to report: People got very defensively involved in the games. I have never seen people in an artificial or imaginary situa-

tion quite so engaged. I suppose people can see movies that jerk tears or read stories that do the same. These were games in which people got desperately involved. Perhaps this was because all of the participants were individuals who believed that they had good judgement on exactly what to do next and what not to do in a nuclear crisis. They also felt their pride, their self-esteem, and sometimes even their local reputations were very much wrapped up in whether or not they brought off this emergency, this crisis satisfactorily. These people felt if we became engaged in a major war or used nuclear weapons, somebody had dreadfully mismanaged, probably themselves. Likewise, if somebody backed down, lost ground, or lost something either diplomatically or militarily, they would feel very ugly about it for a long time. These were real-life crisis politics and indeed, in that respect, I think these games far exceeded the dreams and expectations that Alan and I had.

Furthermore, in these games at Camp David, from five o'clock Friday afternoon till five o'clock Sunday evening, these people virtually "lived" the game.

Alan and I have reflected on a few things about crises and especially the Berlin crisis that came out of the games. If Carl Kaysen were here (since he participated in the first game) we could ask him his impressions. As I remember, he was so impressed that he put together a list of points, principles, and obligations that came out of that first game for a meeting at the State Department. I would give anything to have the memorandum I wrote to him concering this, but it was classified.

I think if you were to ask Alan and me what was the most impressive phenonomenon of these games (Alan was there for the Berlin games, while I was involved in several of the others concerning, for example, Latin American or Laos), we would say how extraordinarily difficult if was to make the crisis continue. The actions naturally seemed to "damp down."

It took extreme ingenuity on the part of the control team to make people misread each other and over-react or to make "accidents" happen, to push the other side into some kind of an aggressive move. We had to arrange misunderstandings and miscommunications. Otherwise, we would have had to send everyone home at noon on Saturday thinking that they had not had much of a weekend.

I think two things: One can identify some reasons why crises tend to damp down. Secondly, I think that some of the hypothesis about why that was so would survive translation into the real world and would be just as valid as they were with respect to the games. If any of you read the chapter I did for Ash Carter in the book on nuclear command and control, I described what was the hypothesis as to why the interactions and the process tended to damp down.

At this point, I should defer to my partner Alan Ferguson who, like me, has many stories about these games.

Alan Ferguson: There are three or four points that I will mention, trying to avoid duplicating too much of what Tom said.

First, I want simply to comment on how different the world was then from what it is now. These scenarios were indended to be intensely realistic. The world was extremely tense at the time. I think this, in part, accounts for the intensity with which the game was played. The people at those sessions felt that there was a real likelihood that they would face decisions somewhat like the ones that they had to work out in the games.

A brief digression to a personal matter might illustrate this better: The rate at which military circumstances have changed was demonstrated this morning as I flew over Boston Harbor into Logan. My brother was in the Boston Harbor defenses only forty years ago when those antique forts, in the same design generally as forts had been built from the invention of gunpowder to the invention of nuclear weapons, were live forts. That, for me, was not a terribly long time ago. There has been a huge transition from then and the 1960-61 period to now. That sense that we are on the verge of nuclear holocaust (especially if decision-makers make a wrong decision) seems to me to be entirely gone.

We were in a situation in which there was intense hostility on both sides. The United States had a clear-cut strategic arms superiority. Both sides had massive forces and the United States was quite persuaded of Soviet aggressive intent. American strategic superiority was still based, for the most part, on the highly vulnerable land based bombers. That was a significant part of the Cuban missile crisis.

With regard to the game results, the single most striking result was our inability to get a fight started. It was, despite the best contortions of control, impossible to successfully provoke a really aggressive act. Each side overestimated the impressions that its own moves would make on the other. Each took moves that, at the time, to control and, in retrospect, to both teams, seemed very mild, despite the fact that each side had the impression that it was being very tough.

I felt that the chief tactic on either side was simply not to give up. It did not make too much difference what they did. They just did not walk away, and they always left the possibility for the other side, that, if they did not stop then it was not clear where the process was going to stop. It was my opinion then (and I have not done anything since about a year after these games) that the Cuban crisis was a subset of the Berlin crisis or of the confrontation in Europe. We can assume the aggressive intent of the Soviets. We correctly assumed that it was impossible for the West to defend Europe with conventional forces. Finally, the United States had strategic superiority. It seemed to me that if the Soviets were as aggressive in fact as I and many others believed, -- if they believed that the United States might not be deterred [from starting a nuclear war], then they would have a much freer hand in Europe. Consequently, places such as Berlin might be taken (whatever "taken" might mean).

Had the missiles been in place and operational in Cuba, then a very large fraction of the bomber force which was based in the southeastern United States would have been within range of these missiles. Therefore, the strategic balance would have been drastically changed.

There was no subsequent crisis in Berlin, and it looked as if deterrence had worked. I will conclude by reading you a few sentences from something written after the crisis:

> "May we reasonably hope for some genuine reduction in hostility between the Alliance and the Soviet bloc? World War II did three relevant things: It eliminated the aggressive organization of Germany and Italy. It impressed the nations of Western Europe with the consequences of war, and it created so great a need for productive efficiency, that some of the protectionist opposition to any kind of unification was turned. Is there some way of getting

operationally similar results in the present context? Deterrence and some disarmament may buy us as much as twenty to thirty years in which to work out that problem."

I came away from all this with the conclusion that deterrence and very limited disarmament may indeed have done exactly that. I think deterrence was indeed an effective force.

Questions and Discussion:

Nye: Thank you Alan and Tom. We will now be open to any questions or comments from the audience. Ash?

Ashton Carter: My comment is directed at the fidelity of the games in general and your hypothesis, Tom, about why these games had the muted character that they seemed to you to have at the time. You said that people had the sensation of acting tough. What they actually did at each step was make a variety of moves of differing toughness and they averaged overall that toughness. In fact, their tougher moves were biased in such a way that they played out over a longer time. Milder moves were more immediately apparent. In other words, the participants had the sensation of throwing a "hard ball and then a "soft ball" when, in fact, the latter arrived "faster" than the former. Therefore, the opposing team had the impressin that their opponent was being more conciliatory.

This is, of course, a happy result for all. Everyone is being very tough and having their ego satisfied and yet, in effect, being very conciliatory toward the other side. It does seem to me <u>not</u> at all to fit the atmosphere at the time, however. Perhaps both teams were playing by this set of rules of never really standing up to the other and making the opponent fold. This seems to me just the opposite of what you had been assuming about the Soviet Union at the time. Whether or not these assumptions were correct, there is always the problem of dealing with an opponent with whom you are <u>not</u> playing a game. In their worst possible light, they are Hitlerite; that is, they are putting their toughest moves earliest and they need to have their bluff called. Two players in that situation have the opposite result; that is they move very quickly into a conflagration.

It seems to me that you all were playing Americans and no one was assuming the posture that would normally be expected of the Soviet Union.

Schelling: I think you are wrong on one point. You said one would have to assume that in order to play like Soviets, one would have to play with one's strength up front. People like Admiral Anderson or Paul Nitze, once they got into the game, if they were playing the red team, were playing the way they thought a wise Soviet would play it and they clearly demonstrated that deep down in their hearts they did not believe that the Soviets would be so bold, so aggressive. This revealed the contrast between how senior people thought the Soviets might act in a real crisis versus what they might <u>say</u> about them in a speech.

Carter: That is the deeper explanation from your chapter in the book.

Schelling: I am not conceding that the Soviets would or would not have played the game differently. One could never know that for sure. The players did feel that if they were asked on behalf of the Soviet Union to avoid disaster in any direction, this is how the Soviets would have acted. It is possible that the reason the blue team underestimated how tough the red team really was was because they were assuming they were seeing all there was to see.

Ferguson: I do not think that the observation about taking weak or mild steps versus tough steps has anything to do with the assumption of how aggressive the Soviets were. I think aggressiveness is a matter of objectives. It was basically impossible to distinguish whether Soviet behavior was aggressive or defensive. They were basically interested in changing the status quo. There is no way of knowing whether that was because they wanted to conquer the world or because they felt that Berlin was a link in their front line that could very well be exploited by Western aggression. The question of whether, given either of those objectives, they would take a Hitlerite move first or a move such as they did take in Berlin, is simply a matter of tactics.

Ivan Oelrich: You mentioned that moves that we probably thought were aggressive were perceived to be mild. Is that because everything tends to be shifted to the mild side or because everything was filtered or damped down? Was there ever a case where one side tried to make a conciliatory gesture that was likewise discounted?

Schelling: I do not even remember any conciliatory gesture, even in reveiwing final documents. I do not remember coming across anything that indicated they took a step to de-escalate at any point.

Nye: Since this is a nuclear crisis project and we are particularly interested in the role of nuclear weapons, can either of you remember any discussions that took place as to how you would use nuclear weapons? Were there times when contigency plans or possible uses were discussed?

Schelling: We both remembered in looking over the documents that our primary motivation had been to use the Berlin crisis to study the behavior of the Strategic Air Command, in order to keep it ready for whatever need arose. In preparation for this, we got a few operations officers in Omaha and asked them how SAC would behave in a crisis. (That is, what was their attitude toward launch-on-warning?) One said they would never launch on warning.

We then asked if it would make sense to launch a fraction of the force if they got an alarm that was possibly false or possible real. They said maybe they could do that. Maybe, for example, they said, "we could launch all the odd or all the even numbered planes." Anything else would have been too complicated. [Laughter.] The second group of planes or backup was like a clean-up force. This bewildered us. Maybe SAC was not ready to think advance.

As the games progressed, however, we got so wrapped up in moves in Europe that we never got close to using those bombers. We actually had almost forgotten the original motivation to study SAC crisis behavior.

Nye: Emanuel has another question on this nuclear point.

Emanuel Adler: Can you control for the nuclear factor? We know that there are certain expectations because of the presence of nuclear weapons. Is it possible to assess the psychological effects of nulcear weapons in this game as opposed to other games in which nulcear weapons were not involved?

Schelling: Everything in these games was, to an extent, constrained. I think if nuclear weapons had been declared non-existent in our games, we probably would have had some conflagration, if not a conventional war. The nuclear phobia was pretty rampant in the Pentagon and in Washington in those days. Let me add, incidently a point made at the Hawks Cay Cuban missile crisis meeting: all these games were played in civilian clothes. Peoples' positions outside the games were not a factor. There was a remarkable uniformity in style and approach to the nature of the problem. Everyone became a military diplomacist, thinking "what will it look like if we do this" or "what do they think we are trying to do."

We had one game later on in which we had British, French, German, and American participants. If you could not hear their accents, you would not have been able to determine who was what nationality from their manner of decision-making and action. This could have meant that, at least in the West, there was a common, uniform, even cultural way of looking at these contests. If this is the case in a smoke-filled room in a Berlin game, it might also happen in a smoke-filled room in a real crisis.

Nye: Alan, do you have any memories of the nuclear discussions per se?

Ferguson: I do not recall any discussion of "shall we do something with nuclear weapons now." I think the whole game was pervaded by the fear that if we do something too tough, we will start a rapid escalation and we have no idea where it will end. Even if I had all the documentation, however, I am not sure I could find a citation to prove that. I do think the blue (American) team was just as inhibited by American stratetic superiority as the red (Soviet) team. There was no one who had a yen to destroy tens of millions of Russians. There was a real sense of human responsibility within these people.

Nye: Ash, did you have something on this point?

Carter: I did have two points which were nuclear related. There are certain aspects of crises that are of particular concern. One is the possibility of internal as well as external miscommunication; of wires crossed or misunderstandings between the policy-making and the operating part of a team. I think this would be an excellent thing to build into a game.

Secondly, I think, a game that involves the <u>actual</u> operators of the forces would be very helpful. Just as you described when you go out to SAC and they have all sorts of operational procedures that you would not have expected, it might be helpful to have their input in gaming exercises. There could be great value in mixing the senior decision-makers and the relatively junior operators.

Schelling: After I had quit, they did build some two-tiered games. However,

they never really worked since the senior people did not get seriously involved.

Nye: Tom, there is another point concerning this senior/junior idea tied in with how involved people got in terms of their egos and reputations in Washington, especially given the type of questions asked or decisions made during the games. How high can you go in seniority in these games? How high did you get the game played and what intrinsically do you think are the limits on that?

Schelling: I do not think I would ever want the President to participate. I do not think he should ever be put in the position where people watch him and what he would do in a crisis. He would be the one player among them all that would be asking himself: "What does their President look like to them as I sit here and do this?" I think one could get a cabinet secretary successfully engaged; but not the President.

The highest level participant we ever had was relatively high. On Halloween, 1963, we held an insurgency game -- actually a series of four simultaneous games -- in which, among others, players included the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Attorney General, the Budget Director, and the Commander of the Marine Corps.

This game was sufficiently intense that, when it was all over, Robert Kennedy asked if perhaps we could use such exercises to game out and help his marshalls anticipate problems (e.g. mob actions, violence) in their efforts to desegregate universities in the South.

At the same time, I explained to him that Mac Bundy and Walt Rostow were interested in engaging his brother in a two-day exercise on crisis management, nuclear alert, etc. Robert Kennedy thought this was a good idea and said he would talk to his brother about it. It even looked as if we would do that, but three weeks later, the President was shot. The point is that these games were conclusive enough experiences that someone such as Robert Kennedy viewed them as a useful tool.

William Jarosz: I would like to try to flesh out a little more what the game players themselves might have taken away from the table. I am struck during these discussions by the discontinuity between the structure of the real world and the structure of the games themselves. As Mr. Ferguson noted, there was a pervasive feeling in Washington of being convinced of Soviet aggressive intentions, and with very good reason. Yet, the structure of the game and the necessity to keep it going seems to introduce the problems in the chain of command -- the problem of real world policy. The perception of world events seemed to imply a path to war that would be purposeful. The structure of the games, on the other hand, seemed to imply a path to war which would be inadvertent. I am wondering if that might have limited the kind of lessons the participants took away from the table. They might have sensed that the game seemed too abstract to translate into the hostile and purposeful real world.

Ferguson: I do not think that hypothesis is right. The game was not oriented toward accidental war. It was oriented toward purposeful war in a sarcastic universe where neither side knew the effect of even its own actions or the impact of what was happening.

Schelling: We did suffer scme limitations if we wanted the scenario to be plausible to both teams. If you tell the red team that it is supposed to engage in deliberate military action or you commit it to it by making that part of the scenario, you run into the problem that the red team is likely to say: "The Soviets are not so stupid as to do that". So unless you can get a red team really believing that it is engaged in purposeful military action, it spoils the game.

Therefore, rather than forcing accidental war, we had to advance the situation to the point where the red team felt it had no choice but to mobilize its forces or to take military action. We never got them to do that, however.

Nye: David.

David Blair: I am not surprised that you had difficulty provoking war in this situation because basically you are assuming the post-war status quo where both sides are relatively happy with each other. Of course, both sides could imagine a situation where they would be happier, but they are not willing to risk a nuclear war to change the situation in Berlin.

My question is this: could you have imposed a constraint on the Soviet side so they would have believed that they were fighting for something that was worth a fight? For instance, could you have told the Soviets that they would lose the game if they did not get the Americans out of Berlin. That is, if they knew in advance, they would not necessarily lose if Americans stay in Berlin, they probably were not likely to risk a major confrontation.

Secondly, did you ever play Vietnam? Was Vietnam one of the four counterinsurgency scenarios you staged?

Schelling: No, there was a Laotian game, but that was before there was a full commitment to Vietnam.

I would have liked to find a way to get the red team committed to something such as "no matter what it costs, get the Americans out of Berlin." I think, however, if you write up the scoring formula in advance, it gets difficult because the teams will then want to know how many casualites they are supposedly willing to accept if something were to go wrong; at what point are they allowed to engage in some preemptive attack, etc. I think it is hard to convince sensible people that they are engaged in sensible military activity if they are given what looks to them like a completely unreasonable scoring system, such as the chance that the whole Soviet Union should go up in embers in order to get the Americans out of Berlin.

Maybe a better idea would be to push the Americans to move.

Blair: I think it is safe to assume that the status quo is a point on which people are willing to settle and from which they are reluctant to move, especially into a risky or questionable situation.

Schelling: If that is a truth, it may be important to see how stable it is, for example, under all the pressures there were surrounding Berlin. I think it is a trade-off. You can eliminate history in your scenario. You can even hand the red team a value system by which you would like them to abide. The more you do this, however, the more they may feel themselves involved in

something like a children's board game rather than a useful intellectual exercise.

Ferguson: There is another question which perhaps takes us away from the Berlin crisis but which, nevertheless, is relevant to our discussion. I think the biggest historical question we must explore now is why has there not been a war between the United States and the Soviet Union? For a generation and a half, we have had these tremendously powerful adversaries with some people at the top of both hierarchies being exceedingly hostile to the other. The obvious hypothesis is that deterrence has worked. For all the limitations of the game and gaming in general, deterrence did seem to work very well in the Berlin game.

Schelling: Someone even said during the Cuban missile crisis: "This crisis sure demonstrates how realistic Tom Schelling's games were." Somebody else replied: "No, Schelling's games only demonstrate how unrealistic this Cuban stuff is." [Laughter]

Nye: David?

David Welch: The Soviets we have spoken to about the Berlin crisis actually use the word "game" in reference to what Khrushchev was up to. They systematically downplay the crisis, referring to Berlin as the "tail of imperialism" that Khrushchev thought he could yank periodically for marginal diplomatic points. He never thought, however, that he was risking nuclear war. The American perception, it seems, was quite the contrary: this situation was perceived to be extremely serious, not just a political game.

If both sides, therefore, believe they are playing an entirely different game, then it would be extrmemely unlikely to get an optimal outcome. I am wondering whether or not the fact that you had Americans playing Soviets in the Berlin game did in fact remove it from the realm of the realistic, since the players on both sides were playing the same game, as opposed to the real world where players on both sides perceived the situation very differently?

Schelling: The Soviets did not want things to get out of hand. Whenever they wanted to get the attention of the United States, however, they stirred things up a little. Of course, they were always ready to turn down the pressure if the situation became too risky.

There was a broad strategic objective known as keeping pressure on Berlin, which may have been Khrushchev's "game," as you call it. Within that, there may have been difficult subjects which came up if something untoward happened (eg. an East German uprising).

Kerry McNamara: My question revolves around what is learned in games of this sort. I think, for instance, in the Berlin game, what was learned depended partly on your perception of the situation and your primary objectives (i.e. to gain something or simply to diffuse the situation). This goes back to the central question of how you define a crisis.

Schelling: One thing a participant learns during such games is what his attitude toward crises is. This came up at the Cuban missile crisis conference a year ago. Most of us had no idea how scared people such as McNamara down in

Washington were. Even in retrospect, some of them are inclined to ask how they got into the crisis or what did they do wrong, rather than to view the occurrence as a real opportunity to analyze what they did right.

Stanley Hoffman: Just a note on that point: some of us here, including Kissinger, who was not such an important figure at the time, were very scared.

Secondly, in reviewing the documents concerning the games, there was no discussion, not even the slightest beginning of talking about what the Soviets were up to? How can you play a game without asking yourself what the objectives of the initiatives of each side are? How did they work that in, if they did?

Schelling: They were to be worked out in the first four-hour planning session by the red team, rather than written out and prescribed by us ahead of time.

Hoffman: Did the objectives which they assigned themselves vaguely correspond to what we now know the objectives probably were in real life? In this way, I found the documents to be profoundly mysterious. We find out much about the crisis situation, but we do not really learn much about the game.

Schelling: If you put people in a situation where they must act within a few hours, there are many long-range objectives that you do not have time to think about. You do not sit back and ask yourself, where do we want to be in the year 2000.

Hoffman: I was not asking about the year 2000. I was asking about 1961 or 1962.

Schelling: If the objective is to maintain the status quo, especially to play the game but not to get into too much trouble, to take advantage of small opportunities that come up but not to press them so far that they become risky, then these are the kinds of objectives that a red team works out by looking at the situation. These are not long-term political objectives. They may not even be the ultimate onjectives for the status of Eastern Europe; but they are the immediate objectives in responding to something that requires an immediate response. The objectives would be, for example, to quiet things down if possible, not to give anything away to the Americans, to avoid getting into a big war, especially a nuclear war, to behave just tough enough so the Americans will back down, but no tougher than is required, not to back them into a corner. These are very local objectives and not much related to long-term planning.

Hoffman: I think you just persuaded me that we should not have Americans playing Soviets.

Schelling: There are two things you can learn from having Americans play Soviets. One is how the situation would look to the Soviets if they thought about it the way the Americans do, which may, for most, be just as close as one may get to finding out how it looks to the Soviets as with any other mode of analysis.

The other lesson is this (and here I fell there is an advantage to having Americans): One of the dramatic lessons that comes out of these games is the

overconfidence of each team in the fidelity with which implicit messages would be received by the other side. Each team is obsessed with what it looks like to the other side in what it does. Each side meticulously works out the recipe for what it is going to do, not realizing that much of what it incorporates into its plan in order to have an impact on perceptions is going to be missed competely. We found out, for instance, that even with Americans thinking for the Soviets, the red team still misinterpreted the blue team's signals, actions, and intentions.

Nye: Kerry.

Kerry Abelson: I would like to return to the idea of the nuclear environment and the lessons on managing nuclear risk. I had an interview with Paul Nitze last month and he said several interesting things. Among them was the fact that, despite all his speeches to the contrary, he felt there were in fact no political gains to be gotten from nuclear weapons and that it was conventional build-up and conventional actions that deterred the Soviets. After your games, do you have a sense at all that it did not spill over into war because of conventional pressure, rather than because of nuclear deterrence?

Schelling: There is no reason to believe they would have acted differently whether it was the nuclear culmination of a large conventional war or the conventional culmination of a large conventional war. They were afraid of casualties on the order of a million. Whether they were also afraid of casualties on the order of twenty or thirty million, does not change things.

Nye: John Jenke will have the last question.

John Jenke: Did either of you brief anyone on the lessons of the game? If so, what were the lessons you explained to them? Also, were they Americans or were there Allies as well who were being briefed? I am interested in how the games were used.

Schelling: I presided over the post mortem of the game in which everybody shared ideas and tried to talk about lessons learned. I never briefed anybody beyond that. I think, however, the people who participated, like Martin Hillenbrand who also spoke to you, went back and perhaps briefed their own staffs or others higher up. I think many who played were close to McNamara and, undoubtedly, the games were reflected formally or informally in conversations with the Secretary of Defense.

I do remember that I wrote something on risk-taking in Europe. One document in particular was copied about a thousand times and distributed as something like a "McNamara bible." McNamara read it as a very strong case against French acquisition of nulcear weapons. It essentially had to do with how risky things could be if we were on the brink of nulcear war in Europe. Much of this was voiced in McNamara's own Ann Arbir speech, especially about the importance of centralized command and control of nuclear weapons.

In short, much of what came out of the games somehow reached the State Department and, I think, consequently, the White House.

Nye: Would either Bill or Bruce like to inform us about the schedule for the next meeting?

Bruce Allyn: Our next meeting will be in two weeks on Tuesday, December 6, 1988. We have a delegation of Soviets coming. We hope to have Viktor Kremeniuk, Igor Malashenko, Andrei Kortunov, and Pavel Podlesnyi here at the Kennedy School on the 6-8 December. They will be speaking with the Nuclear Crisis Project as well as the with the Project on Avoiding Nuclear War which will also meet that week.

Nye: Our thanks to Tom Schelling and Alan Ferguson for their time and a fascinating session.

Notes taken by Kathleen T. O'Reilly.