

L2-1206

THE POLITICAL EXERCISE — A PROGRESS REPORT

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M a r c h 1961

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I. Introduction

On September 15, 16, and 17, 1960 the MIT Center for International Studies conducted its second Political Exercise, once again at Endicott House in Dedham, Mass. The general purpose was to carry a step further the simulation of a crisis-type political situation as part of a continuing experiment in gaming characterized by brevity, economy, and the high professional quality of the participants. This second exercise was planned with the cooperation of the Harvard Center for International Affairs.*

The Center's first experimental political exercise in 1958 was designed to test the potentialities and limitations of the gaming technique. Our interest then was almost purely methodological, i.e., in the potential uses of gaming both as an educational tool, and as a device for testing hypotheses developed in the course of more traditional studies about international relations and in conventional policy planning. The pioneer work on the latter by the Social Science Division of RAND was, it hardly needs saying, invaluable to us.

In Porex II -- the 1960 game -- we wished to go a step further and see if we could learn more about the value of the game technique as a source of insights into possible alternatives, both political and military, which might be available to American foreign policy in the event of a serious diplomatic crisis involving American-Soviet relations.

*For details on previous experiments at MIT, see Bloomfield, Lincoln P., Report and Analysis of Political Exercise, September 1958, (C/58 - 21 Revised ditto) Center for International Studies; Bloomfield, Lincoln P. and Padelford, Norman J., "Three Experiments in Political Gaming", American Political Science Review, December 1959; and Bloomfield, Lincoln P., "Political Gaming", US Naval Institute Proceedings, September 1960.

We particularly wished to learn more about the gaming of a simulated crisis with the Soviet team playing a "realistic" strategy, faithfully representing the known probabilities of Kremlin behavior, but with the US side playing a "deviant" or "optimal" strategy. At the same time we hoped to learn more about gaming with a minimum number of teams rather than the ten at our first effort, and with somewhat more formalized rules for moves, while still attempting to evoke the real-life pressures which bear on governments in the real world.

The particular situation we sought to simulate in Poles II centered on a revolt against the pro-Western ruling regime in an underdeveloped country. The primary objectives of the revolutionary group, as we hypothesized the situation, were to put an end to corruption, inefficiency, and the foreign interference associated with the ruling regime. The revolt began with some popular support and considerable military support but no important initial Communist influence as such. When the problem was placed before the two teams which took part in the game - the Soviet Union and the United States - fighting had already broken out between loyalist and rebel factions, and the country was beginning to divide itself into fairly well-defined areas controlled by each.

The problem as presented to the players also reported to them that prior to the overt stage of the revolt the putative rebel leader had approached the American ambassador in an attempt to insure US support but that such support was not forthcoming at that stage. When the revolt broke out, the teams were told, the Soviet Union had immediately supported the rebel forces, while the government leader not unexpectedly had declared the revolution to be a Soviet conspiracy and had called publicly for assistance from the United States.

Once the problem was placed in their hands, the two teams appraised

the situation in the form of written strategic estimates, stated their policy objectives, and sketched out the contingencies they foresaw. As the teams made their moves and the dynamic process of interaction began, the strategies of the teams unfolded, not always in predictable directions.

In the next section, entitled "Technique and Method", the procedures which were followed are described in some detail. The third part, entitled "Evaluation", draws some conclusions about technique which might be of value in planning future political exercises.

II. Technique and Method

1. Approach and Format

The exercise was conducted with only two teams -- US and Soviet -- and a Control Group. The latter, under the co-chairmanship of the two umpires, acted as collective referee and supplied the facts, factors, actions, and reactions required to enable the two country teams to go from move to move. The two playing teams did not seek to simulate in detail every political, economic, propaganda, or military move which the United States or Soviet Union might be expected to initiate during the postulated crisis situation. Rather, the emphasis was on fundamental choices and decisions based on those choices. Within this frame of reference, designed to maximize the analytical possibility of the game, it was possible to eliminate several elements which for the sake of reality had been incorporated in the Center's earlier political exercise. Five basically new elements were involved in Poles II.

The first was the addition of military advisers, commented on later. Secondly, the play was not continuous. The three-and-one-half day

total play was divided into specific periods alternating between team moves and Control Group (i.e., umpire) activity. This factor facilitated analysis but to some extent detracted from realism. Another non-realistic factor was the limiting of the exercise to essentially three teams. A fourth change was that minor and secondary moves were eliminated so far as possible: the emphasis was on strategy rather than on tactics. Finally, there was no direct contact between the two playing teams. These ground rules translated themselves into operational terms in the game in the following ways: The Red (Soviet) and Blue (US) teams were not expected to simulate in detail the running of governments. The Blue team was instructed to consider itself, in the planning phase of the game, as analogous to a National Security Planning Board which had been transported to a distant underground emergency location to follow the crisis in its broad contours and recommend to the NSC and President, in their location, the basic moves which the US Government should make. As expected, their deliberations resulted in some rather fundamental recommendations which were put into action on a periodic basis, i.e., when communications made it possible. Subsequently, as it turned out, the President of the United States was able to take firm command of all his facilities and resources.

The exercise was conducted in a series of discontinuous move periods. Both teams and the Control Group had four periods of moves, each of roughly one third of a day. In each of those move periods the two teams went through a process of defining and, when necessary, redefining their basic strategies; analysing the motives involved in the other side's moves and the events necessary to foresee the courses of action which might subsequently be open; developing the main alternatives available to them; and determining their moves in relation to those alternatives. Without any direct contact between them, the teams reported their moves to the control team at the end of each period. There were of course exceptions to the latter. If after one hour of deliberations, for example, either side decided on

a move - the commitment of military forces, for example - which would alter the entire nature of the exercise and affect the whole environment, this piece of information would be cranked in immediately. But if it were simply decided to deploy certain forces and to make their actual use contingent upon a series of other events, such a move would be reported at the end of the move period along with everything else. If the other side had not anticipated the contingency in question, the umpires drew this to their attention and suggested that they return to the drawing board to do so. The moves thus proceeded in a fairly orderly sequence. In essence, during its move period each team formulated its basic strategy and at the close of the move period made it available to the umpires except in the extraordinary circumstances mentioned above. The control team, out of those moves and its own knowledge of the situation, plus its own invention of additional external factors, created a new situation which was then made known to the teams. Thus, decision point 2, so to speak, was a product of decision point 1 plus action of the control team, and so on.

The instructions to the two teams made it clear that while the Soviet strategy was expected to be "realistic", that is, as representative as possible of the probable reactions of present Soviet leadership to a given set of events, the American team's strategy was not to be constrained or inhibited by predictable reactions on the part of the administration in office in the United States on September 1960; but neither was it to attempt to predict the strategy that would be followed by either presidential candidate if he were elected. As it turned out, the new "President" had a style and approach which were satisfactorily distinctive.

2. Preparations

As with Poles I, the second Endicott House Exercise was designed with a minimum of staff time. The Game Director devoted a total of perhaps three weeks to planning and coordinating the preparations. He was assisted by a graduate student with firsthand experience in the region in question, who worked for five weeks on the following: a background paper on the country involved, fact sheets on treaties and other agreements involving the area, governmental lineups, order of battle of local army forces, and a ten-page scenario entitled, "The World Situation, September 14, 1961" which imaginatively described the environment throughout the world at game time. For approximately a month, the Game Director also had the assistance of an experienced specialist, just returned from the area, who designed in appropriate detail the problem with which the participants were to be confronted. In addition there was available for the players a brief guide to the functions and procedures of the UN.

The week before the exercise the participants were sent all the papers referred to except the problem itself, and in addition a document entitled "Operational Plan" in which the Game Director described the formal structure and ground rules of the exercise. When the participants convened at Endicott House on the morning of Wednesday, September 14, 1960, they were given a verbal briefing by the Game Director and were then handed the problem. Unlike Poles I, no attempt was made here to conceal in advance the general nature of the problem. If the players had not been busy professionals, they would have been asked to prepare strategic plans in advance. Since that was not possible, a virtue was made out of necessity by withholding until the game actually began the detailed nature of the crisis, the better to simulate its probable real life impact.

3. Teams

The two playing teams consisted of seven persons each. The internal roles within the teams were designated in advance for only three of these: the chairman, the military adviser, and the rapporteur. The active team participants were predominantly men with distinguished reputations in diplomacy or scholarship or both. An effort was made to include on each team at least one man familiar with the area being gamed and another whose professional specialty was defense policy. The American team did not divide itself into functional specialties. The Soviet team, however, did to a certain extent.

4. Control Group

The Control Group consisted of two umpires and five consultants, with the Game Director more or less ex officio and periodically acting as substitute or third umpire. The Control Group had the basic function of reviewing the teams' moves for plausibility, assessing their strategies, and redefining for the teams the new situation at the beginning of each phase of the exercise. In the course of this process the Control Group also supplied the moves, both initiatory and reactive, which would plausibly come from other parts of the world, as well as intelligence reports which should be available to the two playing teams. The umpires, along with their consultants, could be consulted informally by the teams at any time. The umpires for most of the game designated members of the Control Group to be unobtrusively present in the two team headquarters to get a picture of the situation, which they reported periodically to the umpires to assist the latter in their anticipatory planning. As it turned out, the umpires played their role quite permissively. There was, however, one turning point late in the game which they deliberately fabricated in order that the game might remain focused on its primary study objectives bearing on the use - or withholding - of military forces in the course of a steadily intensifying diplomatic crisis situation. To counter the tendency of both teams to avoid such

a strategic confrontation, the umpires accelerated time over the second night and faced both sides with a quite unacceptable erosion of their positions unless they at least seriously considered the introduction of military forces of their own.

The consultants included two specialists on the area concerned, one specialist in Soviet and China affairs, one generalist who supplied reactions from some other areas and who, with the Game Director, stipulated outcomes in the event of UN action, and one military adviser. In addition the staff included two graduate students who assisted the Control Group with communications drafting, reproduction, etc., the administrative officer, and three secretaries one of whom was assigned to each of the three groups.

5. Military Advice

One of the problems which have troubled designers of both war games and political games has been the difficulty of combining satisfactorily in any one exercise significant political and military factors without either overstressing or neglecting one or the other. Manpower and planning have tended to be focussed either on a diplomatic crisis situation -- the typical game played in the universities in recent years -- or on a military hostilities situation - the game emphasized by military researchers and the armed services. The politically-oriented analysts have wished for some manageable way to deal with the outbreak of hostilities without terminating the game entirely. Some of the service schools have felt that the scenarios with which their limited war games started were politically inadequate and, moreover, that purely military exercises were insufficient to train senior officers in the sophistication of modern crisis diplomacy, with its richness of non-military as well as military factors.

A method tried in Porex II may have advanced this problem a step closer to resolution. The innovation was a simple one. The military adviser on each team had the function of representing the kind of military advice each side would be likely to get in the given situation. But in addition, he and his two colleagues were specifically selected and briefed with the notion that if the game ran into a hostilities situation, they would be prepared to sit down together and make a reasonably quick estimate of the military situation on D plus 1, D plus 3, etc., without having to have complete G-2, detailed order of battle, and so forth. In this way, if the logic of the simulated situation led either or both sides to commit military forces, the processes of political decision and diplomacy could take account of military developments and go on, just as they would in a comparable real life situation. In such a case, the problem would be brought back to the players with the new situation redefined in military terms which would enable them to proceed to new political decisions. The experiment was a decided success.

6. Schedule

The schedule for the three-and-one-half day period worked out approximately as planned: Nine o'clock on the morning of day one (Wednesday, September 14) the entire group met together for a general briefing and orientation session. At this session the exact nature of the problem was disclosed. Each of the two teams then retired to its headquarters on the second floor, and the control team was organized in a single large conference room by the umpires. For the remainder of the morning, through the lunch period, and until mid-afternoon the Red and Blue teams studied the problem and developed their basic strategic goals and relevant policies. They reported their initial moves by 3 PM. This was Move Period No. 1. The following move periods are summarized in tabular form.

Umpire Period No. 1 The Control team worked through the rest of the afternoon and into the dinner period, with a brief evening session for all after dinner.

Move Period No. 2 On day two from 9 AM until lunch time.

Umpire Period No. 2 From lunch until 3 PM.

Move Period No. 3 From 3 until 5:30 PM.

Umpire Period No. 3 Dinner session, but no evening session.

Move Period No. 4 From 9 AM through lunch time on day three.

Umpire Period No. 4 Afternoon of day three.

During the latter session the Control Group made its plans for the post-mortem critique period on Saturday morning. There was no dinner or evening session on day three. The critique session ran from 9:30 to 1 PM on the fourth morning.

7. Time

The time period during which the hypothetical events began to unfold was the late summer of 1961. The precise game time at which the Soviet and American teams were confronted with the problem and charged to act upon it was September 14, 1961 -- exactly one year later than the real time at which the game commenced. According to the scenario, world political relations remained fundamentally unchanged between September 1960 and September 1961, and military technology, while undergoing change, had not significantly altered the relative positions of the two powers.

8. Communications

All communications were channelled through the umpires. All moves were in writing and took the form of brief typewritten statements, communiques, diplomatic messages, intelligence reports, etc. All communications for each team were numbered consecutively. Those originating from the Red team were on red paper, Blue on blue, and Control moves on white. "Game Classified" stamps were available to use on communications where appropriate, although this was not to inhibit the umpires from exercising their prerogative to "leak" information when it was plausible to do so.

III. Evaluation

1. General Technique

Following the game, a questionnaire was mailed out to the participants, seeking their reactions to the game. Reactions were uniformly very favorable both to the individual experiences of the participants and, more importantly, to the value and utility of the technique employed in terms of political and military research and planning. Several participants reported that, although originally skeptical of the value of political gaming, they were now convinced. Others cited policy preconceptions held prior to the game which the game experience had altered. Several saw the game's chief value as a "thought provoker", stimulating creative new lines of research or action. A number urged that this technique be repeated fairly regularly in order to explore a series of comparable problems facing American foreign policy.

The outstanding technical features of Poles II, in contrast to Poles I were considerably greater formalization of team and umpire moves and the introduction of a professional military capability into

the teams and the Control Group. The players' reactions to these two innovations are interesting:

a. Separate Move Periods - Out of 14 participants who commented, 12 called the separate move periods constructive. Only one said it diminished the sense of reality; another for this reason cautioned against its use in teaching and training-type exercises.

The participants were evenly divided between two schools: those who felt that the research results could be improved, without loss of any other values, by even greater formalization, concentration on strategic planning, and stipulation of reactions by the teams rather than acting them out; and those who felt that further formalization and streamlining might destroy the atmosphere and end the "chain reaction" by which the game becomes so to speak self-sustaining. It would almost seem that Porex II came close to the limit of formalization without excessive loss of the essential atmospherics. Perhaps there could be a further condensation of written moves; some consolidation might be effected through one participant's suggestion that the Control Group issue a "world newspaper" overnight. Perhaps the greatest loss from over-streamlining would be the elimination of important misunderstandings between teams, which was one of the most intriguing results of Porex II.

Offsetting the decrease in realism is of course the opportunity afforded by the new technique for more deliberate thinking. The payoff should be in the quality of strategic planning in the game, including that done by the Control Group. This element is discussed later.

b. Military Component - There is no doubt that the introduction of qualified military personnel into the teams and Control Group of Porex II supplied an element of flexibility lacking in Porex I. The planners' concern that military personnel would be unable or unwilling to make rapid judgments on a paper situation with the inadequate data

available was not borne out. On the contrary, the game's designers were pleasantly surprised by the ease with which military judgments could be secured, and by the absence of difficulties based on technical details. One umpire in retrospect judged the military feature to be the critical element in the success of this exercise, and the other umpire, agreeing, attributed this to the fact that the control team, rather than simply supplying facts from which the teams could draw conclusions, furnished information on the balance of military forces and even predicted comparative outcomes, using its own military capability to make its appreciations technically credible. Had the exercise continued, it would have been possible to game out the hostilities with which the play ended, but in that case it might have been desirable to expand the available military views, even to the extent of including a small military team whose sole function would be to assess military factors and predict military outcomes.

Some other points of interest arising from the game are as follows:

c. The teams. There was virtually unanimous agreement among the players that the size of the teams was close to ideal - 5 players, plus a military adviser and a rapporteur. Suggestions were made for experimenting with three players, and for supplying each team with an intelligence expert specializing on the other side. The latter suggestion seems promising. It was interesting that one team quickly developed a rather explicit internal division of labor, whereas the other team remained fairly undifferentiated. But there does not seem to be any particular virtue in assigning specific roles within each team where the focus is on outcomes of competing strategies rather than on the processes of decision-making, as would be the case in a teaching or training exercise.

d. Time The question of duration and better utilization of available time are commented on below. An additional issue has to do with expanding or contracting real time within the game. Several participants felt the jump of "thirty days" between moves three and four to have been beneficial, but others said it excessively diminished the sense of reality (and in any event should have been accompanied by a new situation paper). In this view, it would have been preferable to game only the events of a continuous three-day period. Another point of view, however, was that the particular crisis needed far more than the 30 days allowed and that the compression of events into that period resulted in oversimplification.

On balance, it seems preferable to play through the crisis on a continuous basis without telescoping time. But if the research purpose is better served by refocusing the teams on a different situation - as it seemed to be in Porex II - there is no intrinsic reason not to. Indeed, there should be no objection even to stopping the game and replaying a given move, using different strategy, if this will best illuminate the problem under study.

2. Difficulties

The principal difficulties of the kind of exercise represented here are four:

a. Perhaps the most significant difficulty lay in the failure of the teams to work out an adequately detailed strategic plan at the beginning of the game. Some earlier exercises required the players to develop comprehensive strategic planning papers prior to the opening of the exercise. The time of the players of both Porex I and II could not be so trespassed upon. Yet at the same time the technique of Porex II depended for its success on the degree to which the teams could analyse and formulate strategies in a disciplined and structured way. This was

particularly true given the absence of direct contact permitted between teams. The game planners had hoped that the umpires in Porex II could replace the direct interaction of Porex I by selecting from among the contingency plans on both sides in order to mesh the teams' moves, on the assumption that consecutive interaction, while interesting and stimulating, would not provide the desired richness of analysis. It is likely that the game management did not insist sufficiently on detailed contingency planning by the teams in the interval after the initial briefing and the making of first moves. In future games employing the separate move period technique, the entire first move period should be dedicated to the formulation of strategic plans.

Throughout the subsequent move periods the teams did not prepare revised contingency plans with any regularity until at the last stage in the game, when the umpires specifically requested it. If at each stage of the exercise such plans had been developed, the Control Group would have had far less flexibility to revise the ground rules and ultimately push the parties into a brink of war situation as was done between Moves III and IV. A useful related suggestion is that a period be set aside at the end of the exercise to enable the teams to make an orderly evaluation of the underlying issues, a final appreciation of the other side's capabilities and intentions, and an estimate of the probable outcomes. It was felt that this would expose the findings of the exercise even more effectively than the more formal critique sessions.

In this general connection, one participant noted a "touch of disappointment" on learning that the umpires had no preconceived outcome in mind. It is true that the umpires did not start with a detailed strategic plan or even a firm hypothesis about the course events should take. They did, however, have a distinct predilection for a sufficiently intense situation to warrant serious consideration of military involvement, a course of action they were finally able to evoke in the last stage.

It would of course be possible for the umpires to have a detailed

preconception of the outcome, complete with a program for each move period. But such pre-planning could subject the game to the same disabilities which are inherent in conventional planning and which the game is designed to attempt to overcome, namely, the pressures typical of a seminar or group discussion which tend to rule out any but the accepted intellectual framework and interpretation of events. A more spontaneously unfolding game illuminates the variety of intellectual preconception and the wide range of alternative interpretations of events and strategies. It might be possible to make available to the umpires a tentative "prevision" of the possible outcomes of the exercise for the purpose of assisting them to employ the time most efficiently. But one should avoid at all costs any attempt to substitute the strategic preconceptions of the game planners for the creative and spontaneous process which is in fact at the heart of the game technique.

b. The organization of the Control Group in Poles II was not entirely successful and could be improved upon. The basic difficulty, in retrospect, was that the functions of umpires and consultants were combined to the occasional point of being indistinguishable. The line was not initially drawn as sharply as it might have been, on the assumption that the consultants could take full part in Control Group discussions leading to decisions, without the decision-making process becoming unmanageably collective. At times, because of defective planning of both functional assignments and physical arrangements, instead of two individuals umpiring, the game a group of 10 or so collectively acted out the role of umpire under two co-chairmen (three if the Game Director be counted). It is probable that the physical arrangements rather than ambiguity of role created the difficulty. What happened was an inevitable consequence of excessive propinquity, with the umpires, consultants, two technical assistants, and the Game Director all sitting around the same conference table throughout virtually the entire game.

In the future the umpires, perhaps with the Game Director, should be physically separated from the consultants. The umpires would then call

upon the consultants on an ad hoc basis but would be free to act by themselves when necessary. The major drawback in such a scheme is the one which influenced the arrangements decided on in Porex II - isolation and insufficient activity by the consultants if physically separated from the umpires.

One refinement which might go some distance in resolving that problem grows out of the second major suggestion for improving on the Porex II experience. The game was plagued by inadequate information regarding third parties other than the two playing teams. The roles of other countries were deliberately minimized to maximize concentration on the bilateral game, but this experiment in fact went too far. There should have been considerably more information both about other great powers and about countries in the region under study.

One suggestion was made to set up a third playing team which would either represent the target country or, alternatively, cover the most implicated neighboring countries. For an exercise of the modest dimensions of Porex II, particularly where no great additional quantity of team-generated "noise" is wanted, the answer might well be to set up a third consultative team consisting of consultants to the umpires who perform the multiple function of a) supplying special expertise on the target country, military problems, etc., and, b) through some rough division of labor, also ensure that the essential actions and reactions of all other countries are brought to the umpires' attention. This scheme could accommodate the suggestion that the intelligence role in the exercise be upgraded in order to furnish the teams more systematically with information of both intelligence and press variety. One of the control team can be ~~responsible for~~ supplying both "classified" and "unclassified" intelligence.

On other details of operation, the assignment of consultants to observe the two teams in a rotating basis was most useful in keeping Control abreast of developments. There seemed to be great satisfaction

with the role of military advisor in the control team. A like number of participants was extravagant in praise of the umpires. The creation of the role of Game Historian was unqualifiedly successful; in a rearranged control team he should remain at the side of the umpires to preserve the necessary vantage point.

c. The management of Poley II did not work the players hard enough. They were on duty from 9 AM on Wednesday through the dinner hour, again Thursday from 9 AM through the dinner hour, and on Friday from 9 until before dinner. In retrospect, evening sessions should have been scheduled on all three days, or at least on days one and two. This could have had a number of beneficial effects. For one thing, it took about two moves for the teams to actively respond to an ingredient cranked in by the umpires. Instead of four move periods there could have been six or even seven. Indeed, the crisis which the umpires created between Moves III and IV might well have developed spontaneously over a longer period of time; as one umpire put it, this move was accelerated rather than invented.

From Poley I we had concluded that five days would be the optimum length, but participants in Poley II felt strongly that this would be excessive and for that reason probably impractical. There seemed to be almost unanimous agreement that three days plus a partial day for evaluation represents the outside limit for participation by the desired caliber of players. This reality underscores the desirability of more sessions in the three-day period. There was also some waste motion due to the fact that teams were essentially at liberty between their move periods, i.e., during the umpire move periods. It would probably be desirable for the teams to hold informal sessions on basic strategy during their interim periods, thus enhancing their over-all ability to focus on basic strategic choices. This in fact is what the Control Group did at Poley II.

d. The process of critiquing the game could be further improved. Polex II improved upon Polex I by having a night elapse between the close of the game and the opening of the post-mortem session. The post-mortem session at the second game was also planned in a more deliberate and orderly fashion. Unquestionably it remains one of the most valuable and illuminating aspects of gaming, particularly if it exposes with lucidity the crucial strategic alternatives, turning points, motivations and, above all, differences in the ways in which teams understand each other and the issues. But the session itself is still not entirely satisfactory for achieving this purpose. One reason may well be that it is in competition with a different but perhaps equally needful purpose - the therapeutic one of collective catharsis after a sometimes traumatic experience of group dynamics!

Two suggestions in which many of the participants of Polex II joined were: a) that the critique be longer than the three hours allotted; and b) that the group session be preceded by an internal "debriefing" session within each team, utilizing the "classified" communications which they had theretofore missed. This last suggestion seems particularly apt, even though it, like the suggestion that the first game period be devoted to preparation of a strategic plan, underscores the need for fuller utilization of the 3 or 4 day period. (A further question about it is that such preliminary sessions could result in prematurely washing away the points of friction within the teams.) If it were done, the chief issues within each team as well as the principal questions about the other team and about the game itself could be discussed and given shape before the plenary briefing. After reading the materials they had missed, the teams would seek to reach agreement about the main elements of their own strategy as well as about the pressing questions about their opponent's strategy or about the control moves which they wish to have illuminated. In the general session, according to one suggestion, spokesmen for the two teams could present those issues to the whole group as reflecting a consensus of their team.

But while the therapeutic value of talking out the problem would have been in part accomplished through the individual team critique session, perhaps a better suggestion would be to have individual team members comment following the presentation by the team spokesmen, as was done in Porex II, but with the difference that the team comments would be more structured. Possibly all members of the teams could share responsibility for the team presentation.

One final suggestion was that to improve the game's research results, the critique should be considerably longer and built around joint team committees, each of which would concentrate on a particular group of issues and their implications for American policy. After attempting to do this somewhat singlehandedly in a substantive critique of the game, the writer finds this a provocative suggestion. But rather than substitute it for the critique session, which has its own values, the answer might be to assign more than one person to follow up the game for these purposes.

3. Conclusions

The writer is considerably more optimistic about the serious professional use of this technique for research and policy planning than before Porex II. It is still too early to formulate a general theory or a system of theoretical models for political gaming. In this connection, the relevance of pure game theory here is only partial and can even be misleading. The experimental evidence from political simulation is essentially empirical and its variables infinite. Judgments about the evidence are pragmatic, based on the quality of policy insights and conclusions which the game stimulated. (The statements of the participants about this particular value are interesting enough to be attached hereto as appendix 1.) Moreover, it is still too early to assign precise values to various substantive applications in the realm of research and planning.

But some general inferences can be stated. Political gaming seems to have three promising applications in this area: as a test of hypotheses

arrived at by more conventional methods; as a way of generating new hypotheses which may then be studied, both conventionally and by additional gaming; and, more controversially, as a fertile way of adding to the catalogue of contingencies for a given conflict situation in the realm of foreign policy,

A potentially new perspective on the political exercise was suggested to the writer by the results of Porex II. It is that the game might be useful as a model for a more general type of international situation rather than as a source of directives for one particular situation. The substantive findings on Porex II are not uninteresting with regard to the individual country under study, particularly as events unfold in the area which are reminiscent of both the problem and its development in the game. But the results seem equally relevant with regard to a whole category of underdeveloped countries. The game raised vividly such generic questions as: the kind of popular basis of support for pro-Western regimes in one kind of foreign society; the kinds of strategies available to the Soviet Union to embarrass the United States into making policy and even troop commitments which may ultimately undermine the US political and propaganda position; and the relative applicability of short-term military support and longer-term developmental assistance in periods of acute strain. In this sense - and perhaps only in this sense - the game may be viewed as of general predictive value, even though for the particular country in question it represents merely one of many possibilities.

The participants in Porex II urged that similar exercises be undertaken in the future, with emphasis on specific anticipated conflict situations. Some suggested conducting two games simultaneously with one control team, or repeating the same game to incorporate the experience of the first go-round. Perhaps the most thoughtful suggestion was the use of prior research for the purpose of disposing of as many issues as possible, then gaming the "irreducible" issues. Certainly this suggestion is worth merit, along with our present plan of having another comparable academic research organization repeat the Porex II game, with the results

to be compared, preferably alongside a round table planning exercise of the same problem as a control.

On balance, additional support might well be secured for the purpose of investigating this particular range of gaming techniques in a more systematic way, with a view to advancing both its utility for research and planning purposes and our understanding of its value as a tool for those disciplines.

Appendix 1.

Value for Research or Planning - Comments by participants

"Rather optimistic", though acquiring sufficient evidence presents obvious problems.

"Brings policy dilemmas and tacit assumptions into the open. Implications depend on subsequent evaluation."

Not an alternative to conventional analysis, but stimulates thinking and may provide concrete clues or suggestions.

Quite valuable for substantive research.

Considerable value for research; analysis of results should bring out strong and weak points of alternatives in strategic policy.

"An extremely efficient way of organizing the efforts of a group of capable people to work on a problem or a group of problems. Problem is transferring to a non-participant insights gained."

"(It) suggested areas where research might usefully be concentrated, i.e. tribal allegiances, logistical and tactical features of the area, etc."

"Outstanding value for policy planning. Undoubtedly every one of us is now able to see certain contingencies more clearly than before."

Game points up need for greater appreciation of military factor and certain limits of ethical action, in deterring indirect aggression. Excellent tool for research and planning.

Demonstrates how long teams can play strategies not well understood by enemy. "The interaction of strategies not mutually understood, which is clearly critical in the real world, can't be easily simulated by any other technique."

"Excellent device for compelling serious consideration of basic interests and objectives." Not a substitute for research but verifies results. More useful for planning in uniquely turning up alternatives, possible responses, etc.

"Very high", for both, chiefly as an "experiment in social psychology pertinent to the study of planning, communications, intelligence interpretation, decision-making" etc. Also efficiently acquaints player with area problem.

Succeeded in turning up some terribly important questions. Would be of more value if attached to ongoing research project on same problem.

"Great value for the study of social and political problems" because introduces all elements of problem. Regarding policy planning, "of definite value" but "requiring great caution".