

The American Strategy toward Iran in the Nuclear Dispute

Towards a Model of Diplomatic Strategy in Conflict Situations

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Acknowledgments

The American-Iranian relationship is some ways unique. Although the two states enjoy no formal diplomatic relations, they communicate extensively in a complex manner. Their shared history has produced an interstate relationship that many analysts perceive as one of the most interesting in today's world.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks American strategic thinking seemed to change. The American response dazzled many observers, although to some the reaction was expected and should perhaps, according to theory, have occurred earlier.

In combination, these two factors spurred me to write my thesis on the American strategy toward Iran.

A great number of people have helped during the process. This paper could not have been finished without Harriet's steadfast support and patience. I would like extend my gratitude to my parents and three siblings for their efforts to assume my perspective throughout this stressful period. In addition, I am thankful for my father's linguistic advice.

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1. Introduction

The theoretical model presented in this thesis purports to explain the American diplomatic strategy toward Iran in the dispute over the latter's nuclear program. The aim of the dissertation is two-fold. First, I deduce a provisional theoretical model of diplomatic strategy in conflict situations in which the perspective of the stronger power is assumed. Second, I apply the model to the conflict under study.

The diplomatic strategy, conceived as the stronger power's plan of action for employing reward and punishment in order to persuade the weaker state to change a given policy, is considered primarily to be a function of two cognitive constructs; the key strategic belief and the image of the adversary.

The model fuses two concepts from cognitive studies within International Relations (IR). First, drawing on work on operational codes, I have developed the concept of the *key strategic belief*. Second, building on image theoretical studies, I have designed the concept the *image of the adversary*. The former may be conceived as a more general belief about the nature of states and the function of power, whereas the latter involves assumptions about the character of the relevant opponent.

The premise of the model is that statesmen in the pursuit of power aim to add to their states' security in the manner which they see fit. The preferred theoretical perspective can perhaps be labeled as a modified form of defensive realism in which domestic level variables are allowed to operate and the rationality assumption is slightly relaxed.

As noted, the model presupposes a situation of conflict in which, according to Mitchell (1981: 18), "[the] parties come to possess mutually incompatible goals", i.e. they cannot be fulfilled at the same time. Moreover, the model assumes a disparity in power resources and seeks to explain the behavior of the militarily stronger state.

The thesis is built on the premise that beliefs and images hold a special significance when the policymakers shape the state's diplomatic strategy to achieve its goals. Rival explanations for choosing one diplomatic strategy over another are of course also worth assessing. One avenue of interpretation would be to view the diplomatic strategy solely in light of relative capabilities. Such a systemic approach would thus assume that behavior could be considered a function of relative power resources. However, size does not prescribe behavior; superior military capability could perhaps help explain why the stronger power is in the position to demand a change in the weaker state's behavior but would reveal little as to why the diplomatic strategy was composed in a given manner.

Another possibility would be to conceive the diplomatic strategy as a function of the national strategic culture. However, in most states there is no broad consensus as to underlying principles of foreign policy; the debate in the foreign policy community may include competing strains of thought. The basis for predictions may simply prove too open-ended, and as a result, the researcher would have difficulties forecasting behavior uniformly.

Instead of explaining the diplomatic strategy with reference to relative capabilities or national strategic culture, the thesis highlights the role of cognitions. An inquiry into the beliefs and the images of the relevant foreign policymakers may yield a more precise insight into the reflections that underlie the diplomatic strategy.

My intention is not to advance an argument as to which principles of statecraft are strategically or morally preferable. Nor do I argue that adversaries should be perceived as either revolutionary or status quo oriented. The only goal is to investigate whether there is a link between the key strategic belief and the image of the adversary, on the one hand, and on the other, the selected diplomatic strategy.

The enterprise is motivated by an ambition to uncover causal mechanisms between the cognitive constructs and those words and actions aimed at persuading the

adversary to act according to the stronger state's wishes. To Elster (1983: 23-24), mechanisms have a dual role:

First, they enable us to go from the larger to the smaller.... Secondly, and more fundamentally, they reduce the time lag between the explanans and explanandum. A mechanism provides a continuous and contiguous chain of causal or intentional links; a black box is a gap in the chain

Although Elster (1993: 5) does not give an explicit definition of a causal mechanism, he does attempt to get closer to the meaning of the term:

The distinctive feature of a mechanism is not that it can be universally applied to predict and control social events, but that it embodies a causal chain that is sufficiently general and precise to enable us to locate it in widely different settings. It is less than a theory, but a great deal more than a description, since it can serve as a model for understanding other cases not yet encountered

As for the case study, the thesis attempts to elucidate the American diplomatic strategy by opening the black box of decision making, and more specifically, by examining the beliefs and images of the policymakers of the George Walker Bush administrations.¹

1.1 The Research Question

A good research question should be interesting. At the same time it must be focused and clear, and, perhaps most importantly, capable of being answered.

As I approached the subject matter, I became interested in the broad question of why the United States (US) in its efforts to sway Iran, so to speak, acted "undiplomatically" by openly threatening brute force, thus ignoring president Theodore Roosevelt's advice that the US should speak softly, but carry a big stick. Moreover, I was surprised by the strong threat perception conveyed by the American media as opposed to the mainstream view of Iran in European newspapers.

¹ From now on referred to as the Bush administrations.

As a result, I began to take an interest in cognitive studies in international politics. Works on beliefs systems and images of other states held by policymakers especially captured my attention. These concepts are largely out of fashion today, and they were to me, and perhaps also to many fellow students, to a great part unexplored. Bordering on psychology, cognitive concepts are not all dominant within the field.

Conceiving the study of international politics as a continuous struggle, or perhaps a dialogue, between those who argue that the field should be organized around the assumption that man is rational, and those who regard that supposition as too simple, although useful for theory building, but ultimately bringing as much ignorance as insight, cognitive concepts such as beliefs and images may help bridge the divide between the two opposing camps. The notion that policymakers make decisions based on their estimate of the situation, rather than taking reality as a given fact, could provide some common ground.

The cognitive studies that I encountered differed in many respects. Most importantly, the cognitive devices under study were not defined in a similar fashion. Moreover, although these studies share the same principal perspective, the object of study was different. Whereas studies on belief systems assume a more general and encompassing scope, image studies are often narrower and perhaps revolve around one statesman's conception of a given state. As an exemplar of the latter, Ole Holsti's (1962) study on John Foster Dulles' image of the Soviet Union broke new ground and became a classic. As for the former, Nathan Leites' (1951) work on the Bolshevik operational code assumed a commanding position within the field and came to be a standard to which many later works aspired.

1.1.1 The Theoretical Model

My effort is an attempt to advance a model that fuses two core concepts from two diverging methodologies within the cognitive approach. The operational code was refined by Alexander George (1989 [1969]) as he put forth ten questions about

political life whose answers comprised the code. Ole R. Holsti (1977) argued in a later study that the first question was of greatest significance; this *master belief* was assumed to hold a key position from which the answers to the other questions of the code could partly be inferred, or at least, estimated.

The operational code was intended to reflect the belief system of the decision maker. As foreign policy is but one of many policy areas for state leaders, and George's theoretical construct was designed to capture all aspects of politics, it seemed apt to redefine a new master belief that was applicable to international politics, and more specifically, to strategy.

The question whether states in the face of threats usually submits to or resists superior power reflects a protracted theoretical debate within the IR community. The policymaker's view whether states tend to "fight or flight" when confronted by a superior power, may be considered the chief foundation of their foreign policy mindset. The key strategic belief thus has two opposing values; the working hypothesis is that the policymaker is inclined to perceive international politics from either the balancing or the bandwagon perspective.

Within the context of international conflict it is hypothesized that the policymaker's key strategic belief, that states tend to balance or bandwagon, impact on the judgments concerning the optimal course of action. When dealing with an inferior power that opposes the wishes of the stronger state, what actions on the part of the stronger power are preferable? Are promises of reward or threats of punishment more effective in bringing about the desired outcome? I argue that the policymaker's answer to such questions partly follows from his belief about the nature of states and their relations.

As for the image, I conjecture that the policymaker attempts to acquire a definite understanding of the nature of the adversary. The assumption that the image of the adversary conforms either to that of a status quo oriented power or that of a revisionist state, lies at the heart of the image as a theoretical construct as defined

here. The crux of the image is the perceived intention on the part of the weaker power to either conserve or disrupt the prevailing distribution of power, which in turn may impact on the policymakers' judgment concerning the weaker power's responsiveness to reward and punishment.

With respect to *how* and *why* the policymakers reach the conclusion that the other state more closely conforms to one of the ideal types, those questions are beyond the purview of this thesis to explore. In the model, the *what* question is highlighted and perceived intentions are considered the crucial element of the image. An insight into the decision makers' image of the adversary should thus help explain the diplomatic strategy pursued in the conflict situation.

The dependent variable, the diplomatic strategy, is measured through those words and actions aimed at communicating the stronger power's intention to reward and/or punish the weaker state, is thus considered a function of two factors.

In summary, the model has two dichotomous independent variables that I assume to have an impact on the dependent variable diplomatic strategy. The model is tested through a congruence procedure in which the researcher deduces predictions about the diplomatic strategy on the basis of the policymakers' key strategic belief and their image of the adversary. However, the exploratory character of the model excludes any assessment as to the relative impact of the factors, and as a consequence, the model is indeterminate and cannot render any definitive predictions.

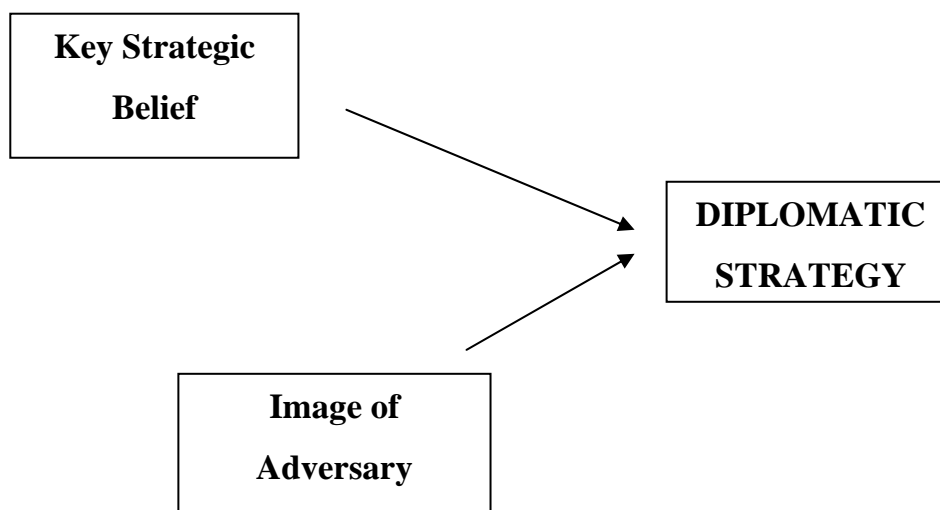
First, the policymakers may either hold that balancing or bandwagoning is more common in international politics. Second, the decision makers may hold an image of the state in question that either resembles that of a status quo power or that of a revisionist state. Four combinations are thus possible.

It is hypothesized that the belief in the bandwagon effect and the revolutionary image entail a preference for punitive measures, and conversely, the belief in the balancing effect and the status quo image involve a preference for accommodative

measures. The two other combinations are presumed to produce a more mixed strategy.

The model may be considered too simplistic, however, I maintain that theory is only a tool and more often than not theories are too all-embracing in scope and as a result work counter to their purpose.

In the following chapters I will attempt to develop the model that is to be applied to the case at hand. Assuming a causal terminology one may depict the tentative model in the following fashion: ²



As the tentative causal model suggests, the questions the thesis attempts to answer may be formulated in the following manner:

To what extent may the stronger power's key strategic belief and its image of the adversary help explain the diplomatic strategy in conflict?

² As the graphic depiction illustrates I presume no interplay between the independent variables. Furthermore, I consider the image to be a more immediate factor than the strategic belief. I will return to these two questions and try to present persuasive arguments in defense of those choices.

To what extent may the Bush administrations' key strategic belief and image of Iran help explain the US diplomatic strategy in the enrichment dispute?

As such the thesis poses two connected questions; one theoretical and one empirical. To answer the empirical question the analysis raises two secondary questions:

Does the key strategic belief of the Bush administrations' correspond more closely to the balancing or the bandwagoning proposition?³

Does the Bush administrations' image of Iran more closely resemble the status quo oriented or the revolutionary ideal type?

The research questions are interesting for several reasons. Although cognitive studies have been preoccupied with international conflict, to my knowledge there exists no explicit attempt to connect a reformulation of George's master belief, combined with the image of the adversary, to diplomatic strategy in conflict. As such, the thesis represents something different.

The field is in need of organizing devices. Such analytical tools help the researcher "select relevant data, relate the data to each other, and determine the boundaries of [the] topic" (Holsti 1992: 12). However, the risk is always present that such devices "act as blinders to other significant facets of the subject" (ibid.) Yet, they are vital in aiding the researcher to "make some sense out of the great diversity of data and events". In addition, they may "create understanding by ordering facts and concepts into some meaningful pattern" (ibid.: 11-12).⁴

As for the case study, in the absence of extensive Great Power competition, the US role in the Middle East is a central aspect of international politics today. To some observers the difficulties the US experiences in the region are symbolic of the

³ In the interest of style I will refer to the two key strategic beliefs interchangeably as perspectives, hypotheses, propositions, set of principles, or simply beliefs.

⁴ As I by no means claim to have developed a theory, I will use different names for the theoretical device. For linguistic reasons I will refer to it interchangeably as an analytical or a conceptual framework, or more simply, a model.

receding American superiority and possibly a harbinger of the return to multi-polarity (e.g. Zakaria 2008). The conflict with Iran could perhaps be understood in light of that narrative. Moreover, the disagreements between the US and Iran are given wide coverage in the news media, and singling out the nuclear dispute as the central source of tension between the two states seems like a logical choice. In addition, the case fits the conditions of the model; the conflict pits a stronger state against a weaker one and there is a clearly defined issue of contention.

Iran is by no means a state belonging in the “near-peer” category; its GDP is one sixty-eighth of that of the US, and its military spending totals only one percent of the Pentagon’s (Zakaria 2007).

1.1.2 The Nuclear Dispute

The relations between the US and Iran have historically been marked by both cooperation and conflict. Over the past three decades, however, the relationship has been rather antagonistic. The ongoing conflict between the US and Iran may to a certain extent be traced back to the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the following hostage crisis. The US severed formal diplomatic relations with Iran in 1980 after Iranian student occupied the American embassy and took 452 US citizens hostage. They were released after 444 days. At the moment the Swiss represent American interests in Iran and formal communication between the US and Iran goes through Swiss intermediaries.

The relations between the Bush administrations and Iran have also been both cooperative and conflictual. From assisting the US in toppling the Taleban in Afghanistan to being decried as part of the Axis of Evil and threatened with brute force, Iran occupies a central position in the American security debate.

There are a number of obstacles to improvement in American-Iranian ties. The website of the US State Department (2008) lists the following “areas of objectionable Iranian behavior”:

Iran's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; Its support for and involvement in international terrorism; Its support for violent opposition to the Middle East peace process, as well as its harmful activities particularly in Lebanon, as well as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region; and Its dismal human rights record and lack of respect for its own people.

Iran's relationship to the US is complex and intriguing. Although the US and Iran disagree on a host of issues, one problem in particular stands out: Iran has refused to suspend its enrichment activities despite severe international pressure spearheaded by the US. The US suspects that the nuclear program is a step toward becoming a nuclear weapons power whilst Iran maintains that the program is only intended to serve energy needs. By inquiring into this particular issue one may perhaps hope to accumulate knowledge about the broader discord between the two states.⁵

Given the historical animosities between the two nations it seems apt to presuppose that to the US, and perhaps to Americans as a people, Iran holds special significance, and the policymakers' perception of that state may for that reason be colored or somewhat distorted. As such the case poses a challenge for the model in the sense that contextual factors may play a significant role. However, the image as defined here involves the stronger power's perception of the weaker state's intention to either conserve or disrupt the status quo; the question why the policymakers hold a given image of the adversary is not considered to be of any interest. Thus to a certain extent the model does incorporate the historical aspect.

For the US, Iran's nuclear program constitutes a central cause of concern. Intensive investigation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has failed to exclude the possibility that Iran may intend to develop a nuclear weapons capability and Iran's defiance of the Security Council heightens concerns to that effect. For the US, the dispute over Iran's nuclear program is in essence a non-proliferation issue, and the diplomatic strategy is predicated on the notion that Iran cannot be entrusted with the knowledge to enrich uranium; a capability which in turn

⁵ Given that the thesis attempts to explain the American diplomatic strategy it necessarily assumes the American viewpoint. For a comprehensive outline of an Iranian perspective with respect to both American-Iranian relations and Iran's right to nuclear energy, I refer to Yazdani and Hussain (2006).

could enable Iran to enrich uranium to the level of weapons-grade, thus allowing for a crucial aspect of bomb making.

Iran maintains that it enjoys access to nuclear power under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and that enriching uranium is an unalienable right which no other power may infringe. Its nuclear activities are claimed to be entirely peaceful and aimed at generating electricity.

The issue of contention between the two states as defined here concerns the uranium enrichment process, which may produce fuel for nuclear reactors, but could also provide highly enriched uranium (HEU), which is fissile material for nuclear weapons. In this conflict situation, where Iran continues its enrichment activities in spite of American demands that Iran is to suspend its enrichment program, there exists an incompatibility between the two actors' goals. From the vantage point of the stronger power, a wide range of foreign policy tools are available. The working hypothesis is that the key strategic belief and the image of the adversary in combination help the policymaker calibrate the diplomatic strategy.

At this point, all measures have been ineffectual. Iran is still enriching uranium in spite of American threats to take military action to prevent Iran from mastering the fuel cycle.

I will divide the empirical part of the thesis into three subparts in which I first try to identify the dominant key strategic belief and gauge its standing in the foreign policymaking group, and second, I attempt to extract the administrations' prevalent image of Iran. Finally, I make an effort to analyze those words and actions aimed at persuading Iran to comply with American demands.

The empirical part of the thesis thus relates to three areas central to students of American foreign policy. First, the key strategic belief reflects to a certain extent the debate among foreign policy pundits as to how the US should employ its vast power resources in its relations to other states. Second, another much disputed question in the American foreign policy establishment concerns the most accurate description of

Iran and the challenge it poses to the US. Third, the American diplomatic strategy toward Iran during the period under study could perhaps be conceived as a microcosm as to how the US in practice attempts to achieve its foreign policy goals in its relations to Iran.

1.2 Conclusions

The analysis argues that initially the administration's key strategic belief to a great extent corresponded to the belief in bandwagon dynamics but grew weaker over the period under study as the balancing perspective gained strength. The key strategic belief was gauged indirectly using the status of the Bush doctrine as proxy; this methodological choice was made under the twin assumptions that the set of strategic principles enunciated by the first Bush administration were guided by the key strategic belief, and that the Bush doctrine itself was pervaded by the belief in bandwagon dynamics.

As for the image, the analysis suggests that the administrations' image of Iran, measured through the policymakers' perception of Iran's intent behind its nuclear program, remained mainly uniform over the years and more closely resembled the revolutionary ideal type than the status quo oriented type, although it did undergo a minor change as the policymakers increasingly began referring to Iran's *intent to acquire nuclear weapons capability* as opposed to the earlier perception which emphasized Iran's *intent to acquire nuclear weapons*; the image thus grew slightly less expansionist.

According to the model, the major change in the key strategic belief and the minor change in the image could shift the diplomatic strategy from being exclusively coercive to becoming increasingly accommodative, thus producing a mixed strategy.

During the nuclear dispute the US has pursued a diplomatic strategy toward Iran which has emphasized punitive measures over conciliatory ones. In the outset the diplomatic strategy exclusively emphasized the coercive aspect but gradually, as the

nuclear dispute gained importance, the US began offering concessions. However, the coercive measures, ranging from the threat of military force to economic sanctions, have retained their dominance as the accommodative option has remained fairly undeveloped.

Even if the findings were commensurate with the expectations derived from the model, the rudimentary analysis cannot connect the cognitive constructs to behavior in any satisfying manner. The research design does not allow any causal inferences about the relationship between the variables under study; any change in those variables that are considered independent cannot directly account for variance in the dependent variable.⁶

The preliminary character of the congruence procedure is primarily due to the fact that I prioritized the development of the theoretical model. Regrettably, the emphasis on theory led to a partial neglect of the empirical part of the thesis.

For this decision I ask the reader's indulgence and would like to encourage those responsible for evaluating my work to appreciate the exploratory character of this thesis.

1.3 Thesis Outline

The second chapter lays the foundation for the formulation of the theoretical model and essentially argues that the rationality assumption should be relaxed and that domestic level variables in the form of cognitions should be taken into account.

In the third chapter I attempt to convey a clear understanding of the concepts of key strategic belief and the image before I develop the concept of diplomatic strategy. The object of this chapter is to deduce the theoretical model and arrive at predictions which are to be tested in the analysis.

The fourth chapter addresses some methodological concerns related to validity and the possibility for establishing causal mechanisms through the congruence procedure.

The analysis is presented in the fifth chapter in which I first try to extract the key strategic belief held by the two Bush administrations before I move on to attempting to capture the prevalent image of Iran as an adversary. Finally, I make an effort to measure the diplomatic strategy pursued by the US toward Iran in the nuclear dispute.

The sixth and final chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings and revisiting the twin questions of whether the model is useful as a theoretical device and whether it helps explain the American diplomatic strategy in this case.

⁶ I discuss the findings and their relation to the model more elaborately in the sixth and concluding chapter.

2. The Theoretical Foundation

According to Thomas Schelling (1980: 3) there is a clear fault line in conflict research; one group of analysts perceive conflict as “a pathological state” and looks for its “causes and treatment”, whereas another group “[takes] conflict for granted” and studies “the behavior associated with it”. Among the students belonging to the latter camp there is a further separation between those that “treat conflict as a kind of contest” and those that “examine the participants in a conflict in all their complexity”. This paper positions itself in the last-mentioned tradition, i.e. I do not consider conflict between states an anomalous state of affairs and I approach the subject matter hoping to know more about why one of the participants has acted in the given manner.

The following chapter builds the groundwork for the core of this thesis. First, I argue that one may fruitfully analyze the diplomatic strategy by adopting the decision making approach, thus allowing internal factors to operate. Second, I try to present reasons for relaxing the rational actor assumption and for examining the role of cognitions, i.e. beliefs and images.

2.1 The Decision Making Approach

In David Easton’s (quoted in Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 2001: 553) terminology, decisions are “the outputs of the political system, by which values are authoritatively allocated within a society”. The concept of decision-making has long been central in diplomatic history, and later, in international relations. However, the study of “how decisions, or choices, are made” (ibid) initially received interest from other fields outside of political science. Most notably, psychology and economics were the two disciplines that first made decision-making a subject of systemic analysis (ibid).

Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (ibid) define decision-making as “the act of choosing among available alternatives about which uncertainty exist”. Decision-

making theories are diverse and identify a large numbers of relevant variables and they vary as to which factors they acknowledge as the more important ones. However, in contrast to what one may call traditional political analysis, decision-making theory directs attention to the “behavior of the specific human decision makers who actually shape government policy” (ibid). Rather than reifying or personalizing nation-states as the prime actors in the international state system, the decision making approach highlights the role of those acting on behalf of the state.

In the seminal work *Foreign Policy Decision-Making* by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1962: 65), the authors eloquently stated that:

It is one of our basic methodological choices to define the state as its official decision-makers – those whose authoritative acts are, to all intents and purposes, the acts of the state. State action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state

Thus, those who prefer the decision making approach to political analysis imply that the level of decision-making is the most appropriate one.

The ideal number of levels for analysis of international politics and foreign policy is a recurring and much disputed question. For Wolfers (1962), two levels are sufficient. Waltz (1959) proposes three, whereas Rosenau (1966: 29-92) adds another two. To Jervis (1976: 15), the preferred level of analysis is not a matter of choice, rather, it is one of belief “about the nature of the variables that influence the phenomena that concern one”.⁷

The non-decision-making levels of analysis all focus on the setting in which the statesmen-makers must make their decision. The premise is, of course, that if the observer knows enough about the setting, he can explain and predict the actor’s behavior.⁸ Wolfers (1962: 13) sheds light on the issue by analogy:

⁷ Rather than referring to the international system, I will employ the looser term international environment because the thesis does not deal with “general patterns of interaction”, but with explaining specific policy preferences (Jervis 1976: 15).

⁸ Jervis (1976: 16) makes an interesting side point and notes that, if “actors believed that the setting is crucial they would not need to scrutinize the details of the [other] state’s recent behavior or try to understand the goals and beliefs held by the [other] state’s decision-makers”.

Imagine a number of individuals, varying widely in their predispositions, who find themselves inside a house on fire. It would be perfectly realistic to expect that these individuals, with rare exceptions, would feel compelled to run toward the exits.... Surely, therefore, for an explanation of the rush for the exits, there is no need to analyze the individual decisions that produced it

For Jervis (1976: 19), in the context of foreign policy the analogy is too simple. If the given situation were so compelling, then

all people would act alike, decision-makers would not hesitate nor feel torn among several alternative policies, nor would there be significant debates within the decision-making elite

Wolfers' analogy may be useful as an ideal type setting, although the situation is rarely as clear-cut. For instance, in the case of Britain's reaction to Hitler's ascension to power, not until March 1939 did Chamberlain conclude that Germany posed a threat to his country, though Churchill is said to have drawn inferences about Hitler's intentions as early as 1933. So when is the house on fire?⁹

According to Wolfers (1962), the level of decision making is appropriate in situations in which the environmental constraints are less severe since there will be greater differences in behavior between states in the same objective situation. Conversely, the greater the external constraint, the less is the need to study decision-making.

Jervis (1976: 16) argues that it is "unlikely that there is a single answer to the question of which level is most important" as the utility may vary with the issue. However, given that the environment may exert an influence on "the general outline of the state's policy but not its specific responses" and that "people in the same situations behave differently" (ibid: 17, 29), analysis at the level of decision making may in particular be preferable when the research question is conducive to such an enterprise and when the analyst works with a narrow scope.

⁹ The level of analysis problem reflects to some extent the discussion about the decisive determinant of foreign policy. At the one extreme, the environmental approach presupposes that states are nothing but mere puppets of the environment. At the opposite extreme, the predispositional approach privileges factors internal to the state.

Within the decision making approach there has been much debate concerning the object of study: the decision maker. In the following I will first paint a simple portrait of the rational actor model before I deal more thoroughly with what I have called the cognitive actor.

2.1.1 The Rational Actor

The following paragraphs build largely on excerpts from Graham Allison's seminal article *Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (1989) and thus echoes his delineation of the model.

Implicit in much writing on international politics lies the rational actor model. Adopted by both analysts and practitioners, whether consciously or not, the model provides a powerful and simple basis for making inferences about the acts of states. In Allison's (ibid: 337) view, one may explain state action on the international arena simply by showing "how the government could have rationally chosen that action" because in the rational actor model (ibid: 338),

[t]he nation or government, conceived as a rational unitary decision maker, is the agent. This actor has one set of specified goals ... and one set of perceived options, and a single estimate of the consequences that follow from each alternative

In the face of a policy problem, or perhaps in a conflict, "[a]ction is chosen in response to the strategic problem which the nation faces. Threats and opportunities arising in the "international strategic marketplace" move the nation to act" (ibid.)

As for goals and objectives, the rational actor is able to calculate the costs and benefits of each course of action. Given the actor's ability to maximize value, he will select "the alternative whose consequences rank highest in terms of his goals and objectives" (Allison 1989: ibid).

The explanatory power of the rational actor model results is derived from the manner in which the analyst may draw inferences: "[I]f a nation performed a particular action, that nation must have had ends towards which the action constituted

an optimal means” (ibid). The rational actor model is thus an approach to international politics that is both powerful and simple.

The few paragraphs I have devoted to the rational actor model do not capture all the complexities of this approach to international politics. The brief description is arguably insufficient should the model be applied to the case. However, as a base-line for comparison with what I have called the cognitive actor, it does serve a purpose. The next chapter draws a somewhat contradictory picture of the decision making process.

2.1.2 The Cognitive Actor

According to Kal Holsti (1992: 320), “there is always an element of choice in policy making”. Throughout history statesmen have referred to compulsion as explanation for their choices, however, they are in most cases only “compelled” when they have rejected other options (ibid).

The question whether the perceptions of decision-makers matter, is of course a disputed one. One view within the debate stresses that:

One may describe particular events, conditions, and interactions between states without necessarily probing the nature and outcome the processes through which state action evolves. However, and the qualification is crucial, if one wishes to probe the “why” questions underlying the events, conditions, and interaction patterns which rest upon state action, then decision-making analysis is certainly necessary. We could go so far as to say *that the “why” questions cannot be answered without analysis of decision-making* (Snyder, Bruck, Spain 1962: 33).

However, many scholars within the discipline have argued against the psychological approach. For Morgenthau (1968: 5-6), the pursuit of motives logically made sense, but in practice could not be carried out:

To search for the clue to foreign policy exclusively in the motives of statesmen is both futile and deceptive. It is futile because motives are the most elusive of psychological data, distorted as they are, frequently beyond recognition, by our own interests and emotions of actor and observer alike. Do we really know what our own motives are? And what do we know of the motives of others?

Most likely, Morgenthau also believed that ambiguous cognitions were as difficult to capture as motives.¹⁰

Harold and Margaret Sprout (1960: 147), on their part, contend that

what matters in the explanation of decisions and policies is how the actor *imagined* his environment to be, not how it actually was, whereas what matters in the explanation of accomplishments is how the environment actually was, not how the actor imagined it to be.

By distinguishing between what Harold and Margaret Sprout (1957) called the ‘psychological environment’, i.e. the image, or estimate, of the situation, and the ‘operational environment’, i.e. where decisions are executed, then policies and decisions “must be mediated by statesmen’s goals, calculations, and perceptions” (Jervis 1976: 13). The former may or may not correspond to the latter, i.e. the statesman may be wrong in his estimate of the situation. In policy-making, what matters is “how the policy-maker imagines the milieu to be, not how it actually is (Sprout and Sprout 1957: 318). Ole R. Holsti (1962: 244) agrees and states that a policy-maker “acts upon his ‘image’ rather than upon ‘objective’ reality”. Thus, there seems to be room for the analysis of the perceptions held by policymakers as a subfield of foreign policy analysis within the domain of international relations.

The discrepancy between the state’s image of the other and the ‘objective’ reality may be attributable to a number of psychological, sociological, and organizational factors. For instance, states build intelligence gathering communities that are intended to learn the capabilities and intentions of its adversaries. Often these organizations fail to provide an accurate estimate of the situation. Sometimes their guesses are relatively precise, yet, they do not succeed in bringing their view across. In those cases, the policy-makers may be predisposed to preserving the image they already hold. Whatever the reason, the estimate of the situation on which decisions are made, needs not correspond to reality. Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1962: 65) also support this distinction:

¹⁰ Singer (1961) made an argument in the same vein holding that the goal of parsimony was not compatible with such an

It is also one of our basic choices to take as our prime analytical objective the re-creation of the “world” of the decision-makers as *they* view it. The manner in which *they* define the situations becomes another way of saying how the state oriented to action and why.

The task for the analyst then becomes to recreate the perceptions of the policymakers, and perhaps demonstrate how “[o]f all the phenomena which *might* have been relevant, the actors (the decision-makers) finally endow only some with *significance*” (ibid: 79).

In the case of the attack on Pearl Harbor early December 1941, this important distinction was made apparent. American officials were expecting a military attack from Japan, but had predicted it to take place somewhere in Southeast Asia. Although there were data pointing to impending military action, American policymakers failed to ascribe the correct meaning to that information. Thus their definition of the situation was at odds with the objective situation, and as a consequence, their countermeasures were ineffective (K.J. Holsti 1992: 321).

As Sprout and Sprout (1957: 319) have noted: “Attitudes are formed and decisions of foreign policy are constantly being taken on fragmentary and often quite defective estimates of the situation”.

According to Stein (2002: 292) the cognitive-psychological approach is especially helpful when

representations of problems are contested, when these problems are not routine, the stakes are high to the choosers, and when the environment offers sufficient degrees of freedom to permit a range of choice.

Under such circumstances, Stein (ibid) argues, the role of leaders is crucial because “institutional routines are often not considered adequate”.

Moreover, according to Jervis (1976: 28), it is “often impossible to explain critical discussions and policies without reference to decision-makers’ beliefs about the world and their images of others”. George (1989: 483) concurs: “[T]he way in

which leaders of nation-states view each other and the nature of world political conflict is of fundamental importance in determining what happens in relations among states”.

As for the representation of the problem in the case study, the most apt perception of Iran as an actor on international arena remains a disputed one. The potential proliferation of nuclear weapons to states that are considered enemies of the US is not a routine issue for American policymakers. No rule of thumb, or commonly accepted heuristic, exists as for the “best practice” in policy in such cases. Furthermore, the salience of the issue should not be downplayed. In the foreign policy debate, Iran conjoins two of the most notable security concerns of the US, i.e. proliferation of nuclear weapons and terrorism. As for the current distribution of power in the state system, the US was prior to its troubles in Iraq by many considered to be at the peak of its power in both relative and absolute terms. The power configuration of today allows American policymakers to pursue a wide range of policy options. Thus, the case in question appears to be one in which the utility of the approach chosen here should become evident.

In the next subchapter I will survey some works within the cognitive approach before I introduce the concepts of the *operational code* and the *image*.

2.2 Cognitive Studies

Though students of international politics long have been aware of the importance of cognitions (e.g. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 1962; Boulding 1956; Sprout and Sprout 1960; Jervis 1976), they have not reached a consensus as to which method of measurement that provides the most valid and reliable results. Studies within this subfield of foreign policy analysis cannot take place in a laboratory setting, and the researcher is thus forced to rely on the “written and spoken words of its subjects”

(Young and Schafer 1998: 64). The amount of data involved in such enterprises is therefore vast, and the analysis is by its extension labor intensive.¹¹

Within the study of cognitions, there are broadly four methodologies that have been employed with adequate results (ibid). First, there are studies focused on *operational code* analysis that originated with the work of Leites (1951) and George (1989). Then, *image theory* arose with the enquiries of Boulding (1956), Jervis (1976), Ole R. Holsti (1962), and Cottam (1977). In addition, there are the two methodologies *cognitive mapping*, which is built on the efforts of Axelrod (1972), and *conceptual complexity*, an information processing approach, which originated in psychology, was adapted among others by Suedfeld and Rank (1976).

Thus, the ‘methodological arsenal’ consists mainly of four approaches that differ in primarily three respects. First, and perhaps most important, the cognitive construct under investigation is not identical. Second, the methodologies vary in regard to *how* the researchers may draw inferences about cognition. Third, they diverge in reference to the linkage between cognitive construct and behavior (Young and Schafer 1998: 68-69). The remainder of this chapter discusses works that build on the operational code and the image. I will not comment on the other two methodologies as they are not relevant for this study.

2.2.1 The Operational Code

The term *operational code* was first introduced by Nathan Leites (1951). His pioneer inquiry into elite belief systems, *A Study of Bolshevism*, broke new ground.

Alexander George (1989) refined the concept and introduced ten questions to which the “answers” constituted the operational code. The responses to the first five

¹¹ Allegedly, automatic content analyses are available for purchase for under U. S. \$ 1000. Preferably, this thesis should have rested on a comprehensive computerized analysis that would have mitigated some of the validity and reliability concerns. However, I cannot afford it and must therefore build my thesis on an analysis that may be criticized for being subjective and superficial. However, I do believe that once graduate students start paying research institutes to perform their analyses, a dangerous precedent would be set. Moreover, an analysis performed by professionals does of course not guarantee that the thesis as whole will produce a satisfactory result.

questions George (1989: 487) refers to as the “philosophical beliefs”, whereas the replies to next five questions comprise the “instrumental beliefs”. The former set of beliefs encompasses the statesman’s “assumptions and premises he makes regarding the fundamental nature of politics, the nature of political conflict, the role of the individual in history, etc.”, whereas the latter category pertains to beliefs about “ends-means relationships in the context of political action”. In combination, the philosophical and instrumental beliefs form the operational code (ibid).

George (ibid) argues that there are “important cognitive limits on the possibility of rational decision making in politics” and that “efforts at rational decision making in political life are subject to constraints”. First, the statesman’s must rely on incomplete information, second, his limited knowledge of ends-means relationships indicates that he cannot reliably predict the effects of selecting one of the available policy alternatives, and third, it is problematic for him to establish a single criterion for choosing the “best” course of action (ibid).¹²

Moreover, humans must simplify reality in order to cope with it. The complexity of the world requires that individuals structure their perceptions. This applies to the statesman as well as he must “comprehend complex situations in order to decide how best to deal with them” (ibid: 488). In such cases, “the actor typically engages in a ‘definition of the situation,’ i.e., a cognitive structuring of the situation that will clarify for him the nature of the problem, relate it to his previous experience, and make it amenable to appropriate problem-solving activities” (ibid). The task of extricating the essence of the situation is partly done “through the prism of his [operational code]” (ibid). As a result, George (ibid: 486-487) argues, “these beliefs ... are among the factors influencing that actor’s decisions”.

On the basis of George’s ten questions, Ole R. Holsti (1977) developed a typology of political belief systems. According to him, the first question holds the

¹² However, the term operational code is a misnomer insofar as it does not refer to “a set of rules and recipes to be applied to the choice of action” but rather to “a set of premises and beliefs about politics” (George 1989: 486).

highest hierarchical value; the policymaker's view on the nature of political life is a candidate for a "master belief", i.e. a belief that may affect other elements of the actor's belief system:

What is the essential nature of political life? Is the political universe essentially one of harmony or conflict? (George 1989: 489)

George's first question arguably captures a central belief about both national and international politics. Insofar as there exist separate realist and liberalist mindsets among foreign policy makers, the formulation seizes the core of those diverging worldviews. For our purpose, however, the formulation is not a good fit. Rather, by twisting the wording and bringing a connected issue into focus, one may extract a related belief.

What is the dominant tendency in international politics? Do states in general balance or bandwagon in response to threats?

The answer to this question is hypothesized to be of central concern when policymakers assess the optimal diplomatic strategy in a given case. For that reason I hypothesize that the answer to this question is a *key strategic belief* within this context. The question reflects a debate within the field of international politics as theorists find evidence that states do both.

Before returning to the key strategic belief and the hypothesized effects on the diplomatic strategy, I will assess some image theoretical work that may be of interest to the development of the model.

2.2.2 The Image

Kenneth Boulding made a significant development within the field when he published *The Image* (1956). The book's central argument is that behavior is a product of the image held by the subject rather than immediate stimuli. As such, the studies on images have one unifying idea: The policymakers' perception of reality may or may not correspond to reality; however, it is their representation of reality on which they base their decisions. At first glance this is a pretty straightforward

concept. Images are the interpretations or the perceptions of reality on which decision-makers base their policies (Young and Schafer 1998: 79). However, there is at least one theoretical challenge to this elegant concept: What are the ingredients or components of the image? In addition, there is an empirical obstacle: How does one measure the image? (ibid) I will return to the methodological question in the fourth chapter.

Our conception of another state is arguably composed of many parts, and if asked to describe our impression of another state, our response would probably differ to a certain extent from person to person. Take, for instance, any individual's image of Germany. An engineer would perhaps emphasize the country's strong achievements in manufacturing, whereas a philosopher might stress its longstanding tradition in the arts. But what are the key aspects of the national image from the vantage point of a statesman? In the case of Germany, the theorist or the practitioner of international relations would presumably accentuate the so called German problem, i.e. the belief that if Germany were to realize its power-political potential, it would strive to dominate the continent and thereby possibly provoke a countervailing response from other powers.

The image is a general concept and has been put to a number of different uses. No commonly accepted definition of the image has arisen, and its exact meaning has been presented at the analyst's discretion. The question of the fundamental components of the image, i.e. the factors that an image comprises, has been answered in a variety of ways; however, in the context of nation states most analysts focus on at least two factors.

Herrmann and Fischerkeller (1995: 425) write that “[c]entral to any image of another actor is a judgment about the threat or the opportunity that actor represents” and that “[t]he second essential dimension ... is relative power”. In addition, they add a “cultural dimension” which includes “judgments about the culture ... and what norms of behavior the other is likely to respect” (ibid: 425-426). Thus, almost echoing the writings of Morgenthau on status quo and imperialist powers, Herrmann

and Fischerkeller (1995) emphasizes three factors; the perceived intent of the other, the relative power of the other, and a judgment regarding the other's culture. For my purpose, however, I have chosen to only incorporate two factors: intentions and power. This choice is defensible as the length of this paper precludes a far-reaching discussion of the cultural aspect. The third chapter deals with the concepts of intentions and power and the relation between them.

3. Deducing the Theoretical Model

In this chapter I will first define what I have designated the *key strategic belief* and then the *image* before I make an effort to develop the concept of *diplomatic strategy*.

3.1 The Key Strategic Belief

The belief that states tend to either balance or bandwagon in the face of threat, I hypothesize, may have an impact on states' diplomatic strategy in conflict. The two positions differ in many respects. For this purpose the prescriptive element is arguably the most interesting one. I argue that the two strains of thought offer competing recommendations for the diplomatic strategy in a conflict situation. The relevant suggestions that follow from each perspective rest on diverging descriptive accounts of how international politics works. The propositions diverge as to the nature of states and the character of the state system. As a result, proponents of each view are likely to disagree about the utility of punishment and reward in conflict situations.

Before deducing the anticipated effect of the belief on the diplomatic strategy, I first will attempt to portray how these opposing beliefs perceive the workings of international politics. Then I turn to the differing perceptions of the utility of punishment and reward.

With respect to the case study, many analysts of American foreign policy have identified a split in the foreign policy making circles of the Bush administrations. The tug of war between two factions has been described as a conflict between, among other labels, neo-conservatives vs. realists, transformationalists vs. traditionalists, ideologues vs. pragmatists, expansionists vs. realpolitiker, and unilateralists vs. multilateralists.

To draw a dividing line between those who hold that balancing dominates international politics and those who believe bandwagoning shapes the relations between states, I think is well-founded for the reason that, in relation to the perceived utility of punitive and accommodative measures, this division reflects central theoretical underpinnings for the diplomatic strategy in a concentrated manner that the dichotomies above do not.

Moreover, the beliefs under discussion are subject to an ongoing theoretical debate among scholars of international politics about which is the dominant tendency in the relations between states. Thus I hold that the preferred concept pair captures the essence of two competing visions for the articulation of diplomatic strategy and at the same time carries theoretical relevance as to the mechanisms that regulate international politics.

3.1.1 Balancing versus Bandwagoning

Within the context of a conflict situation in which the stronger state attempts to change the behavior of the other, balancing involves resisting the wishes of the stronger side. In contrast, bandwagoning implies that the weaker state accedes to the demands of the stronger power. This understanding of the concepts lies close to Walt's (1987: 17):

When confronted by a significant external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon. *Balancing* is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat; *bandwagoning* refers to alignment with the source of danger.

The balancing proposition lies at the heart of the balance-of-power theory (Morgenthau 1968, Waltz 1979). Realism as a theory of international politics assumes that Great Powers matter most. In virtue of their military capability they are the key players and their decisions to enter or break alliances are an important point of inquiry within the research program. Morgenthau (ibid) and Waltz (ibid) argue that Great Powers should and do join the weaker side to preserve the balance of power.

Waltz (1979) separates the internal from the external balancing. The former refers to states' acts whose aim is to maintain or upgrade the military capability whereas the latter involves forging closer relationships to other states.

In the more specialized or mid-range theoretical debate over which is the prevailing tendency in international politics the argument that balancing dominates has been most forcefully advanced by Waltz (1979) and Walt (1987). They hold that states balance in almost every instance; only in exceptional cases do states bandwagon. Their critics, on the other hand, point to several examples where balancing has not occurred and argue instead that bandwagoning is the rule rather than the exception (e.g. Sweeney and Fritz 2004)

As for bandwagoning, Walt (1991: 55) elaborates on his definition in a later work:

Bandwagoning involves *unequal exchange*; the vulnerable state makes asymmetrical concessions to the dominant power and accepts a subordinate role Bandwagoning is an accommodation to pressure (either latent or manifest)

Schweller (1994: 72) argues that scholars generally hold a balancing image of international politics whereas those that act in name of states more often believe that the bandwagoning hypothesis corresponds to reality. Moreover, the inclination of statesmen to hold the view that bandwagoning dominates has helped shape many expansionist policies. According to Schweller (ibid), the bandwagoning belief has been central to "every bid for world mastery". Napoleon I (quoted in ibid: 73) once said that:

My power depends on my glory and my glories on the victories I have won. My power will fail if I do not feed it on new glories and new victories. Conquest has made me what I am, and only conquest can enable me to hold my position

Jervis (1976: 9) argues that the American intervention in Vietnam cannot be understood without reference to the strong belief in the so called domino theory. Predominant during parts of the cold war, the theory presupposed the notion that states in most cases would embrace communism rather than resist the ideology. According to Mearsheimer (2005), the effect was assumed to multiply and for that

reason “[eventually] almost every state in the international system would jump on the Soviet bandwagon” which would leave the US “alone and weak against an unstoppable juggernaut”. Thus whatever the argument’s empirical merit, the belief that bandwagoning dynamics prevail may contribute to policies predicated on that idea.

The competing propositions hold different assumptions as to the nature of states. In the face of danger, states, according to the balancing perspective, will fight. Conversely, in the bandwagon perspective, states are assumed to flight. These diverging accounts of how states respond to threats from the external environment give rise to competing views as to the character of the state system.

According to Schweller (1994: 73), the bandwagoning image of international politics portrays the international state system as

a complex machine of wheels within wheels. In this highly interconnected world, small local disruptions quickly grow into large disturbances as their effects cascade and reverberate throughout the system.

In contrast, the balancing proposition assumes a different nature of international politics. The balancing perspective perceives “a world composed of many discrete, self-regulating balance-of-power systems” (ibid) and in an environment where balancing dominates, “prudent powers should limit their commitments to places where their core interests are at stake” (ibid.). Walt (1987: 4) concurs and writes that these “contrasting hypotheses [balancing vs. bandwagoning] depict very different worlds and the policies that follow from each are equally distinct”.

Those who subscribe to the view that we live in a balancing world, should advocate policies different from those that emanate from a bandwagoning understanding of international politics. Furthermore, whether those who act on behalf of the state hold that balancing or bandwagoning is the dominant tendency in international politics, should affect the state’s diplomatic strategy in conflict situations.

From the definitions above I will attempt to extract differences with respect to the diplomatic strategy that each perspective may prescribe. In summary, both beliefs rest on diverging conceptions of international politics; whereas the balancing proposition envisages multiple balance-of-power systems, the bandwagoning perspective perceives a highly interconnected world. In the next subchapters I will assess the implications of each perspective for the formulation of the diplomatic strategy.

3.1.2 Perceptions of State Interests

The balancing and bandwagoning hypotheses diverge with respect to how international politics is assumed to operate. As a result, proponents of each perceive states' interests differently.

Jervis (1991: 27) distinguishes between *reputational* and *intrinsic* interests. The latter pertains to 'end values', i.e. those interests that "are valued for their own sake rather than for what they contribute to the power relations between the protagonists" (Snyder quoted in *ibid*: 26). The former is related to the concept of image and refers to "the influence the state's behavior will have on other events because of the changes in the expectations about how the state will behave in the future" (*ibid*: 27).

In a highly interconnected world then, behavior is not only guided by the intrinsic but also by the reputational interest. A defeat in the conflict at hand would imply not only that the contended value is lost, but also that the losing party also has displayed weakness and lack of resolve: It has exposed itself and revealed its actual power.

The bandwagoning proposition stresses the importance of the whole and the tight relations between its parts. As a consequence, even *prima facie* minor issues may be defined as vital ones. If policymakers hold that other states draw inferences from the state's behavior, the conflict at hand is significant not only because of the

inherent values at stake, but also because third parties observe the state's behavior and forecasts its later conduct on that basis. In a highly interconnected world, foreign policymakers must approach the world as a whole rather than analyze situations in isolation.

A defeat of minor intrinsic importance may thus gain significance as other states change their perception of the state. Should other states come to the conclusion that the emperor in fact has no clothes; the reputation of that state would suffer. Subsequently its ability to shape outcomes in later conflicts would grow weaker.

For a statesman that formulates policies on the assumption that bandwagon dynamics dominate international politics, the boundaries of an intrinsic interest are far from clear-cut. Subsequently, the distinction between the vital and non-vital, the central and peripheral, and significant and the insignificant, is blurred. If foreign policy is to be oriented toward satisfying the reputational interest, policymakers will have a daunting task distinguishing between core and peripheral interests.

The following statement from Robert Murphy (quoted in Jervis 1991: 20), a US Department of State political adviser, during the Berlin Blockade may illuminate this line of reasoning:

Our retreat from Berlin would be tantamount to an acknowledgment of lack of courage to resist Soviet pressure short of war and would be amount to a public confession of weakness under pressure. It would be the Munich of 1948 ... [and] would raise justifiable doubts in the minds of European as to the firmness of our ability to resist the spread of communism.

The belief in bandwagoning is in essence a domino belief which Jervis (*ibid*: 22) defines as “the expectation that a defeat or retreat one issue or in one area of the world is likely to produce ... further demands on the state by its adversaries and defections from its allies”. Even minor defeats could imply great losses as the bandwagon gains momentum and other states will be impelled to resist the stronger state. Thus even peripheral issues should be fought vigorously for as a defeat may accelerate the bandwagon.

Now turning to the balancing hypothesis, in a world that is *not* highly interconnected foreign policy can perhaps be conducted in a more flexible manner as it allows the decision maker to approach the relevant situation in relative isolation. And perhaps more importantly, given that the world is not considered an interconnected whole, intrinsic interest may thus be prioritized over reputational ones, thus permitting the policymaker to separate the vital from the non-vital issues. However, it should not be inferred that the balancer does not take the effects on third parties into consideration. In fact, the balancer is just as attentive to the reactions of the states external to the conflict situation, however, the belief that balancing dominates involves the assumption that power repels and that a threatening posture may lead other states to band together in opposition. Thus the diplomatic strategy may take any form that is considered effective in the relevant situation; it should, however, be calibrated so as to not provoke a countervailing response from third party states.

To summarize; the bandwagon belief assumes a highly interconnected world where states tend to align with the source of danger and gains and losses are considered a force in their own right. By contrast, in the balancing belief the world is perceived quite differently; most importantly perhaps, states respond to threats by resisting the dominant power rather than acceding to it. Moreover, conflict situations are considered separable. As a consequence, the policymaker may approach each issue in greater isolation. States may thus fight for the intrinsic interest as opposed to trying to satisfy the reputational interest. The next subchapter discusses diverging perceptions of the utility of accommodative and punitive measures in conflict situations.

3.1.3 Perceptions of the Utility of Reward and Punishment

The formulations of the balancing and the bandwagoning belief are simplified notions. In order to elicit differences between them, it is necessary to express their underpinning principles in clear words. The descriptions are boiled down and reflect

an extreme representation of each position. The predictions one may deduce from the manner in which statesmen perceive the world, i.e. in either balancing or bandwagoning terms, are admittedly vague. However, a few observations can perhaps be noted with some certainty.

As noted above differing views as to the nature of states and the state system implies different room for the policymaker to maneuver. In conflict situations policymakers that subscribe to the balancing proposition have more freedom of action given that the international system is perceived as multiple balance-of-power systems, thus facilitating a more flexible approach.

Jervis (1991: 22) argues that many "foreign policy disagreements turn on different evaluations of the consequences of concessions and limited defeats". Before assessing the perceived utility of accommodative measures, I will attempt to estimate the perceived usefulness of coercive measures from each perspective.

Do the distinct propositions diverge as to the level of punishment that is desirable? Balancers do not assume that states give in to power. On the contrary, they take it as given that states do not surrender until they have to. Moreover, they also believe that it is preferable for the weaker state to join a countervailing alliance to balance threats than to accede to the threatening state.

Furthermore, the belief in balancing implies that threats in one conflict situation will create an incentive for other states to engage in either internal or external balancing. Threats and relative increments in power may spur others to take countermeasures to make certain that they will not be in a position to be "bullied". Should the state assume a threatening posture in one situation, then it may make it harder for itself in later conflicts by creating an incentive for other states to add to their power.

A proponent of the balancing proposition may of course issue threats or resort to the use of force, however, it is evident he is more concerned that states external to the situation will take balancing measures. In a hypothesized two-state world where

the statesman represents the stronger power, there would be no need for hesitation with respect to the use of threats and ultimately force. If there were no other states in the system, then other states' reactions to the diplomatic strategy would not be a part of the calculus; any means deemed effective in attaining the desired goal could thus be adopted. However, in such a world, the decision maker should nevertheless be occupied with the expected utility of threats in the existing situation. Should the statesman hold that threats will work counterproductively and induce the other state to engage in either internal or external balancing, then the use of threats should be avoided.

Cognizant of the danger of being perceived as a threat by third parties and ascribing little utility to threats in the relevant conflict situation, balancers should, everything else being equal, be more cautious with respect to issuing threats and to applying force.

On the other hand, if the policymaker does not subscribe to balancing proposition and instead holds the conviction that the weaker state will act according to the notion that "if we can't beat them, we'll join them", then, I argue, the policymaker should be more willing to resort to threats, and ultimately, to violence. As states flight in the face of danger, the attractiveness of threats should be evident.

Mearsheimer (2005) summarizes the implication of the belief that bandwagoning dynamics dominate international politics:

[Those who] believe that if a powerful country like the United States is willing to threaten or attack its adversaries, then virtually all of the states in the system – friends and foes alike – will quickly understand that the United States means business and that if they cross mighty Uncle Sam, they will pay a severe price. In essence, the rest of the world will fear the United States, which will cause any state that is even thinking about challenging Washington to throw up its hands and jump on the American bandwagon

Mearsheimer's precise, though somewhat rhetorical, wording indicates that the belief in bandwagoning entails greater willingness to put one's faith in threats and the use of force. Rather than assuming that threats provoke a countervailing response, the dynamics among states should make states external to situation more amenable to the state's wishes under comparable circumstances.

Now turning to the utility of the conciliatory option as perceived by proponents of each perspective, the distinction between intrinsic and reputational interests is of central concern.

Figures in policymaking who subscribe to the balancing proposition are not ignorant of the value of reputation. However, as they conceive international politics as a system of more or less isolated balance-of-power systems, they are not as likely to assume that certain acts in one conflict situation will have an important impact on the state's credibility with respect to living up to threats or delivering on promises in later instances. In this perspective, other states' inferences will be made from case to case rather than being based on an abstract quality that is not likely to be perceived in the same manner throughout the globe. Balancers are therefore more prone to believe that the relevant situation is possible to disconnect from other affairs. Thus, a more pragmatic approach is feasible in which the pursuit of the intrinsic interest can be prioritized over reputational concerns, thus allowing for more elaborate use of carrots.

Moreover, a case can perhaps be made that those who believe that states generally balance against threats, will also maintain that in an effort to not appear aggressive, rewards may be considered an effective instrument of policy. In danger of repeating myself, the balancer is attentive to the threat perception of other states, and should for that reason be more inclined to use promises of reward as a tool of foreign policy.

Those who accept the bandwagoning principles would consider it detrimental to the reputation of the power they represent, if they were to, for instance, reward a state suspected of nuclear proliferation. Enticing a country to change its undesired policy would set a dangerous precedent for other states. Other smaller powers could be inspired to follow the same path, thus accelerating the bandwagon, and expect to be rewarded for the same unwanted conduct. Accommodative moves on behalf of the stronger power will be interpreted as weakness that others will come to exploit. According to the bandwagoning hypothesis, this process will feed on itself. Thus, in

this context the promise of reward as a means in the diplomatic strategy is largely discounted by those who believe that international politics are dominated by bandwagoning dynamics.¹³

Each perspective holds diverging prescriptions for the optimum diplomatic strategy. Those who subscribe to the belief that bandwagon dynamics dominate relations between states, may ascribe greater utility to threats of punishment as a means of foreign policy, whereas those who believe that balancing is the dominant tendency among states, may hold inducements in higher regard.

Therefore, one may expect in conflict situations that a decision making group that holds the former perspective should recommend an emphasis on threats of punishment, whereas a group of policymakers that is dominated by the latter perspective should propose a diplomatic strategy that stresses potential reward.¹⁴

3.2 The Image of the Adversary

3.2.1 Intentions and Power

According to Morgenthau (1968: 145), sound foreign policy depends on accurate estimates of other states' intentions and capabilities:

It is the task of those responsible for the foreign policy of a nation ... to evaluate correctly the bearing of these factors [the elements of power] upon the power of their own nation and of other nations as well, and this task must be performed for both the present and the future

¹³ Although the two key strategic beliefs are assumed to mutually exclusive, it is conceivable of course that policymakers mix these two contrasted beliefs. In addition it is neither certain that the belief is fixed; it may perhaps vary the region of the world that the policymaker perceives. However, for the sake of simplicity I am compelled to keep them apart and consider them as two contrasting beliefs.

¹⁴ The tacit assumption is clearly that the statesman believes in either the balance or the bandwagon hypothesis. It is, however, conceivable that the relevant policymaker does appreciate the differences between them and policies will emerge without reference to either set of principles. Despite the possibility that the decision maker may not be cognizant of any abstract hypothesis, he will nevertheless in the context of a conflict situation assess what means are more likely to bring about the desired outcome. Thus, without consciously referring to a general problem-solving principle, he will inevitably consider the diverging prescriptions of each hypothesis.

Thus, in order to conduct successful foreign policy, the decision maker must assess the other's power resources as they appear today as well as tomorrow. The latter task also involves some estimation of the other's intentions. Kal Holsti (1992: 144) writes that the fact that states spend a great amount of resources is indicative of the significance of those factors:

The reason that governments invest millions of dollars for gathering intelligence is to develop a reasonably accurate picture of other states' capabilities and intentions

When discussing images of another states, and perhaps those of enemies in particular, Kennan's (1947) famous *Foreign Affairs* article easily leaps to mind as a key text that to a great extent shaped American policymakers' image of the Soviet Union. In his analysis of the nature of the communist adversary, he emphasized the characteristics of the Soviet leaders and the system's ideology and indicated that isolationism was not tenable and that appeasement would be ineffective. Kennan's essay helped shape the containment doctrine which remained in place, though it did undergo some changes, throughout the cold war.

The notion that states tend to be either supportive or unsupportive of the status quo is an assumption found in many works of diplomatic history. For the purpose of this thesis I assume that policymakers also assess states in such terms. The dichotomy adapted here is of course not very nuanced. However, the notion that there exist states that are either satisfied or dissatisfied with the existing distribution of power runs through much of the literature in the field. As a result, historical analogies are widely available and the meaning of the concepts of a status quo and of an imperialist power should be possible to discern with some precision. I will elaborate on these concepts below.

As for the cognitive processes related to the formation and the maintenance of the image, Jervis (1976: 68) writes in his seminal theoretical work that:

Once a person develops an image of the other – especially a hostile image of the other – ambiguous and even discrepant information will be assimilated to that image... If they think that a state is hostile, behavior that others might see as neutral or friendly will be ignored, distorted, or seen as attempted duplicity.

Thus, the image is resilient and shapes the information about the adversary's behavior so as to conform to the image. Once the image is formed, it is resistant to change and exerts considerable influence on the policymaker's judgment about the opponent's motivations for choosing a given course of action.

Much can be said as to how policymakers' images come into being. A great number of indicators may be relevant in that endeavor. However, for this purpose the question of *how* is not relevant. The related question of *why* a given image has come to prevail as opposed to a different one is of course also interesting. Unfortunately, the scope does not allow for an examination of that aspect either.

To summarize, the "why" and the "how" will not be explored whereas the question of "what" is highlighted. For the political analyst, in order to explain, and possibly forecast, the behavior of one state toward another, the question of *what* is most pertinent; if the salient characteristics of an image held by a group of policymakers are identified, then perhaps one could be able to explain why those decision makers preferred one course of action over another towards the state with which the image is associated.

Restating that perceptions, no matter their accuracy, are the basis on which the policymaker acts, perceptions should therefore impact on policy (Young and Schafer 1998: 79). Therefore, given the dichotomization of the image adopted here, should the policymakers first have adopted either image, that is the image of a status quo or an imperialist power, one could expect that judgment to remain and future assessments of the other state's behavior to be assimilated to that image.

The question whether the weaker power should be perceived as expansionist or status quo oriented, depends among other factors upon its intentions. In the next subchapter I will elaborate on the concept of intentions and its relation to capabilities.

3.2.1.1 Intentions

Generally, observers take intentions to mean what one plans to do or what goals are hoped to be reached. Building on this common understanding, Jervis (1976: 48) defines the term as “the collection of actions the state will or would take because that is what others are trying to predict”.

Reading the intentions of adversaries is a difficult but momentous task for the decision makers. The fundamental question of “how to detect and counter an imperialistic policy” (Morgenthau 1968: 60) confronts those who conduct foreign policy: “The answer to that question has determined the fate of nations; for upon the correctness of that answer depends the success of the foreign policy derived from it” (ibid).

George Kennan (1958: 21-21) wrote that,

in everything that can be statistically expressed – expressed, that is, in such a way as not to imply any judgment on our motivation – I believe the Soviet Government to be excellently informed about us. I am sure that their information on the development of our economies, on the state of our military preparations, on our scientific progress, etc., is absolutely first-rate. But when it comes to the analysis of our motives, to the things that make our life tick as it does, I think this whole great system of intelligence-gathering breaks down seriously.

Thus, what outside observers can quantify may be easy to measure. In contrast, those factors that are harder to count may be more difficult to estimate correctly. Intentions arguably belong in the latter category.

Before I describe the difference between imperialist and status quo powers a brief discussion of the concepts of *power*, *distribution of power* and *status quo* is necessary. For now it is sufficient to bear in mind that the critical point concerns whether or not the adversary’s intention is to overturn or conserve the status quo. For the decision maker it is essential to make an accurate assessment with respect to the other’s intentions. According to Kissinger (1964: 22-23), “[a] series of paradoxes may be intriguing for the philosopher but they are a nightmare for the statesman, for the latter must not only contemplate but resolve”. Thus, faced with an adversary the statesman must determine the other state’s true nature. Given that military capability

is a necessary means to eventually reach the goal of a revolution in the international order, the following paragraphs focus on that aspect.

3.2.1.2 Power

The question of power has been in the forefront in debates within the field from Thucydides to the present day. However, consensus as to the role and nature of power has not emerged. In realist theories of international politics, power remains a key concept, although its content is hard to agree on. Gilpin (1981: 13) for example, admits that it is “one of the most troublesome in the field”. Nevertheless, the number of definitions should be interpreted as a testament to the significance of the concept, and even though academics fail to concur on its proper definition, most analysts believe it is an essential task to address the role and nature of this elusive concept (Baldwin 2002: 177).

Morgenthau’s (1968: 106-139) contribution to this debate consisted in an approach to the concept that summarized “elements of national power”, i.e. factors such as industrial capacity, economic strength, population, national character, scientific knowledge, etc. In order to reach an assessment of the power of a given state, the observer would add up Morgenthau’s factors. In this “power as resources” approach, the power of a state relative to another, then, would be understood as the sum of its parts seen relative to the parallel sum of the other state. The distribution of power therefore reflects the disparity (or parity) in power resources. Thus, in this interpretation of the concept, power is conceived as a possession or a property of states.

In contrast to the understanding exemplified by Morgenthau, there is the “relational power approach,” in which the concept refers to a relationship between two or more actors. Instead of regarding it as a property of the actors in question, this approach highlights the relation between them and advances the notion of power as a type of causation. In the relationship between, say, actor A and actor B, A’s behavior causes a change in the behavior of B (Baldwin 2002: 178). As a consequence of the

shift from “a property concept of power to a relational one,” power was no longer considered one-dimensional.

Although academics have engaged in heated disputes concerning the most apt definition of power, and whether or not power should be interpreted as “the sum of resources” or as a property of the relationship between the actors in question, a different conceptualization altogether may be possible. Perhaps Wolfers (1962: 104) cuts the Gordian knot by separating *power* from *influence*. The first concept refers to the “ability to move others by the threat or infliction of deprivations” whereas the latter denotes the “ability to do so [move others] through promises or grants of benefits”. Wolfers (ibid: 104-105) stresses that these theoretical constructs are not unrelated in practice and as “a rule they will be found to go hand in hand”.

Wolfers (ibid: 104) connects power to coercion and influence to persuasion. Aware that the distinction is an oversimplification, Wolfers (ibid.) notes that in almost every case in which “these means achieve significant political results, there is present both an element of persuasion and an element of pressure or constraint bordering on coercion”

Wolfers (ibid) is thus fully aware that power and influence as means of foreign policy cannot be understood in isolation. In any conflict in which a given state tries to persuade its counterpart, “the coercive power in the background” plays a certain part. Wolfers (ibid: 108-109) illustrative example is worth quoting at length:

[I]f any diplomat should doubt the assistance he gains from the mere existence of power in the hands of his government and from the threat of forceful action implicit in such power, he need only ask himself whether he would expect equal success in negotiating with a strong opponent if he were representing Iceland instead of the United States.

The relationship between power and influence is not clear cut. In an effort to illustrate the interrelation between them, Wolfers (ibid) depicts them as opposing ends in a spectrum “into which one can fit the actual means used by nations in pursuit of their foreign policies”.

In Wolfers' terminology, power is related to coercion and broadly reflects the concept of power advanced by Morgenthau. In many cases, military capability is a necessary means for coercing others to conform to one's wishes. Conceiving capabilities as one of the more tangible elements of power, as conceived by Morgenthau, that is relatively uncomplicated to measure, an assessment of the states' military capabilities may contribute to an understanding as to how policymakers view the other state in power terms. To employ a sports analogy; if two boxers belong to different weight classes, the probable outcome of a match should be clear to actors and observers alike.

The study of international politics has to a great extent been absorbed by questions relating to war and the use of force. The preoccupation with military force as the key component of power has according to Baldwin (2002: 184) led to a neglect of other forms of power and impeded the understanding of not only "military statecraft itself" but also "the conditions under which military force should be used".

Nevertheless, the traditional emphasis on military power as the ultimate measuring rod on which states may be compared does have some utility. A straightforward concept mitigates the problem of measurement. Although arguments against the one-dimensional concept of power may be numerous, it facilitates comparison between states.

Another much employed but vague concept is the balance of power. What is the precise meaning of the term? According to Wolfers (1962: 117), four interpretations are common:

[T]he term refers somehow to the distribution of power among nations, it is taken in some instances to be synonymous with the distribution of power generally, and in other instances to imply the superiority of one country over another ... Most frequently, however, the term signifies the equilibrium of an evenly balanced scale.

The thesis adopts the latter understanding of the balance of power as "a roughly equal distribution of power between two opponents" (ibid: 118).

Transferred to the proposed theoretical framework power represents punishment whereas influence corresponds to reward. For the development of the theoretical model these two concepts are central.

3.2.1.3 Synthesis

In the policy making process, I presume that the policymaker should attempt to gauge the intentions of the adversary; and decide whether the diplomatic strategy should be formulated on the basis of an expansionist or a status quo oriented image of the adversary. I hypothesize that words and actions on the part of the weaker power are interpreted by the stronger power in light of the image of the adversary that prevails within the central foreign policy making group.

As stated above the question of how, or through which mechanisms the image is formed, falls outside the scope of the thesis to explore. However, intentions to either upset or preserve the status quo as perceived by the stronger power are necessarily coupled to a judgment of the expected benefits that the weaker power believes it will derive from an investment in capabilities. If the adversary does not possess any capability to upset the status quo, any voiced aspirations to pursue expansionist policies abroad would not be credible. Conversely, should a state claim that it did not have any designs to overturn the status quo, observers would perhaps argue that its great investments to augment its military power indicate that, indeed it does. The coupling of intentions to military power therefore seems to be a necessary one.

To summarize, the inferred intentions are considered the crux of the image, however, the observer cannot infer intentions without reference to capability. In other words, intentions form the core of the image but capabilities are also a necessary factor to which the decision maker must pay attention. Simply put, the intentions represent the state's power aspirations whereas the capabilities constitute the means to realize those ambitions.

Confronted with the armament of another state, what inference should the decision maker draw about the intent of this action? Will other states consider the other's efforts to improve its military might as an attempt to meet the security needs of its external situation or as a preparation for the use of force? The answer is not clear, and I believe it hinges among other things on the observer's image of that given state.

Should the policymaker have an image of the other that corresponds to that of a status quo power, efforts on the part of the weaker state to add to its military power may be considered as a legitimate move to protect its security interests. If, on the other hand, the image held resembles that of an imperialist power, then an increment in military capability would perhaps be understood as a preparation for the use of force.

Returning to the German problem, few observers today would argue that the reunification of the country has led to a bid for regional hegemony, as some analysts predicted at the time. The dominant image of Germany today largely corresponds to that of a status quo power. Should Germany, however, suddenly engage in a massive arms build-up and decide to develop nuclear weapons, observers would perhaps be inclined to alter their image of that state. Thus, efforts on Germany's part to improve its military capabilities may affect outside observers' estimates of the state's intentions.

However, no balanced analyst would contend that Germany intended to upset the status quo if it were to modernize its air force by buying, say, fifteen state-of-the-art fighter aircrafts. Thus, in that case proportionality would be important. It is hard to determine the critical point with respect to when the image of a state crosses the threshold from being status quo oriented to becoming imperialist. Furthermore, although the state in question may have intentions to overthrow the status quo, that may not be evident to outside observers. For instance, Germany under Hitler had revisionist designs; yet, those did not entirely become clear to other states before war was inevitable.

I assume that, during a conflict the statesman of the stronger state evaluates the other state's ambition with respect to its power position. The question the decision maker must strive to answer concerns the nature of the opposition: Is the adversary a status quo or a revisionist power? Thus, the image in this context equals the statesman's estimate of the other's intention and capability to maintain or disrupt the prevailing the distribution of power.

As a starting point for differentiating between status quo and imperialist states I will apply the distinction put forth by Morgenthau (1968). Before describing the imperialist state, I will first characterize the status quo power.

3.2.2 The Status Quo Power

The term *status quo* has its origins in the diplomatic concept of *status quo ante bellum*, i.e. a restoration of the power configuration prior to the war. Adapted by Morgenthau (ibid: 37), *status quo* refers to “[policies aimed] at the maintenance of distribution of power which exists at a particular moment in history”, however, that does not mean that such policies are in opposition to change altogether, although they are opposed to “any change that would amount to a reversal of the power relations among two or more nations” (ibid: 40). However, minor modifications of the distribution of power, which “leave intact the relative power positions ... are fully compatible with a policy of the status quo” (ibid).

Kissinger (1964: 1) is also preoccupied with stability and what he calls the legitimacy of the international order: “Stability [has resulted] from a generally accepted legitimacy ... [which] means no more than an international agreement about the nature of workable arrangements about the permissible aims and methods of foreign policy”.

The legitimacy, as conceived by Kissinger (ibid), is not to “be confused with justice” but “implies the acceptance of the framework of the international order by all major powers”. As to what level of acceptance that is necessary to maintain the

system, Kissinger (ibid) adds that no power can be “so dissatisfied that, like Germany after the Treaty of Versailles, it expresses its dissatisfaction in a revolutionary foreign policy”. If a legitimate order is in place, wars may still occur but their scope is limited (ibid: 1-2).

A status quo power then does not intend to bring about any revolution in the existing power relations and will be mindful of the framework of the status quo, i.e. “the permissible aims and methods” (ibid: 1), in its foreign policy conduct. Thus, a status quo power is satisfied in the sense that it perceives its power position within the international order as optimal, or at least, favorable. Efforts on the part of a status quo power that seek to augment its national power are motivated primarily by increases in other states’ power. Thus, it does not intend to upset the current distribution of power, but to conserve it.

In conflict situations status quo powers should perhaps be amenable to persuasion. As the status quo oriented state is satisfied with its current position in the distribution of power, it holds no ambition to overthrow it. The stronger power may interpret the other state’s actions as legitimate and perhaps as a response to security concerns; efforts to strengthen its military capability may be construed as a reaction to external events.

The weaker side’s motivations to augment its absolute power stem from legitimate grievances and/or conditions imposed on it from the outside. Thus a diplomatic strategy pronounced on the assumption that the weaker state is in fact a status quo oriented state could very well contain accommodative measures. In Morgenthau’s framework, concessions to a status quo power do not equal appeasement as the target state only has limited objectives. Accommodation could thus be considered a prudent policy.

Threats of punishment in the case of non-compliance on the part of the status quo state could work counterproductively as it may induce balancing behavior. Given that the weaker state intends only to conserve its position in the power hierarchy or is

responding to legitimate grievances, threats could serve to strengthen the weaker side's perception of vulnerability and add to its firmness to sustain its behavior.

Therefore one could postulate that if the stronger power's image of the other state corresponds to that of a status quo state, then one should see that the former adopts a diplomatic strategy that emphasizes reward and downplays punishment.

3.2.3 The Imperialist Power

Now turning to the imperialist power, a caveat is in order. According to Morgenthau (1968: 41), the term imperialism has "lost all concrete meaning". Polemical usage has emptied the concept and its utilization usually expresses the observer's disdain for the foreign policies of the state in question. For Morgenthau (ibid: 41-42), then, it "becomes the task of theoretical analysis to break with popular usage in order to give the term an ethically neutral, objective, and definable meaning that at the same time is useful for the theory and practice of international politics".

Morgenthau (ibid: 42) defines imperialism as "a policy that aims at the overthrow of the status quo, at a reversal of the power relations between two or more nations". However, Morgenthau (ibid) notes that not "every foreign policy aimed at an increase in the power of a nation is necessarily not a manifestation of imperialism" and that a policy "seeking only adjustment, leaving the essence of these power relations intact, still operates within the general framework of a policy of the status quo". Moreover, if a policy is intended to preserve the power of an empire, it should not be designated as imperialistic because "imperialism is contrasted with the policy of the status quo and ... has a dynamic connotation" (ibid).

For the statesman the fundamental question regards the judgment of the other's policies. Is the foreign policy of the other state imperialistic or not? Does it aim at the overthrow of the current distribution of power, or does it merely intend a minor modification of the status quo?

Students of international politics often invoke Neville Chamberlain's image of Germany as an example where the policymaker had not come to grips with the realities of the situation. The image he held of Germany, presumably one in which Germany's intentions consisted in an ambition to rectify justified grievances as imposed on it by the Versailles treaty, enabled him to make a deal with Hitler at Munich. The British prime minister failed to perceive Germany for what it really was, mistaking the imperialist state for a status quo power:

It is quite well known that if one tries to appease a bandit by first giving him one's purse, then one's coat, and so forth, he is not going to be more charitable because of this, he is not going to stop exercising his banditry. On the contrary, he will become ever more insolent (Krushchev quoted in Jervis 1976: 61).

Krushchev's statement captures the defining characteristic of the imperialist power: It cannot be appeased. Concessions work contrary to their intentions as the imperialist power only desires more: "‘Appeasement’, where it is not a device to gain time, is the result of an inability to come to grips with a policy of unlimited objectives" (Kissinger 1964: 3). The adversary whose objectives are without boundaries cannot be pacified through accommodative measures. Any concession will add to the relative power of the other side and enhance its appetite and resolve to have more.

In a conflict situation, to check the ambitions of the revolutionary power, the stronger power must resist not only on the relevant issue of contention, but on all matters. If the weaker power's unwillingness to alter its behavior is caused by its motivation to reach some sub-goal in a comprehensive program of expansion, then any display of weakness on the part of the stronger power will be exploited by the revolutionary power since it is always looking for an opportunity to expand. A prudent policy toward an imperialist state cannot include inducements as these inevitably will serve to reinforce its determination to upset the status quo. Thus a diplomatic strategy toward a revolutionary power must mind that the other is not responsive to limited inducements; only punitive measures are available.

Thus toward an adversary perceived as expansionist, one may expect the diplomatic strategy to maximize punishment and minimize reward.

The next subchapter develops the concept of diplomatic strategy.

3.3 The Diplomatic Strategy

The concept diplomatic strategy is composed of two related ideas, diplomacy and strategy. *Diplomacy* is commonly understood to refer to negotiations between states, or more broadly, the art of conducting external relations on behalf of the state.

For Morgenthau (1968: 135) is the “quality of diplomacy” the most important of the “elements of power” because:

The quality of a nation’s diplomacy combines those different factors [the elements of power] into an integrated whole, gives them direction and weight, and awakens their slumbering potentialities by giving them the breath of actual power

Morgenthau (ibid) refers to diplomacy as “the brains of national power” and argues that “if its vision is blurred, its judgment defective, and its determination feeble”, the other elements “will in the long run avail a nation little”. Furthermore, Morgenthau (ibid) equate s the significance of diplomats in peace with generals in war. Both groups are concerned with “bringing the different elements of national power to bear with maximum effect”. Thus, a state that possesses an advantage in national power cannot use it on the international stage without the assistance of adept diplomats.

Strategy, on the other hand, usually carries one of two meanings. Firstly, it may refer to a branch of the art of war, and secondly, and more generally, to a systematic plan of action. It is the latter meaning that is adopted here. Two well-known definitions of strategy are worth quoting:

Strategy is ultimately about effectively exercising power (Foster quoted in Baylis and Wirtz 2002: 4).

Strategy is a plan of action designed in order to achieve some end; a purpose together with a system of measures for its accomplishment (Wylie quoted in ibid)

To Wolfers (1962), reward and punishment are the primary means that states employ in pursuit of their foreign policy goals.

For this purpose the concept of diplomatic strategy may thus be defined as

the plan of action for employing the twin instruments of policy, reward and punishment, either separately or in combination, in order to bring about a change in the adversary's behavior.

I hypothesize that the stronger power communicates its intention to punish or reward the adversary through words and actions. In addition, the stronger power may present the other state with a *choice* between two outcomes; the weaker state may accept the stronger one's demands and receive the concessions stipulated, or maintain its resistance and face the consequences. The goal of the diplomatic strategy is to convince the weaker side to accommodate its behavior to the stronger power's wishes.

In order to measure the diplomatic strategy, or at least, be able to describe it with some accuracy, the concept must be operationalized. What indicators may be relevant to that end? Arguably, diplomacy is about both style and substance. However, in order to measure the concept, one is forced to concentrate on those aspects that are tangible and more easily lend themselves to be counted and compared. Thus the researcher should perhaps concentrate on the substantial dimension and gauge the extent of those punitive and accommodative measures that are communicated to the adversary through words and actions.

In this context, assuming a mixed strategy, the diplomatic strategy can be considered to consist of two components; the sum of costs that is to be imposed on the weaker state should it not bend to the stronger state's will, and the sum of benefits that will accrue to the weaker side should it decide to alter its conduct in coherence with the stronger state's wishes. Conceived as two ends of a continuum, the distance between the promised reward and the prospective punishment may perhaps be referred to as the *discrepancy*.

Of course, a precondition for employing both carrots and sticks in a conflict situation is that the stronger power has something to offer that the weaker state wants,

and that it has the ability to harm or asymmetrically impose costs on the weaker party.

Admittedly, the two-dimensional concept of diplomatic strategy may be too basic to capture the complexities in a state's actions toward an adversary in a conflict situation. However, measuring the dependent variable through prospective reward and punishment is a straightforward task as such factors are relatively easy to estimate, which in turn may simplify comparison to other cases. Moreover, as punishment and reward – sticks and carrots – may be considered the central means of foreign policy, it seems apt to conceive the diplomatic strategy as a combination of those two factors.

Similar concepts to the one defined in this chapter include deterrence diplomacy and coercive diplomacy. The logic of the latter is summed up by George (1991: 4):

The general idea of coercive diplomacy is to back one's demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand

This definition has strong resemblance to the concept of diplomatic strategy, however, George's (ibid) construct involves more variables that in turn produce different types of coercive diplomacy. This thesis, however, investigates potential links between the two cognitive constructs, on the hand, and the policymakers' inclination to offer inducements and threaten punishment, on the other. Therefore, it seems apt to adopt a minimalist conception of a related construct.

In the conflict situation, the problem for the policymaker consists in finding the optimum trade-off between coercion and accommodation that maximizes gains and minimizes loss (Snyder and Diesing 1977: 10, 207).

Depending on whether the gravity point of the diplomatic strategy lies close to the accommodative or coercive end of the spectrum, it will be designated as accommodative or coercive respectively. In the latter case, the stronger side maximizes punitive measures and minimizes accommodative measures, and

conversely, in the former case, the stronger side minimizes punitive measures and maximizes accommodative measures.

In a conflict situation no diplomatic strategy will rely on pure coercion or pure accommodation. Moreover, threats of military action need not be pronounced and promises of reward are at times not expressed in definite terms. As Wolfers (1962) has noted, the distinction between power and influence is hard to draw, and as a consequence, a weaker power when confronted by a stronger state will in most cases pay careful attention to the superior capabilities of the latter. Thus threats can be present although they are not explicitly articulated.

Two dichotomies imply four combinations. In two instances one may expect the diplomatic strategy to be all but one-sided. In the case that the policymakers subscribe to the belief that international politics is dominated by bandwagon dynamics and the adversary is perceived as a predominantly revolutionary power, then the diplomatic strategy should emphasize punitive measures over conciliatory actions. If, on the other hand, the decision makers believe that balancing is the dominant tendency and the other state is perceived as a status quo oriented power, then the diplomatic strategy should downplay the threat of punishment and stress the possibility of reward. In the other two combinations one may anticipate more mixed strategies. Below I will elaborate on this point.

IMAGE

Revolutionary

Status Quo

Bandwagoning

*Coercive**Mixed***BELIEF**

Balancing

*Mixed**Accommodative*

The research design does not allow for the quantification of effect. However, in the two cases that the two factors pull in different directions, what combination of coercive and accommodative measures may the researcher expect?

The key strategic belief is assumed to be a more general perspective on international politics, whereas the image is associated with the adversary in particular. One could perhaps make the case that the belief stipulates the outline of the diplomatic strategy and that the image provides the more specific details.

Conceived in such a manner, the belief would stipulate the general utility of conciliatory and punitive measures, whereas the image would yield assumptions as to the adversary's responsiveness to reward and punishment.

Thus the image could be more closely related to the diplomatic strategy than the key strategic belief. For that reason the tentative causal model suggests that the image is a more immediate factor than the key strategic belief.

However, the preliminary character of the model precludes any authoritative assessment as to the relative impact of the two independent variables. Perhaps the

following case study may illuminate the relations between the cognitive constructs and the diplomatic strategy.

In the interest of parsimony I assume that the two independent variables are unrelated to each other. As a result, I have regrettably discounted several avenues of interpretation that would be interesting to explore. For instance, the two concepts may be related; for example, is it conceivable that a policymaker who holds a bandwagoning perspective is inclined to view all adversaries as in effect revolutionary powers? Conversely, if a policymaker holds that balancing is the dominant tendency among states, is it more likely that he will assume that all opponents simply react to external dynamics and actually are status quo oriented?

Moreover, it is by means no a given that the policymakers actually think in the categories selected here; one cannot say with certainty that these concepts appear in the cognitive process. Even if they do, one cannot ascertain that they exist as clear-cut categories between which there are no grey areas.

Such questions should admittedly be explored in a satisfactory manner. However, the scope of this thesis does not allow that.

Conceiving both the belief and the image as the products of two separate cognitive processes that occur in isolation and at different points in time is arguably too simple; the complexity of the cognitive process should not be discounted. However, the choice to do so is defensible for at least three reasons.

First, as the belief involves assessments of how international politics works and subsequently how foreign policy should be conducted, it is more general in character than the image. Whereas the image corresponds to the perceived nature of a given state, the belief involves assumptions about states generally. Thus, the assumption is warranted by a common sense supposition.

Second, although “everything is connected to everything else” analytically one must keep variables distinct. Thus, the segment of reality under study must be partitioned into concepts that are intelligible and clearly defined.

Third, this paper is strengthened by a presentation that is easy to follow and theoretical constructs analyzed in isolation will help reduce confusion. Therefore, I presuppose that the two independent variables are unrelated and that the cognitive process involving the key strategic belief precedes the process in which the image is formed.

3.3.1 Two Levels of Communication

In diplomacy, what is done is often as important as what is said. Observers should recognize that communication between the parties take place on two levels: words and actions. Important non-verbal signaling can happen via military moves or political-diplomatic activities (George 1991: 9).

The relation between words and actions is often complicated and vague. George (ibid) writes that: “Actions may reinforce strong words, or they may compensate for weak words when it is not possible or prudent to utter strong words”. Moreover, deeds committed or not “can reinforce verbal threats and make them more credible or can dilute and weaken the impact of even strong verbal threats” (ibid).

Conventional wisdom has it that words are cheap; actions speak louder. In negotiations between states that may not always be the case; even behavior intended to convey an unambiguous message may be misread by the other party: “However strong the actions, they may be perceived by the adversary as equivocal or as bluffs” (ibid: 10).

Words may help clarify meaning of actions that the adversary may misinterpret. Correspondingly, actions may make words clearer or more intelligible. The relationship between actions and words, one may conclude, is not a given and its complexity obviously demands more than a few passages to develop a nuanced

understanding of the subject matter. However, the point of inquiry is the diplomatic strategy's mixture of reward and punishment; the manner in which these intentions are communicated is of secondary importance.

4. Method

The aim of this thesis is twofold. The model presented represents an amalgam of two traditions of the cognitive approach. By redefining the George's master belief and transferring it to the more confined realm of foreign policy, and more specifically, diplomatic strategy, and combining it with the policymakers' image of the relevant adversary, I hope to develop a model that is simultaneously parsimonious but also captures some of the complexity the decision maker faces in conflict situations. Thus the primary task concerns the development of the theoretical model. Secondly, I attempt to apply the model to the selected case by deducing anticipated effects and relating those to the case. As such, my effort is essentially a theory-building exercise which includes a test of predictions using a congruence procedure. Given that the focus of this enterprise is the development of the model I have given less thought to the methodological concerns related to the secondary goal.

The thesis features a case study approach, which, according to George and Bennett (2005: 5) implies "detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events". I would also like to incorporate Gerring's (2004: 341) definition of a case study as "an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomenon".

I will explore the case looking for within-case correlation between the key strategic belief and the image on the one hand, and the diplomatic strategy, on the other. Thus I try to establish the dependent variable's causes. Given the preliminary character of the analysis, I will not attempt to define causal relations in a strict sense; however, I do briefly discuss my findings and their relation to the model. Should the predictions accord with the outcome of the case, it would at the very least be an encouragement and an indication that the model may have a purpose.

In contrast to the method of controlled comparison, which demands that the researcher finds two cases that are similar in every respect but one, the congruence method offers an alternative approach. The latter method does not, however, “achieve the functional equivalent of an experiment” (George and Bennett 2005: 181). Rather, its strength lies with the causal interpretation which the researcher may elicit through its use (ibid).

In essence, the congruence method stipulates that the researcher starts out with a theoretical proposition from which he tries to formulate more or less well-defined predictions. Should those correspond to the outcome of the case, the analyst may at least “entertain the possibility” that there exists a causal relation between the variables under study (ibid).

A strict criterion for such tests is “congruity” which presupposes that the study variables “vary in the expected directions, to the expected magnitude, [and] along the expected dimensions” (George and Bennett 2005: 183). Before the researcher addresses the question whether the independent and dependent variables are congruent, one must evaluate whether there is unexplained variance in the dependent variable that cannot be accounted for (ibid).

The congruence method has, as every other method, advantages and limitations. I will describe its relatively beneficial qualities before I turn to its central disadvantage.

Firstly, the method offers a great deal of flexibility and adaptability. The theory put to the congruence test need not be well-established. On the contrary, it may be explored for the first time. Perhaps one could argue that less established theories should not need to undergo as rigorous tests as highly regarded ones. Secondly, in many instances theories are ill defined; they neither have clarity nor internal consistency. As a consequence, they cannot be evaluated critically on the basis of a congruence test. However, the congruence method may help refine and develop the theories by making them testable. Thirdly, the method does not require

much data; the researcher does not have to trace the causal process (although the congruence method may be combined with process tracing, as a form of controlled comparison) (ibid: 182: 183).

Although the method does have a few strengths, they may very well be outweighed by its weaknesses. The chief problem concerns the logic of inference: Should the outcome be consistent with the predictions postulated by the researcher, it may not necessarily mean support for a causal interpretation. A causal relationship may not exist although the test establishes congruence; the researcher should be particularly attentive to spuriousness (ibid: 184-185).

It is apparent that the congruence method has an important weakness that makes it difficult to draw causal inferences from testing theories this way. However, as the object of this thesis is mainly to present a preliminary theoretical model, and not to test or refine an already recognized theory, one could perhaps relax the methodological requirements that the researcher must set for himself.

If the aim, on the other hand, was to raise the status of a given theory by attempting to elevate the understanding of its causal relationships from ambiguity to near certainty, then perhaps the researcher should impose stricter criteria on himself. A theoretical model in its infancy, i.e. a period in which the researcher is not able to make clear, definite predictions, cannot be subjected to such rigorous tests which theories of higher rank could be expected to pass.

Relying on a single case to test a model is arguably an insufficient foundation for demanding general explanatory power, should the case accord with my argument. However, congruity between the predictions and observations should strengthen my intention to develop the model further and perhaps test it against a broader set of cases.

Van Evera (1997: 78) stipulates two basic criteria for case selection. First, researchers should choose those cases that best serve the purpose of their defined goal. Second, relevant for theory testing, the investigator should make a choice on the

basis of strength and simplicity; the case selection should let the researcher perform strong tests with little effort.

My purpose is to develop a model for the diplomatic strategy in conflict, and the choice to analyze the US diplomatic strategy toward Iran in the nuclear dispute as a test case is well-founded for several reasons. The case fits the conditions of the model, pitting a stronger against a weaker power measured through their power resources. In addition, the amount of data available openly through the internet facilitates the enterprise. Moreover, the conflict is ongoing and relevant in a historic perspective and thus of both political and academic interest.

Van Evara (ibid: 80) defines a strong test as one “whose outcome is unlikely to result from any other factor other than the operation or failure of the theory” and that evaluates “*certain* and *unique*” predictions. Given the exploratory character of the thesis, one cannot say with any certainty that the predictions, if they were to correspond with the observations, result from the postulated relationship between the variables under study. The predictions deduced are not particularly certain, thus weakening the test. However, to my knowledge there exists no well-established theory that connects cognitions to the formulation of diplomatic strategy in conflict, thus satisfying the criterion of uniqueness. The case is thus useful for my purpose of building theory; however, the number of unknowns involved in the enterprise renders strong tests unavailable.

The unit of analysis in the case study is the Bush administrations. It follows that one should have understanding of the boundaries of that unit, i.e. which members of the administration are central enough to be included and which members are peripheral enough to be excluded. Unfortunately, I have made no clear distinction in that respect; throughout the case study I have assumed that those individuals that have dealt with the nuclear dispute are sufficiently important to be considered a part of the group that develops the diplomatic strategy toward Iran.

The analysis presupposes that the relevant decision making group may be considered a “black box” in which the belief and the image may come to prevail. Although factions within the administrations may hold different views as to the manner foreign policy should be conducted and to the most accurate description of other states, I choose to perceive the foreign policy making group as a coherent whole. Inside the box, I acknowledge, that competition between factions who hold diverging beliefs and images occurs. Thus rather than analyzing the foreign policy making unit *per se*, I attempt to take apart words and actions emanating from the administration and primarily interpret those as indicative of the beliefs and images that prevail within the decision making group at the given time.

4.1 Conceptual Validity and Reliability

Ole R. Holsti (1969: 142) defines *validity* as “the extent to which an instrument is measuring what it is intended to measure”. Validity thus concerns the relationship between the empirical indicators and the theoretical constructs. As both the belief and the image are difficult to measure directly, I opted for a different approach, attempting to gauge the cognitive constructs through proxies. Thus I present no general suggestion as to how the researcher may measure the belief and the image as defined here.

In the case study, however, I first try to assess the relative standing of the key strategic beliefs through the status of the Bush doctrine, which, I argue, is permeated with the belief that we live in a world where the bandwagon dynamics dominates. Second, I attempt to pronounce the prevalent image of Iran through the policymakers’ perception of Iran’s rationale for its nuclear program as conveyed through speeches, statements, interviews, and press briefings and so forth.

The indirect measurement of the concepts may concurrently strengthen and weaken validity. The proxy variables need not correspond well with the concepts, thus possibly heightening validity concerns. However, if they do correspond, they

may represent an alternative to direct measurement which in turn may increase validity.

As for the key strategic belief, I fail to see an alternative approach to the one chosen here. Estimating the standing of the beliefs directly would involve labor-extensive reading of texts, which ultimately would not guarantee a more valid result. Rarely do statesmen reveal how they think in strategic terms. Such information may of course be available after the policymakers retire; however, this case encompasses events over the last six years. Thus estimating whether the administrations hold that balancing or bandwagoning dominates through the status of the Bush doctrine, may thus strengthen validity, given that the doctrine may be considered the key intellectual product of the first Bush administration. The decision to measure the standing of the doctrine throughout the period under study thus seems well-founded.

The image is operationalized through the prevalent perception of Iran's rationale for its nuclear program. Estimating the image directly through officials' statements in the media, hoping thereby to form an opinion of the image, will weaken validity as the measurement will most likely become a biased product of the researcher's impressions. The image, conceived as intentions and power, may be gauged more accurately through the policymakers' perception of the opposition's investment in its power resources. At the moment the enrichment program lies at the heart of the American-Iranian discord, and as such it may be fruitful to attempt to estimate the policymakers' image of Iran through their perception of Iran's rationale for maintaining its enrichment activities.

Reliability, on the other hand, concerns objectivity and how the investigation is conducted. For the thesis to satisfy that requirement, its measurements and procedures must be reliable, i.e. "repeated measures with same instrument on a given sample of data should yield similar results" (ibid: 135). To Ole R. Holsti (ibid) reliability is a function of the researcher's skill as well the ambiguity of the data. In order to mitigate reliability concerns, the case study should have rested on a content analysis which included an unambiguous coding system (ibid). Given that I have

prioritized the theoretical part of the thesis, I am forced to present an analysis that by most standards does not have an acceptable level of reliability.

4.2 Sources

The analysis rests primarily on primary sources in the form of speeches and statements. In addition I employ secondary sources such as insiders' accounts about the workings of the White House. Sources should not be taken at face value; the researcher must appreciate the context in order to understand the "true" content of the source material (George and Bennett 2005: 107). The paper relies heavily on the spoken and written words of American officials either in the form of speeches, press briefings, and interviews. Chollet and Goldgeier (2002: 169) advance a strong argument in favor of attaching weight to speeches and statements. They hold that speech-making is "a critical part" of foreign policy process because in many cases it is during "speech-making ... decisions get made". Speeches are thus significant not only as messages to external audiences or as data from which to derive beliefs and images, but as the endpoint of the decision making process, thus preparing the ground for the implementation, by communicating to the bureaucracy and to factions within the executive that the relevant issue is settled (ibid).

This view is confirmed by former secretary of state, Warren Christopher (1998: 9):

Policy debates [are] the lifeblood of government.... [but] in any given week as secretary, I received dozens of memoranda advocating various particular policy directions. However persuasive their contents, they did not constitute U.S. policy unless they were incorporated into a speech, public statement or formal government document. The challenge of articulating a position publicly compels leaders to make policy choices

In addition, there is another argument for attributing importance to words relevant for the diplomatic strategy; to Christopher (ibid), speeches were "valuable tools of day-to-day diplomacy [and] statements made on the public record were often more effective than private ones". Thus making a public demand against another state in a

speech does reflect a policy decision to influence the other's behavior (Chollet and Goldgeier 2002: 170).

The first part of the analysis concerns the key strategic belief. Here I rely on the primary sources for the enunciation of the doctrine and secondary sources such as Jervis (2003), Gordon (2006), and Woodward (2006) for the interpretation, who all are well-respected.

Then I turn to the image of Iran held by the administrations. In order to measure the image I gauge the policymakers' perception of Iran's rationale for its nuclear program. Depending on the policymakers' image the program is presumed to be serving either civilian or military needs. In the latter case I interpret the perception to indicate that a revolutionary image prevails, and conversely, in the former, I assume that the policymakers hold an image of Iran as oriented toward the status quo.

For this part primary sources are used to arrive at the prevalent image. More specifically, I attempt to analyze the policymakers' formulation in speeches, interviews, and statements when describing the Iranian nuclear program with respect to the perceived Iranian rationale.

The third part of the analysis involves gauging the development of the diplomatic strategy throughout the period under study. Here I approach the American diplomatic strategy from a communication perspective, trying to interpret American words and actions as messages expressive of intent to either punish or reward Iran. Words and actions have a complex interrelationship that I cannot explore here; however, the assumption is that communication takes place on two levels on which words and actions may reinforce or weaken each other.

The chronological account of the diplomatic strategy builds on newspaper articles, most notably from the respected *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, and speeches, press releases and so forth. I have searched the archives of both papers, which are available through log in, and assessed the official account of the same event, which is available through the relevant web sites. For instance, if the Post

reports that the US imposes new sanctions on Iran, I would then search the official transcripts of statements given by, for example, the president or the secretary of state and so on. Secondly, I would look in the online versions of weekly magazines such as *The Economist*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. Thus the method rests on the assumption that these two newspapers would report any change in the American diplomatic strategy as defined here. I believe that presumption is justified given the status of these institutions and the significance of the nuclear dispute.

The journalist Seymour Hersh has written extensively in the *New Yorker* on the American diplomatic strategy and the ideas concerning Iran that supposedly exist among key officials. Although his sources must have some relation to the top echelon of the administration, his prophecies have failed to materialize. That may suggest that Hersh may have been fed misinformation, and even that the media have been used as a mouthpiece in which highly orchestrated “information” is leaked to convey messages to Iran. Moreover, Hersh’s writings rely substantively on unofficial quotes, thus facilitating potential distortion. In any case, I choose to avoid Hersh to avoid potential bias.

The primary sources used in this thesis are conceived concurrently as data points for those cognitive constructs under study and as messages to the adversary.¹⁵ Thus the researcher must assess the context in an ad hoc manner in order to separate those words that are expressive of the relevant cognitive constructs from those words and actions that are aimed at influencing the adversary. This inherent contradiction in the manner sources are employed is an empirical weakness of the thesis, and the findings cannot be judged in isolation from that fact.

In research on beliefs and images the risk that a tautology emerges is prevalent. As the cognitive constructs are believed to guide behavior, the observer

¹⁵ Every statement has of course multiple audiences. In the case of Iran the state plays a significant role for the American public at large, given the historic relationship between the two nations, but Iran is also important for staunch supporters of Israel, given the enmity between the two states and the extent of fierce anti-Semitic rhetoric on the part of elements of the Iranian regime.

cannot infer the content of beliefs and images from behavior. If the researcher does arrive at a given image using actions as data, one has not established a causal relation between the two variables (Young and Schafer 1998: 81). In order to alleviate this problem I try to triangulate sources and avoid inferring cognitions on the basis of behavior.

4.3 Preconceptions

When mind analyzes mind the observer should guard against his own preconceptions. This thesis deals with perceptions, and as a result I have become more aware of the beliefs and images I hold myself, and perhaps more importantly, fully cognizant of my shortcomings as an observer. Although uncertainty may increase with knowledge, that does not indicate that awareness of one's limitations is a weakness. In fact this process has helped me reassess my images of both Iran and the US, thus allowing me to interpret the evidence in a more sober light.

It is often said that the moment one begins to believe in a given hypothesis, one will deny the importance of pieces of the puzzle that do not conform to one's initial interpretation. Although I would like the predictions to correspond with my observations, I would much rather accept that the model may not be a good fit as opposed to clinging on to a theoretical construct that has little relevance to reality.

As the thesis builds almost exclusively on American sources, the risk is present that I will be influenced to embrace the administration's point of view regarding, for instance, the image of Iran as a state. However, I believe this concern is to a certain extent mitigated through the fact that the thesis involves gauging beliefs and images, thereby possibly making the observer more conscious in that respect.

5. Analysis

This chapter forms the empirical part of the thesis. In the following subchapters I will first try to assess the administrations' key strategic belief, i.e. the belief that we live in either a balancing or bandwagoning world, before turning to the task of identifying the Iran image and discuss whether the image has changed or remained the same over the six years under study. Then I will try to describe the American diplomatic strategy toward Iran throughout the period under study. Finally, in the concluding subchapter I will attempt to link the cognitive constructs to the diplomatic strategy.

5.1 The Key Strategic Belief

In the following section I will attempt to carefully make an inference as to which perspective on international politics that prevails within the central foreign policy making group of the Bush administrations.

In the first part I will try to define the Bush doctrine and discuss to what extent it is influenced by the beliefs under study. The second task involves gauging the Bush doctrine's standing today. The assumption is, of course, that the Bush doctrine is formed according to principles central to either the balancing or the bandwagoning perspective.

Studying perceptions is never simple. The decision to employ the Bush doctrine as the decisive test in the search for indices that either the bandwagon or the balancing hypothesis dominates thinking in the White House, may perhaps be criticized for being too superficial. However, as the following discussion shows, the Bush doctrine, conceived as a set of strategic principles, assumes a given image of the workings of international politics; the founding principles of the doctrine impinge on core assumptions of both beliefs.

The answer to the question which perspective pervades the Bush doctrine is considered a proxy test for the more comprehensive question of what key strategic belief has the upper hand within the administration. It follows that the matter of investigation should focus on those constituent parts of the doctrine that reflect either the balancing or the bandwagoning hypothesis.

A doctrine in this context refers commonly to a set of guidelines or principles for the formulation of foreign policy. Some observers do not agree that the Bush doctrine represents a shift in the American approach to the world, arguing that it only served as a justification for the Iraq invasion.

Others (e.g. Melby (2004), Gaddis (2005)) perceive a revolution in American foreign policy thinking. Jervis (2003: 365) concurs and holds that “the doctrine is real” and “quite articulate, and American policy since the end of the military campaign [against Iraq] has been consistent with it”.

However, if the Bush doctrine is nothing more than an ad hoc rationalization for the war on Iraq, it would be a strong counterargument against attaching so much importance to it. The invasion was clearly a manifestation of the principles laid out in the doctrine; the doctrine is, however, well-founded and far-reaching. In Gaddis (2002: 54) view, there is a “coherence in the Bush strategy that the Clinton security team ... never achieved”. Moreover, as Jervis (2003: 365) notes there is a strong tendency among policymakers to behave in accordance with the explanation they have given for their actions at later junctures. In that case a doctrine intended to serve as a rationalization may nevertheless guide behavior in the future.

5.1.1 The Bush Doctrine

President Bush (2002a) unveiled his doctrine in his speech to the 2002 graduating class of West Point. The speech was structured around three key points:

We will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent (Bush 2002a)

The first sentence constitutes a summary of the perceived relationship between Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and so called rogue states. The second point concerns the role of American power in the world and its relationship to other states. As this thesis primarily deals with a key strategic belief and the image of an adversary, Bush's third point, the question of spreading American values to other countries, is considered to be of lesser importance although the impulse to encourage others to adopt an American inspired system of governance cannot be understated in a wider perspective.

In the post 9/11 context the confluence of Islamic radicalism and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in American strategic thinking is evident. The worst-case scenario assumes a "non-deterrable" fanatic equipped with a "nuclear suitcase". According to Litwak (2008: 93), the attacks produced "a new calculus of threat" that centered on non-state terrorist groups and rouge states. The risk that an irresponsible state such as those belonging to the "Axis of Evil" would either transfer technology and weapons to groups whose goal is to hurt American interests, or employ unconventional means themselves, was stressed by Bush (2002a) at West Point:

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology – when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking those terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends – and we will oppose them with all our power

Given that enemies of the US in this new age cannot be expected to be successfully checked by traditional ways of deterrence and containment, the US should assume the initiative:

We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long... We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act (ibid)

The need for a shift toward the offensive in US relations to its enemies was repeated in 2002 State of the Union address (Bush 2002b):

I will not wait on events as dangers gather. I will not stand idle as perils draw closer and closer. The USA will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons

The means to conduct a more aggressive strategy was also stipulated:

Our security will require transforming the military ... a military that must be ready to strike at a moment's notice in any dark corner of the world. And our security will require all Americans to be forward-looking and resolute, to be ready for pre-emptive action when necessary to defend our liberty and to defend our lives (Bush 2002a)

According to Jack Snyder (2003: 29) America at that time embodied "a paradox of omnipotence and vulnerability". The combination of heavy US military spending and a strong fear of terrorist attack has "fostered a psychology of vulnerability that makes Americans hyper-alert to foreign dangers and predisposed to use military power in what may be self-defeating attempts to escape their fears" (ibid). Snyder (ibid) argues that the adoption of the Bush doctrine must be understood in this light.

Now turning to the task of dismantling the Bush doctrine in light of the beliefs under study, I will assume Jervis' (2003) analysis as my point of departure. In his view (ibid: 365), the doctrine has four key components,

(1) a strong belief in the importance of a state's domestic regime in determining its foreign policy and the related judgment that this is an opportune time to transform international politics; (2) the perception of great threats that can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war; (3) a willingness to act unilaterally when necessary; (4) and, as both a cause and a summary of these beliefs, an overriding sense that peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy in world politics

Instead of commenting on each component of the doctrine as defined by Jervis, I will analyze two concepts that are central to all four parts and thus fundamental to the Bush doctrine as a whole: *hegemony* and *preventive war*. These two are in turn strongly connected to each other and to the two perspectives under study. Therefore, I will consider each concept's relation to the balancing and bandwagon hypotheses respectively.

In the following paragraphs I argue that the Bush doctrine is heavily influenced by the bandwagon perspective and only slightly inspired by the balancing proposition.

Recalling that the balancing perspective portrays the realm of international politics as more or less isolated balance-of-power systems in which the state may approach each foreign policy problem in isolation. Balancing implies that the policymaker must expect other states to resist superior power and should emphasize the importance of not being perceived as a threat. Given that the world is not considered highly interconnected, there is a greater scope for pragmatism that facilitates flexibility and enables an elaborate use of both sticks and carrots.

The bandwagon perspective, on the other hand, perceives the relations between the system's parts to be tight, and as a consequence, gains and losses multiply and gather momentum. This notion is in its essence a domino belief and may hinder a clear distinction between reputational and intrinsic interest as the state should always strive to maintain the guise of power and resolve. Subsequently, the bandwagoning position allows for less flexibility and could as a result perhaps produce more dogmatic policies. For fear of communicating weakness and gaining a reputation of rewarding negative conduct, those that hold the bandwagon perspective should prioritize punitive measures over conciliatory ones.

The central question for this chapter involves a judgment as to whether the Bush doctrine is formulated on the basis of bandwagoning or balancing dynamics. At the time of release of the 2002 NSS (Bush 2002c), the document that outlines the relevant set of principles, the question of Iraq heavily occupied American strategic thinking. The strategy document sketches both the motivation behind, and the intended effects, of a regime change in Iraq. Thus a discussion of this kind must take into consideration the cognitions that brought about the invasion.

In many respects an act of preventive war presupposes hegemony; elevating wars of choice to the body of principles that guide a state's foreign policy does

indeed assume great disparity in power resources. Before examining to what extent the notion of preventive war is influenced by those perspectives of international politics under study, I will first analyze the concept of hegemony and the administration's perception thereof.

5.1.1.1 Hegemony

In Jervis' (2003: 376) view, American hegemony is the element of the doctrine that ties the three other components together. The term itself is controversial and is at times employed interchangeably with related concepts such as empire and primacy. The former is often utilized in polemic texts and holds adverse connotations. The latter is narrower and commonly refers to the most powerful state in the state system, *primus inter pares*. Thus perhaps hegemony is preferable in this context as many would agree that US has a somewhat different status than being merely the first among equals, and conversely there is yet to emerge a consensus that the US in fact is an empire.

In any case, the Bush doctrine stipulates that there should be no confusion as to which state is the dominant power in the realm of international politics. President Bush in his West Point speech (2002a) made it perfectly clear that the US aimed to maintain this position of strength:

America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge – thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace

The 2002 NSS (Bush 2002c) document is perhaps more tactful and states that “our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States”. Although the formulation is slightly more diplomatic, the gist of the argument is essentially the same.

To prevent near-peer states such as China or rising powers such as Russia from challenging the US, America intends to preserve an advantage in military capability so great that any efforts to bridge that gap will inevitably result in harm to those states

that try. Thus, by communicating that competition in the military domain is futile, the administration hopes to channel rivalry between states into non-military contests.

The notion that a vastly superior power by way of armaments will remove the incentive to compete militarily cannot be informed by the basic position of the balancing hypothesis. In a world where power pushes away rather than attracts, a strategy aimed at negating Great Power competition by sprinting ahead cannot be considered prudent. The American determination to deter or dissuade others from attempting to compete demonstrates an uncompromised insensitivity to the security dilemma. Although the US may be convinced of its own benign intentions, the possibility that other states are not reassured, should perhaps be factored in; in the balancing proposition increments in military power create an incentive for other states to arm as well and would thus compel states to act counter to the American intention of abolishing military competition.

Rather, it seems apt to presume that the idea that superiority in the military sphere induces other states to lay down their weapons is heavily influenced by the belief in bandwagon dynamics. Instead of assuming that states will engage in balancing as a response to the American military advantage, the statements quoted above seem to encapsulate the position that American power will attract others onto its bandwagon and make them accept American hegemony.

Thus the Bush doctrine may be interpreted as a strong assertion of American hegemony. The superiority in military terms provides the US with the unique ability to act unilaterally, should it choose to do so. The concept of preventive war does in many respects presuppose a capacity to undertake military action single-handedly. Below I will elaborate on the relation between hegemony and preventive war.

5.1.1.2 Preventive War

With the 2002 speech at West Point and the release of the 2002 NSS, the first Bush administration elevated preventive war against “rogue states” and terrorist groups to official doctrine. Although it was presented as doctrine of ‘pre-emption’, it does in

fact more closely resemble the related concept of preventive war. As a consequence, the doctrine blurs the normative and legal distinction between the two.

At the time the press characterized it as a revolutionary change in American foreign policy that would supplant the outdated concepts of the cold war, containment and deterrence. Confusion concerning the role and importance of the concept of pre-emption is partly due to the fact that the administration was simultaneously presenting a *general* doctrine *and* building a *specific* case for war against Iraq (Litwak 2003: 53). To this day, ambiguity exists as to the relevance of the doctrine and the conditions under which it may be employed. I will return to this question in chapter 5.1.3.

America's position as the dominant power in the state system gives rise to a persisting tension in US policy debates: the superior military capability that permits the US to attack an adversary's unconventional weapons in war, also allows for the use of military force in situations that fall short of war (ibid).

According to Kegley and Raymond (2003: 388), the concept of pre-emption applies to actions that aim to "quell or mitigate an impending strike by an adversary" whereas a preventive military attack "entails the use of force to eliminate any possible future strike, even when there is no reason to believe that aggression is planned or the capability to launch such an attack is operational".

Applied to the current American political context, in which the anti-terrorism and the non-proliferation agenda to a certain extent have merged, linked by the disputed assumption that there exists an incentive for states to distribute WMDs to non-state organizations, Litwak (2003: 54) argues that the terms hold slightly different meanings; preventive action pertains to a set of techniques to forestall the proliferation of WMDs that in extreme circumstances includes the use of force; pre-emption refers to the military actions when the actual use of such weapons is imminent.

Although other factors are of course relevant, imminence is the key determinant of pre-emptive action. The American administration invoked the concept of pre-emption in the run-up to the Iraq war, however, most observers would today not dispute that the invasion constituted a case of prevention. The US worked hard to persuade allies that Iraq in fact possessed weapons of mass destruction and that their use could be imminent. The investigation to support the American pre-war allegations that were intended to drum up diplomatic support for the war has instead confirmed the position of the more skeptical allies.

According to Jervis (2003: 370), the preventive war doctrine is “based on strength and on the associated desire to ensure the maintenance of American dominance”. Its rationale is to deny hostile states the possibility to acquire unconventional weapons that may even out American conventional superiority.

In military thought the strategic utility of preventive war is disputed; Bismarck reportedly compared it to suicide for fear of death. Jack Snyder (2003: 30) has argued that preventive war itself weakens a state’s security position because the preventive use of force sparks ceaseless limited wars. A great number of historic examples indicate that “the preventive pacification of one turbulent frontier ... has usually led to the creation of another, adjacent to the first”.

Even if the concept of preventive war may at times be intellectually or strategically defensible, Jervis (2003: 359) argues, it cannot be sustained by the American political system over time. Evidence to support military action aimed to counter emerging threats is necessarily ambiguous, and as a consequence, arguments in favor of the use force will easily be rebutted. Jervis (*ibid*) employs a counterfactual to support his point:

If Britain and France had gone to war with Germany before 1939, large segments of the public would have believed that the war was not necessary. If the war had gone well, public opinion might still have questioned its wisdom; had it gone badly, the public would have been inclined to sue for peace

Thus the cost of a war that the public considers unnecessary will in time erode domestic support.

As the dominant state in the international system, the US has the power to shape the norms that govern the use force between states (Kegley and Raymond 2003). The concept of preventive war impinges on the status of international norms. States do of course not enjoy equal rights, and any document outlining the strategy for a Great Power will probably not assume as point of departure the notion that entitlements are evenly shared between all states. However, the view that no rules bind the dominant power in the system, whereas inferior states must respect and obey the norms set by the strongest power, is somewhat perplexing. This paradox is perhaps recognizable as the US, on the one hand, attempts to delegitimize terrorism as an instrument of warfare, and on the other, assaults the norm of state sovereignty by invading Iraq. What does this idiosyncratic perception of international norms tell the outside observer? These contrasting principles inherent in the Bush doctrine suggest that the administration believes that other states will respect the superior position of the US because of its power.

The distinction between preventive action and pre-emption is arguably vague. However, the adaptation of the preventive war concept under the rubric of pre-emption as a strategic doctrine has further blurred the boundaries between the two concepts. Under international law, self-defense is considered legitimate. If attack is imminent, the presumed target state has the right to strike first. However, if that is not the case, i.e. the one party merely suspects that the other side's intention is to attack, a number of problems related to motivation and intentions arise. From the vantage point of a statesman, one cannot say with any security what an adversary will and will not do in the distant future. Moreover, chances are that the adversary himself has not even decided the future course of action. Besides, intentions may change.

As Jervis (2003) notes, the problem of gauging intentions is largely resolved in the Bush doctrine as it assumes that the regime characteristics determine foreign policy; if you know whom your are dealing with, you will also know what they intend to do. Given the rogue character of the would-be proliferators, the only prudent policy is to stop them before they acquire powerful weapons.

From the perspective of a policymaker that subscribes to the bandwagoning belief, the preventive war concept could perhaps be recommended. As a strong assertion of American hegemony, it sends a forceful message to other states that the US has great resolve and will not yield an inch in its war on terror. As such, the Bush doctrine could perhaps be interpreted as a manifestation of the desire to project an image of forcefulness and determination. Openly embracing American hegemony as a given fact does perhaps indicate that the doctrine of preventive war is strongly influenced by the belief in bandwagon dynamics. The doctrine itself and the fact that it was publicly pronounced could easily be perceived by other states as arrogance; perhaps US policymakers held the belief that they should boast US power in the anticipation that it would signal strength and boldness. The effects would echo among the enemies of the US and one by one, they would agree to give up their pursuit for unconventional weapons and return to the fold.

Adopting preventive war as a strategic doctrine could not be considered sound foreign policy from the viewpoint of a proponent of the balancing hypothesis. States should aim to appear benevolent and threats should be directed toward the enemy in question as opposed to embracing a defiantly confrontational posture toward the external world as a whole. Being more sensitive to the security dilemma, the balancer should emphasize that threats without a well-defined target, should be avoided. Moreover, given that policymakers should be wary to upset the rules of the system that regulate inter-state conduct, the notion of preventive war itself would, according to the balancing hypothesis, be considered unwise.

As noted, some observers of American foreign policy downplay the importance of the Bush doctrine and hold that it was merely intended to support a regime change in Iraq. This paper, however, is written on the assumption that the doctrine indeed represented a significant shift in the manner which the US relates to its environment. Instead of perceiving the doctrine as intellectual ground work for a one-time policy of invasion that, as soon as it has outlived its purpose, will join other obsolete strategic ideas on the scrap heap of history, I consider the set of principles

enunciated by the first Bush administration as indicative of a more momentous shift in American strategic thinking. Although any invocation of the concept of preventive war may not be on the horizon for some time, it is possible that the blurred distinction between pre-emption and prevention has become, if not permanent, maybe at least long-lasting. Thus preventive action remains a policy option but cannot be described as a blue print solution which American policymakers discretionary can apply in conflict with states perceived as hostile to the US. The circumstances under which the doctrine will be invoked are ill defined. As of yet, despite all the tough rhetoric towards Iran, no serious steps have been undertaken on part of the US to provoke a military confrontation in which escalation dynamics would ensure initial domestic support for military action against the theocratic state. The conditions under which the doctrine will be applied are vague.

Jervis (2005) argues that US has not embarked on a new course from which it cannot deviate; rather, the Bush doctrine cannot be sustained. However, should the Bush administration be forced to adopt a different posture toward its environment, it does not mean that the future foreign policies of the US will revert to those of the Clinton era. Even if the next administration attempts to commit the US more strongly to multilateral institutions, Jervis (*ibid*) predicts, the allies will not have forgotten the role of anarchy, which was highlighted by the first Bush administration, in binding the behavior of states; a slide back to unilateralism would always be feared.

Perhaps one may draw further insight into the beliefs that prevailed in the Bush administration from the one case where the doctrine was put to use. The following subchapter examines the rationale behind the 2003 Iraq war and attempts to elucidate its intended effects.

5.1.2 The Implementation of the Bush Doctrine

With reference to the concept of pre-emption, American forces invaded Iraq in the spring of 2003. What did the administration hope to achieve by changing the Iraqi regime? What effects on friends and foes were desired?

According to Gordon (2003), at the time there existed a comprehensive vision for the Middle East within the administration; the toppling of Saddam's regime was perceived as an integral component of a broader effort to reshape the region. America's vast power resources should be used to promote democratization as the status quo in the region had become untenable for the US security situation. In the 9/11 attacks the majority of the hijackers came from Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both states ruled by repressive regimes propped up by American power. In this new American thinking, according to Gordon (ibid: 156) the combination of oppression and American support led to "alienation, resentment and hatred of the West" which in turn increased the risk of more terrorist attacks. Among central policymakers this democracy deficit argument as the "root cause" of terrorism gained ground (ibid).

According to Bob Woodward in *State of Denial* (2006), Paul Wolfowitz, then deputy secretary of defense, helped organize a group whose objective was to produce the strategy to fight radical Islam. The outfit was named Bletchley II after the group of British intelligence experts that formed during the Second World War to break the ULTRA German communications code. The president of the conservative think tank The American Enterprise Institute, Christopher DeMuth put together a group of intellectuals that consisted of among others the Middle East historian Bernard Lewis, a Cheney favorite who had written extensively on the issue of tensions between the West and Islam and, and the IR theorist and Newsweek columnist Fareed Zakaria. The group perceived the September 11 attacks as a manifestation of a broader conflict within Islam and as a different kind of terrorism than the 1970s version exemplified by the Red Brigades in Italy. As opposed to dealing with alienated groups disloyal to their nation state, the American government now faced a protracted ideological struggle, and Saddam's regime, being weak and vulnerable, represented an opportunity to transform the Middle East, the group concluded.

In a speech made in November 2003 Bush (2003a) defined the status quo in the region and explained why the political situation there could not be allowed to remain unaltered:

As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. And with the spread of weapons that can bring catastrophic harm to our country and to our friends, it would be reckless to accept the status quo

A related assumption behind this new vision for the Middle East may have been that peace and stability in the region was not attainable before the states in that area had become democratic. Perhaps inspired by the liberal peace thesis, in which democracies are considered more pacific than other regime types, and the related Fukuyama's end-of-history thesis in which liberal democracy is conceived as the historical end point of human governance toward which history inevitably progresses, American decision makers may have determined that given America's superior power, this was an opportune time to accelerate history and democratize the region at gunpoint.

Gordon (2003: 159) holds that the key rationale for the Iraq war was the belief held by the Bush administration that "the elimination of the Iraqi regime will send a decisive message to friends and adversaries alike throughout the Middle East: threaten the United States and its friends in the region and you will pay a terrible price". This assumption, according to Gordon (*ibid*) was linked to the notion that

[the] development of a freer, more democratic Iraq allied to the United States would show the entire Arab world that siding with the United States can bring peace, prosperity and freedom, whereas opposing it can bring heavy costs.

Gordon (*ibid*) goes on to note that the "Bush team ... believes that, particularly in the Middle East, signs of strength are respected but weakness is punished".

America's determination and willingness to resort to force would thus create fear in the rulers of the most autocratic region in the world, which in turn would induce political change toward democracy. The strategy of compelled democratization resonates well with the notion that a strong and forceful posture will propel threatened powers to accede to the stronger power's demands by reforming and becoming more democratic. Such a line of reasoning is strongly reminiscent of the core assumptions of the bandwagon perspective.

The narrative above seems to imply the belief that bandwagon dynamics shapes the relations between states. Although one may establish with some degree of certainty that the Bush administration at the time of the Iraq invasion was guided by central principles in the bandwagon hypothesis, one may not infer that the relative standing of this belief has remained constant throughout the period under study. The next subchapter approaches the question of the development of the Bush doctrine's standing after its first, and so far only, implementation.

5.1.3 The Status of the Bush Doctrine

In July 2006 Time Magazine proclaimed "The End of Cowboy Diplomacy" (Allen and Ratnesar 2006) and wrote that "[t]he shift under way in Bush's foreign policy is bigger and more seismic than a change or a modulation of tone" and that "the Administration has been forced to rethink the [Bush] doctrine" as its "effectiveness is exposed by the very policies it prescribed". The article cites Condoleeza Rice's ascendancy and her push for pragmatism as evidence that the strategic thinking that prevailed during the first Bush presidency was now on the wane.

To Norman Podhoretz (2006), the editor-at-large of the Commentary Magazine, the reports of the death of the Bush doctrine, as he understands it, are 'greatly exaggerated'. To bolster his argument he quotes several presidential statements that support his view: "If we go by the President's speeches ... there is not the slightest indication that today he is any less committed than he was at the start to ... the substance of the Bush doctrine". As for the policies that seem to contradict the guiding principles of the Bush doctrine, Podhoretz (*ibid*) laments:

In short, the fact that the President has lately been talking a lot about diplomacy and entering into multilateral negotiations has no bearing on the question of whether the Bush doctrine is dead, since it never ruled these out in the first place

These differing accounts arguably rest on competing understandings of what constitutes the Bush doctrine. The fact remains, however, that president Bush on several occasions during his second period in office has repeated the core components of the doctrine as defined here. As a case in point, the central thrust of

the Bush doctrine was reiterated in the 2006 National Security Strategy (Bush 2006a: 28):

If necessary ..., under long-standing principles of self-defense, we do not rule out the use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. When the consequences of an attack with WMD are potentially so devastating, we cannot afford to stand idly by as grave dangers materialize. This is the principle and logic of pre-emption

At the rhetorical level several statements indicate that the position of Bush doctrine remains unblemished. However, the combination of three factors indicates that the basic tenets of the Bush doctrine have in fact been reversed. First, the second administration adopted a new style and tone in its diplomacy; second, the new foreign policy team exchanged those person closely associated with the ideological component of the Bush doctrine with so called pragmatists; third, foreign policy itself shifted from being confident and unilateral to becoming more cautious and multilateral.

In Bush's second period former national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, was appointed secretary of state January 2005. In her confirmation hearing she (quoted in Gordon 2006) stated that "the time for diplomacy is now". In the immediate aftermath she made a conciliatory trip to Europe aiming to reestablish good relations between the US and its allies. In her first year as secretary of state Rice took 19 trips to 49 states. In contrast to the supposedly multilateralist Colin Powell, who went abroad 12 times and visited 37 countries, Rice's travel schedule may be considered as a sign of a greater effort to consult allies and an increased attentiveness to their concerns. Moreover, less than a month after Rice's first trip to Europe the president followed suit and met with European leaders. As opposed to his visit to Europe in 2001 when he only stopped in Poland, the UK, Spain, and Italy, all states that supported the American fig-leaf interpretation of international law prior to the Iraq war, this time around he had long meetings with the French President Chirac and the German Chancellor Schröder, leaders that opposed the very same war (Gordon 2006).

The second inauguration of president Bush also saw other changes in personnel. Paul Wolfowitz, the author of the 1992 draft memo that outlined a new foreign policy for the US in the post-cold war era, which emphasized negating great power competition and the preventive use of force, and by many considered the chief architect of the Bush doctrine, Douglas Feith, undersecretary for defense, and John Bolton, under secretary for arms control and international security, and point man for the first Bush administration's diplomatic strategy toward Iran, who all held key posts in foreign policy making process, and viewed by many observers as representing what came to be the dominant voice in the articulation of the Bush doctrine, were all replaced. The new foreign policy team included well-known pragmatists such as Robert Zoellick, deputy secretary of state, Nicholas Burns, undersecretary of state, and Christopher Hill, North Korea negotiator (Cannistraro 2007, Gordon 2006, Mann 2004).

The new style of American diplomacy was not only reflected in the choice of new staff but also accompanied by a change in substance. North Korea may serve as a case in point. In 2001, as one of his first actions, Bush broke with what the president held to be unreasonable patience with dictators and their weapons programs. The Clinton approach identified with 1994 Agreed Framework, according to which the US would provide economic aid and offer proliferation-resistant reactors if North Korea were to suspend its nuclear program, was now perceived as counterproductive. The Bush team derided the agreement and perceived it as an example of appeasement. In September 2005, however, the second Bush administration implemented a contradictory policy and agreed to deal with the regime by providing energy aid, extending security guarantees, and normalizing relations, should the counterpart give up its nuclear program. Thus the US 2005 approach to North Korea strongly resembles that of 1994. Although the 2005 deal since then has collapsed it is nevertheless revealing that it was reached in the first place (Gordon 2006).

Although the president's rhetorical exercises indicate that the Bush doctrine does retain its status in the second Bush administration, the altered style and

substance of American diplomacy and the fact that the second inauguration saw several key figures that helped formulate of the Bush doctrine strategy leave their posts, suggest that the position of the Bush doctrine is weakened. Thus it seems fair to conclude that the doctrine of preventive war is largely abandoned as a security problem panacea, but one cannot conclude that it will not resurface should unforeseen events occur.

Conceiving the status of the Bush doctrine as a proxy variable for the relative standing of the belief in balancing vs. bandwagoning among the central foreign policymakers, the downward trajectory of Bush's set of strategic principles, enunciated in 2002 and implemented in 2003, suggests that the belief in the balancing perspective has been strengthened to the detriment of the bandwagon perspective.

5.2 The Bush Administrations' Image of Iran

American-Iranian relations have undergone several swift changes throughout history. From being the US most dependable ally in the region to becoming decried as part of an Axis of Evil, the image prevalent in the minds of American policymakers is most likely complex and perhaps even contradictory. Takeyh (2007) argues that "a perception of Iran as a destabilizing force congealed in the U.S. imagination [after the 1979 revolution] and has endured ever since"

This chapter attempts to extract the prevalent image of Iran held by the central foreign policy making group within the two Bush administrations. First, I will briefly assess whether the perception on a more general level, as conveyed by the president, has changed throughout the period under study. Then, I will turn to analyzing the evolution of the American perception of the Iranian intent behind its nuclear program. The fundamental question concerns whether Iran's rationale for maintaining its nuclear program, in spite of international pressure, is perceived to be economic or military-strategic.

In the following subchapter I argue that the two core arguments advanced by American policymakers that allegedly indicate Iran's malign intent do not stand scrutiny particularly well. Iran's has plausible economic need for nuclear energy and its unwillingness to develop the nuclear program under the auspices of the IAEA does not necessarily imply that Iran's intention is to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

Throughout the period under study both administrations have consistently invoked Iranian intent to develop a nuclear weapons capability as the predominant rationale behind the nuclear program. At no point has a member of either administration referred to Iran's proclaimed need for diversifying its energy production as the driving factor in the regime's nuclear ambitions. The analysis of the US perception of Iran's intent thus lends credence to the possibility that the image of Iran as largely expansionist has been maintained throughout both terms. However, the analysis also suggests that the assumption that Iran is determined to develop nuclear weapons is weakened as officials have instead begun referring to Iran's intention to develop a *capability* to produce nuclear weapons.

Under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (IAEA 1970) Iran enjoys the right to have a civilian nuclear program. However, the dual-use character of the technology gives rise to diverging perceptions as to the Iranian intent for its nuclear program. Given that the process of uranium enrichment simultaneously produces nuclear fuel that can be utilized in the production of electricity and, if highly enriched, be employed as fissile material for a nuclear bomb, two broad interpretations are available; observers may accept Iran's argument that the nuclear program is intended to serve civilian needs, or refuse the validity of Iran's statements and instead assume that Iran's efforts indicate that it intends to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

Furthermore, a related secondary inference, in the case that the observer interprets Iran's actions as evidence that it seeks a nuclear weapons capability, concerns the perceived character of Iranian motivation: Is Iran's desire for a nuclear weapons capability motivated by legitimate security concerns or illegitimate power aspirations?

In the competitive realm of power politics, the possession of a nuclear weapon provides states with a deterrent in the presence of an existential threat. Iran is bordered by American military power in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and as such, it may perceive its position as encircled. Thus the perception that the regime in fact is a status quo oriented power that merely seeks the means to its survival, may perhaps be in conformity with the assumption that intends to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

However, should Iran acquire a nuclear weapons capability, its initial motivation to do so would not matter much, as its actions would inevitably alter the current distribution of power. An Iran armed with nuclear weapons, or even possessing a nuclear weapons capability, may disrupt the existing status quo between Iran and the US. The Middle East today has one nuclear power, Israel. In addition the US has a strong military presence in the region. As Iran is hostile to both Israel and America, Iranian nuclear weapons will most likely have destabilizing effects on the regional distribution of power.

Thus the analysis assumes that the crux of the image held by American policymakers concerns the question whether Iran's nuclear program is intended to serve civilian or military needs. In the latter case I make a distinction between those who perceive Iranian efforts as expressive of intent to develop nuclear weapons as opposed to those who envisage that Iran seeks a nuclear weapons capability.

If the group of relevant policymakers hold that the nuclear program is intended to serve civilian needs I interpret that as an indication that the status quo image is dominant, and conversely, if the decision making group perceives a military rationale, I will assume that the imperialist image is prevalent.

Should policymakers belonging to the latter group concurrently maintain that Iran does not necessarily intend to develop nuclear weapons, but does seek a nuclear weapons capability, I will consider the image to be slightly less imperialist.

The US attempts to bring the Iranian enrichment program to a halt. The key objective for American policymakers, I posit, is to avoid that Iran acquires a nuclear weapons capability. A clear understanding of what a nuclear weapons capability implies is a necessary precondition for the following discussion. By capability one usually understands the requisite level of scientific knowledge combined with enough fissile material enriched to weapons grade. In addition capability often implies the possession of the appropriate means of delivery. In the case that an actor has acquired a nuclear weapons capability, the possession of actual nuclear weapons would be available in the short-term should those responsible choose to develop them.

The nuclear weapons capability is often considered a threshold, or a point after which “the horse is out of the barn”, as the aphorism goes. A caveat, however, may be in order; the capacity to produce nuclear weapons and the intent to acquire that ability do not mean that the state in question intends to develop nuclear weapons.

The distinction between an intention to develop nuclear weapons and an intention to develop a nuclear weapons capability is relevant. In the former case the ambition to become a nuclear weapons possessing state is to a greater extent fixed whereas the latter objective refers to the *potential* possession of a nuclear weapons. As such, the pursuit of the capability may imply a more significant role for external actors as the potential proliferator is considered to be more responsive to changes in its the international environment.

5.2.1 The Iranian Nuclear Program and its Standing under the NPT

The Iranian nuclear program dates back to the early 70s when Iran was ruled by the Shah Pahlavi. After initial help from European powers Iran was forced to turn to Russia after successive US administrations had tried to thwart Tehran ambitions to master nuclear technology. The Reagan administration persuaded European states to enforce export controls with respect to dual-use technologies and Germany to cease its cooperation with Iran’s program. In the 90s the cooperation between Russia and Iran intensified as the former superpower assisted in building two nuclear reactors at

Bushehr. The Clinton administrations attempted to dissuade Russia from providing further assistance by threatening economic sanctions and promising expanded economic ties. An agreement was reached in 1995 in which Russia assured it would not help construct additional reactors or give fuel-cycle assistance to Iran. By 2000, however, the accord had fallen apart (Takeyh 2006: 136-138).

The nuclear issue received less attention as the Clinton administration managed to prevent any considerable international cooperation with Iran. However, events in August 2002 changed the importance to which Western intelligence agencies attached to the Iranian nuclear program. An opposition group uncovered that Iran had extensive facilities for uranium enrichment in Natanz and that Iran had received outside support from Russia and the Abdul Qadeer Khan network. The disclosure that Iran's nuclear program was far more advanced than expected intensified the conflict under study (ibid: 137-139).

The American reading of the NPT (IAEA 1970) is at odds with the Iranian understanding. Under article IV signatory states have the "inalienable right" to "develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination". Article II, however, calls on non-nuclear powers to forego the pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. The US maintains that its effort to deny Iran from mastering the technology is legitimate as long as Tehran is pursuing a nuclear weapons option. Given that Iran has deceived the nuclear agency, it is in violation of article II, and has thus forfeited its legitimate access to nuclear technology. Tehran insists, however, that the nuclear program only serves civilian needs and thus is in conformity with the requirements of the treaty.¹⁶

In Washington there is growing impatience with the non-proliferation regime and the article IV of the NPT in particular, as states may develop the technology

¹⁶ For the Iranian point of view, I refer to the letter from the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2008) to the secretariat of the IAEA.

necessary for a nuclear weapon under the guise of a civilian program (Allison 2004, Joseph 2006).

As for Iran's intentions, some arguments exist in the favor of interpreting Iran's nuclear ambitions as peaceful. Iran's primary argument is that the process of enrichment produces fuel for the generation of electricity. The obvious counterargument to this claim involves Iran's position as a producer of oil and natural gas; why does an oil-rich state need nuclear power? When the Shah Pahlavi controlled Iran, the US favored the building of the Bushehr reactor. In fact the US was supportive of what was perceived at that time as a diversification of energy production and an investment in the economy (Hart 2005).

Although a country is a net producer of hydrocarbons, investment in nuclear energy can both be an economically and technologically sound policy. Norway may be a case in point since it chose to heavily invest in the search for hydrocarbons at a point in time which its demand for energy was largely met by the domestic production of hydroelectric power. No analyst questions the wisdom of that policy today. In addition, the activities related to the search and the production of oil and natural gas may have helped Norway climb the technological ladder which in turn may have benefited other sectors of the economy. Finally, as the demand for energy on the global market is likely to rise as states such as China and India rapidly industrialize, it makes perfect economic sense to boost the production of energy. Thus the argument that Iran has no economic need for atomic power is, at least, partly negated.

With respect to the second possibility there also exist grounds to believe that Iran's nuclear program is intended to meet military needs. Iran has failed to disclose all enrichment related activities and attempted to hide parts of the nuclear infrastructure. In negotiations with the IAEA Iran has adopted a rather defensive posture and been unwilling to fully cooperate. Iran's failure to be candid toward the IAEA indicates that there may be grounds for suspicion; if Iran is merely committed to developing its civilian energy program, it might as well do so in full cooperation

with IAEA? Tehran's excuse is that it allegedly feared an attack on its facilities from either the US or Israel.

However, to equate Iran's behavior with the intent to acquire a nuclear weapons capability is an example of the logical fallacy *affirming the consequent*. The logical missteps may be displayed as following: If Iran intends to secretly develop a nuclear weapons capability, it would try to hide its activities and engage in stonewall tactics (if A, then B). Given that Iran has attempted to hide its activities and engaged in stonewall tactics, it intends to secretly develop a nuclear weapons capability (given B, then A) (Hart 2005).

The crude evaluation of the two core arguments indicates that there is some ambiguity concerning Iranian rationale for its nuclear program; it is far from certain that Iran is bent on developing nuclear weapons. A sober assessment of the evidence suggests that Iran *may* intend to seek a nuclear weapons capability, although that interpretation is by no means given. I hypothesize that the ambiguity that surrounds Iranian intent is partly resolved through the policymakers' image of Iran. For the policymaker, I assume, it is in such ambiguous cases that the image of the opposition is convenient in the decision making process. The key inference whether Iran's nuclear program is intended to meet civilian or military needs is assumed to be drawn with reference to the policymaker's image of Iran.

In the following analysis of American statements I will search for words that support either interpretation of Iranian intent, however, I will first try to sketch a more comprehensive perception of Iran as conveyed in speeches held by the US president.

5.2.2 President Bush's General Perception of Iran

The following subchapter surveys the president's more general perception of Iran as a state before I address the key question of perceived intent of the nuclear program.

In president Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address (Bush 2002b) a nearly unambiguous image of Iran was painted: "Iran aggressively pursues these weapons [WMDs] and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom".

In the very same speech the much regretted phrase "Axis of Evil" was expressed for the first and the last time:

States like these [Iraq, Iran and North-Korea], and their terrorist allies, constitute an Axis of Evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic (Bush 2002b)

One year later president Bush (2003b) also devoted a paragraph of his State of the Union Address to Iran:

In Iran, we continue to see a government that represses its people, pursues weapons of mass destruction, and supports terror. We also see Iranian citizens risking intimidation and death as they speak out for liberty and human rights and democracy. Iranians, like all people, have a right to choose their own government and determine their own destiny

Approaching the end of his first term president Bush (2005a) gave a description of its adversary as an illegitimate state that abuses its people:

Iran remains the world's primary state sponsor of terror -- pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve

As for the second Bush administration the image of Iran pronounced consistently throughout the first period in office, seems largely to be conserved on the rhetorical level. In a speech given to a group of veterans early 2006 Bush (2006b) said that:

The international community is also speaking with one voice to the radical regime in Tehran. Iran is a nation held hostage by a small clerical elite that is isolating and repressing its people, and denying them basic liberties and human rights. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorists and is actively working to expand its influence in the region. The Iranian regime has advocated the destruction of our ally, Israel. And the Iranian regime is defying the world with its ambitions for nuclear weapons

During the same speech president Bush (ibid) made a clear reference to the perceived nature of Iran's nuclear program: "[The] world's premier state sponsor of terror cannot be allowed to possess the world's most dangerous weapons"

The president's description of Iran from the 2002 State of the Union Address was restated by Bush (2006c) four years later at the same occasion, thus suggesting that the general image had not changed. Bush (ibid) also said that the "Iranian government is defying the world with its nuclear ambitions, and the nations of the world must not permit the Iranian regime to gain nuclear weapons".

October the following year Bush (2007a) repeated essentially the same message, but in addition compared Iran to Nazi Germany and likened today's situation to Munich of 1938:

I've told people that if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing them [Iran] from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon.¹⁷

During this year's State of the Union Address, Bush (2008a) also invoked a stark image of its adversary:

We're ... standing against the forces of extremism embodied by the regime in Tehran. Iran's rulers oppress a good and talented people. And wherever freedom advances in the Middle East, it seems the Iranian regime is there to oppose it. Iran is funding and training militia groups in Iraq, supporting Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon, and backing Hamas' efforts to undermine peace in the Holy Land. Tehran is also developing ballistic missiles of increasing range, and continues to develop its capability to enrich uranium, which could be used to create a nuclear weapon

Thus the president's rhetoric toward Iran seems to adhere to same principles throughout both periods in office. Although hard to distinguish these statements from the broader effort to pressure Iran, speeches from both tenures indicate that the prevalent image of Iran corresponds to that of an expansionist state that intends to upset the status quo. With references to extremism, meddling in Iraq, support for Hezbollah and Hamas, and its unwillingness to suspend enrichment, the image on the more general level more closely resembles that of a revolutionary power rather than that of a status quo oriented one. At first sight there seems to be a high degree of

¹⁷ In contrast to speeches prior to 2007 the president here seems to draw a new red line as he refers to the *knowledge* to produce nuclear weapons as the central point of concern. I will elaborate on this below.

consistency and coherence between the images of Iran held by the first and the second Bush administration.

According to Middle East scholar Ray Takeyh (2006: 1), undiplomatic discourse has characterized American-Iranian relations since the 1979 revolution. At the heart of the estrangement lies “a profound and frequently mutual misunderstanding of the enemy [and] getting Iran wrong is the single thread that has linked American administrations of all political persuasion” (ibid).

5.2.3 The Administrations’ Perception of the Iranian Rationale for its Nuclear Program

Now moving on to analyzing the more particular question whether the administrations perceive Iranian intent behind its nuclear program as benign or malevolent, I analyze statements in chronological order to track any change in the administrations’ perception of whether the program is intended to serve civilian or military needs.

After Iran’s undeclared activities were revealed in 2002 the director of the IAEA Mohamed Elbaradei made a visit to Natanz the following year. At a later press conference the director (quoted in Eeles 2003) described the site as “centrifuge uranium-enrichment facility which was still under construction” and noted how “comprehensive and sophisticated” it was. In response to Elbaradei’s comments the State Department stated that Iran had “[a] nuclear program based on deception and bad faith, and an ambitious rush to develop a nuclear fuel cycle, whose true purposes can only be to produce fissile material for its nuclear weapons program” (ibid).

John R. Bolton (2004), then undersecretary for arms control and international security, testified before a congressional subcommittee in June 2004 and presumably spoke on behalf of the administration:

The United States strongly believes that Iran has a clandestine program to produce nuclear weapons, and has been warning publicly about Tehran’s weapons ambitions for over a decade

His view was based on the two arguments discussed above:

No comparable oil-rich nation has ever engaged, or would be engaged, in this set of activities -- or would pursue them for nearly two decades behind a continuing cloud of secrecy and lies to IAEA inspectors and the international community -- unless it was dead set on building nuclear weapons (ibid)

In August 2005 the conclusions of the 2005 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) were leaked to the Washington Post (Linzer 2005). The intelligence community judged “with high confidence that Iran currently is determined to develop nuclear weapons despite its international obligations and international pressure, but we do not assess that is immovable“ and had “moderate confidence in projecting when Iran is likely to make a nuclear weapon ... it is unlikely before early-to-mid next decade” (NIE 2007).

As such, the view held by the intelligence community assumed that Iran was at least ten years from acquiring the bomb. This estimate was in conflict with the administration’s rhetoric as officials repeatedly had warned that Iran was five years from having the bomb. Perhaps more importantly, the consensus view among US spy agencies was that even though Tehran may have decided that it desired nuclear weapons, it could be persuaded to follow a different path. Thus the intelligence document somewhat undermined the administration’s assumption that Tehran was “dead set” on developing nuclear weapons (Linzer 2005).

November that year Robert G. Joseph (2005), then undersecretary for arms control and international security and Bolton’s successor, made a speech at the Carnegie International Non-proliferation Conference:

Let me be clear about the Iranian regime’s *pursuit of nuclear weapons*. Iran has pursued numerous routes to acquire an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle capability to provide it with fissile material for weapons. Iran is going down the plutonium route through construction of a heavy water research reactor and a heavy water plant. It has conducted experiments to separate and purify plutonium. Iran also has pursued the ability to begin enrichment, thereby going down the uranium route to a bomb. It is building facilities to convert and enrich uranium. All of these efforts involved a dizzying array of cover stories and false statements. Iran’s *pursuit of nuclear weapons* is real -- an issue the Bush Administration takes -- and

believes the international community takes -- very seriously. And let us not forget that the leader of this regime recently called for the State of Israel to be 'wiped off the map.'¹⁸

However, April the following year, then undersecretary of state R. Nicholas Burns (Burns and Joseph 2006), gave a briefing on the Iran nuclear issue that departed from those views expressed to this date in both style and substance; as opposed to referring to Iranian determination to acquire nuclear weapons, Burns directed attention to Iran's "very obvious attempt to create a nuclear weapons capability for itself". At the same briefing, Bolton's successor, Robert Joseph (ibid), portrayed the nuclear program as driven forward by malign intent and proclaimed that "Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons capability". Thus administration officials had slightly modified their position as to the true purpose of Iran's nuclear program.

That the administration to a certain extent had moderated its view was also evident in October 2007 when Bush (Bush 2007b) visited the National Defense University where he announced his aim to deploy a missile defense:

The need for missile defense in Europe is real and I believe it's urgent. Iran is pursuing the technology that could be used to produce nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them

Thus the assumption was no longer that Iran was determined to press ahead in its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The release of the 2007 NIE in December recast the debate about Iran's intent and the discussion as to what means are appropriate for meeting Iran's nuclear aspirations (Litwak 2008). The document judges the status and prospects of Iran's nuclear program. In bold print the authors state that they do not assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons. Its key conclusions include the twin assessments that Tehran halted its nuclear *weapons* program in fall 2003 and that Iran "at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons" (NIE 2007). As for the image of Iran, the document stressed that "Tehran's decisions are guided by a cost-benefit approach rather than a rush to a weapon irrespective of the political,

¹⁸ My emphasis.

economic, and military costs”. Thus the intelligence community dismissed the notion that Iran is an irrational state determined to disrupt the regional order. Instead Iran should be perceived as responsive to international pressure, the document stated, and suggested that “some combination of threats of intensified international security and pressure, along with opportunities for Iran” may “prompt Iran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program”.

The 2007 NIE further weakened the notion of Iran as a revolutionary power: Its decisions were made on a cost-benefit approach and the policymakers are thus amenable to external pressure. By extension the NIE argues that Iran is vulnerable to external events and may forego the development of nuclear weapons should it conclude that it is its interest to do so.

The document severely undercut the Bush administration’s tough rhetoric. The president’s national security adviser, Stephen Hadley (2007), first commented the conclusions of the intelligence document. The thrust of his briefing cites the intelligence document as supportive of the administration’s views and strategy. In response to the question whether “[i]t was troubling that the United States was so wrong about what Iran was doing or what its intentions were?”, Hadley (*ibid*) replied that,

I don’t think we were wrong about what it’s doing or what its intentions were. Our concern was that they were pursuing a nuclear weapon. We saw the enrichment ... we saw the ballistic missiles. And it led people to conclude: We are concerned that they were pursuing a nuclear weapons program and might have a covert program to actually weaponize highly-enriched uranium in order to be [sic] a nuclear weapon. And that’s what the NIE has now discovered.

On the other hand, however, Hadley (*ibid*) twice insisted that the NIE’s conclusions were misguided given that “[having] mastered that ability to enrich uranium, they [Iran] will have the capacity to make weapons-grade uranium. That is the long pole of the tent”.

The effort to interpret the findings of the NIE as a vindication of the administration’s stance and at the same time deride its conclusions was not particularly successful. The president pursued a slightly less self-defeating strategy.

On December 4 the president (Bush 2007c) gave a press conference in response to the conclusions of the 2007 NIE. Bush argued that the new threat assessment to a great extent validated the US approach to curb Iran's nuclear aspirations. To the question whether the president was still convinced that Iran "is trying to build a nuclear bomb", he replied that,

We know that they're still trying to learn how to enrich uranium. We know that enriching uranium is an important step in a country who wants to develop a weapon. We know they had a program. We know the program is halted.

President Bush went on to note that "if Iran were to develop the *knowledge* that they could transfer to a clandestine program it would create a danger for the world".¹⁹ Thus the NIE should be understood as "warning signal" because "they [Iran] could restart it [the nuclear weapons program]" and what "would make a restarted program effective and dangerous is the ability to enrich uranium, the knowledge of which could be passed on to a hidden program" (ibid).

In effect the president proclaimed that Iran could not be allowed to have the scientific know-how to enrich uranium, openly articulating for the first time the underlying premise for the administrations' diplomatic strategy. Fearing that this knowledge could be transferred to a nuclear weapons program that Iran could be pursuing hidden from scrutiny, the scientific know-how to enrich uranium should be kept out of Iranian hands. Moreover, despite the fact that the intelligence community's perception of Iranian intent was in disagreement with that espoused both by the first and the second Bush administration, the president argued the NIE had vindicated the American position because Iran had dismantled its *weapons* program in response to his administration's actions. The intelligence document thus presented the US with an opportunity to "rally the [international] community to pressure the Iranian regime to suspend its program" (ibid).

¹⁹ My emphasis.

At a joint press conference with Israel's prime minister Olmert during a trip to the Middle East in January 2008 president Bush (2008b) had polished his initial response to the NIE and bluntly stated that: "Iran was a threat, Iran is a threat, and Iran will be a threat".

The president seemed to have accepted that Iran had halted "weaponization" of its program, he did not seem persuaded that Tehran's intentions were benign; although evidence suggested that Iran had abandoned the military aspect of the program, Bush refused to alter his perception of Iranian intent as to the true purpose of the nuclear program:

A country which once had a secret program can easily restart a secret program. A country which can enrich for civilian purposes can easily transfer that knowledge to a military program. A country which has made statements that it's made about the security of our friend, Israel, is a country that needs to be taken seriously. And the international community must understand with clarity the threat that Iran provides to world peace.

In April 2008 at the NATO summit in Budapest president Bush (2008c) addressed the perceived necessity of a missile defense in light of Iran's nuclear aspirations and repeated the very same phrase employed in his October speech quoted above:

The need for missile defense in Europe is real, and in my opinion, it is urgent. Iran is pursuing *technology that could be used* to produce nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles of increasing range that could deliver them.²⁰

In summary, the assumption that Iran's program is intended to produce nuclear weapons seems to have been weakened throughout the period under study. On the more general level, American policymakers have repeatedly brought the issue of terrorism into focus and emphasized Iran's alleged regional ambitions. Iran has consistently been denounced as a state that does not respect "the rules of the game" and harbors power aspirations that are in conflict with America's regional role.

In contrast to the crude study of the more general perception of Iran as a state, the analysis of the more specific image found a moderate change in the perception of

²⁰My emphasis.

Iran's rationale for its nuclear program. Although the administration has firmly rejected the notion that the nuclear program is civilian in nature, the assumption that Iran is persistently seeking nuclear weapons seems to have been replaced by the more nuanced proposition that Iran may be seeking a nuclear weapons capability.

Thus the analysis suggests that the administrations' image of Iran corresponds more closely to that of an imperialist state than one of a status quo power. Throughout the period under study, the image has evolved from being strictly revolutionary to becoming slightly less so.²¹

5.3 The American Diplomatic Strategy toward Iran

The dispute under study is not merely a US-Iran feud. Although France, Great Britain, and Germany (EU3), China, Russia, and the IAEA, all are important players in this conflict, the thesis assumes the American perspective as the point of departure. The research question dictates that other states' concern over the enrichment issue is not brought into focus.

Chubin (2006: 81) summarizes the role of two of the key actors in the diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from mastering the full enrichment cycle: "[EU-3] has acted as 'good cop' to the United States' 'bad cop'". At the risk of grave simplification, the thesis assumes that the US is the dominant actor and the fact that the EU3 has overseen the diplomatic overtures to Iran is presumed to be a strategic choice for US in which the EU3 acts as a vehicle for the American diplomatic

²¹ Although the 2007 NIE seems to assume an image of Iran as a state oriented more toward the status quo rather than explicitly revolutionary, one should not draw the conclusion that the administration is isolated in its view that Iran in essence is a dangerous state. The hard-line Lieberman- Kyl act indicates that the image of Iran as a player in the international system that does not respect the rules of the game is also found outside the White House. Moreover, presidential contenders John McCain and Hillary Clinton have been fierce in their rhetoric toward the regime. Perhaps the image held by the current and the former administration is shaped among other things by the formative events of September 11 which in turn contributed to a merging of the non-proliferation and anti-terrorism agenda. As these memories will fade with time, perhaps the 2009 administration will be able to take fresh look at Iran and reach a different conclusion as to what the exact nature of the Iranian threat is and its motivation to defy the US. However, that the new administration will come to believe that Iran in fact is a status quo oriented state is far from certain. In any case it seems clear that any resolution of the conflict in the sense that Iran ceases its enrichment activities either through persuasion or the application of force is not likely to happen within the time the current Bush administration has left in office.

strategy. Thus incentives and disincentives communicated on part of the EU3 are assumed to be integral to the American diplomatic strategy.

Furthermore, the tensions between the two states are not merely the product of a disarmament issue. According to Takeyh (2007), the strategic and political differences run deep. As a result a number of issues divide the US and Iran. From the Islamic republic's opposition to the Israeli-Arabian peace process via its support for groups hostile to Israel to the character of its political involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq, these two states differ on a host of issues. As a consequence of these disagreements, the US has imposed a wide array of sanctions on Iran.²²

However, the analysis confines itself solely to the nuclear issue and those words and actions aimed at persuading Iran to suspend uranium enrichment. That delimitation may be criticized as artificial, as other facets of the broader discord are important to Iranian-American relations perceived as a whole, but one may hope to gain greater insight into the broader conflict by singling out the one source of tension that stands out as most pertinent for American policymakers to address. The temporal boundaries of the analysis are set to 2003, when the dispute concerning Iran's nuclear program intensified, and until May 2008.

In the words of the retired American ambassador John W. Limbert (2008), "these two erstwhile allies have preferred to communicate through posturing, exchanging insults, threatening, sermonizing, and resorting to occasional violence".

In this subchapter I attempt to draw an accurate picture of the US diplomatic strategy in the nuclear issue and try to assess whether the diplomatic strategy has changed throughout the period under study.

First, I will present a brief background of US relations toward Iranian under president Bush before I attempt to take apart the diplomatic strategy pursued by the

²² For the interested reader I refer to Kenneth Katzman's (2008) congressional report *Iran: U.S. Concerns and Policy Responses*.

US toward Iran in the nuclear dispute. To measure the diplomatic strategy, I analyze those words and actions that communicate incentives and disincentives.

It is perhaps apt to presume that US strategy toward the Middle East operates on three separate levels. I assume that the US, first, on the region specific level, aims to maintain or improve its power position in the region. Second, on the state specific level, it seeks to conduct a coherent policy toward states with the objective to co-opt, contain or coerce the state in question. Third, on the issue specific level the US tries to persuade individual states to act in compliance with American wishes on particular matters. The two lower levels are arguably subordinate to the higher goal of sustaining or altering the current distribution of power. Although the researcher may find it difficult to analyze US efforts on the different levels in separation, this thesis is concerned with those computations that underlie the efforts on the lowest level.

The American diplomatic strategy to persuade Iran to suspend enrichment is the focus of the case study. However, given that these three levels may relate to each other, the thesis must briefly consider the two higher levels. Although the scope does not allow for an elaborate analysis, the thesis must at least have some appreciation of the broader US approach to the region, as a whole, and to Iran as a player in the regional distribution of power.

After the September 11 attacks, the US decided to restructure or refashion the Middle East. Gone were the concepts of deterrence and balance-of-power that formed the corner stones in the first Bush administration's initial foreign policy outlook. According to Rice (2000),

the American military must be able to meet decisively the emergence of any hostile military power in the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Europe -- areas in which not only our interests but also those of our key allies are at stake. America's military is the only one capable of this deterrence function, and it must not be stretched or diverted into areas that weaken these broader responsibilities

This conservative approach was replaced by the Bush doctrine which emphasized American hegemony, preventive war and democratization of the Middle East. The 2003 Iraq war was the first, and so far the last, implementation of the doctrine.

America's role and its vision for the desired political development in the region changed in the wake of September 11 attacks. As opposed to primarily being a guarantor of security with a limited military presence in the region, the US decided to fundamentally alter the distribution of power and removed both the Taleban regime in Afghanistan and the Baathist regime in Iraq from power. In their place the US installed pro-American governments. However, the political loyalty of the new rulers of Afghanistan and Iraq is being questioned as the successor regimes have proven somewhat responsive to Iranian diplomatic advances, thus creating an ambiguous image of the regional distribution of power; the new external situation may simultaneously represent a threat to and an opportunity to Iran (Takeyh 2006).

As the vision for America's role in the region as a whole shifted toward the offensive, the Iran strategy also changed, although America's muscular confidence was not to last. Prior to the devastating terrorist attacks in 2001 the US broadly sought to contain Iranian influence in the region and to deter unwanted Iranian behavior (ibid). In 2002, however, president Bush branded Iran as a member of the Axis of Evil, after Iran had cooperated to remove the Taleban from power in Afghanistan. 2003 the US invaded Iraq, and many observers argue that overthrow of Saddam Hussein was undertaken as a part of a greater initiative to upset the regional distribution of power; evidence suggests (e.g. Dunn 2007) that if the newly established Iraqi regime had found it easier to consolidate its rule, Iran may have been the next hostile power to fall prey to American military power.

In the immediate aftermath of the Iraq invasion Iran offered a 'Grand Bargain' to the US through the Swiss ambassador. The administration did not respond to the Iranian invite to engage in a dialogue over mutual strategic concerns, which included among other things, Iran's nuclear program (Leverett and Flynn 2006). As the entanglement in Iraq has imposed greater strains on American resources, ambitions to topple the rulers in Tehran seem to have lost their initial appeal; America's strategy toward Iran has reverted to that of containment and deterrence (Nasr and Takeyh 2008).

The execution of the diplomatic strategy is arguably related to the developments on the regional and the national levels. Of course, in the case that the US had decided to overthrow the Iranian regime, efforts to analyze the American diplomatic strategy in the nuclear dispute would be a futile endeavor. Although the US in the heyday of the Bush doctrine may have contemplated the regime change option, that policy failed to materialize. Today the attractiveness of the concept of coerced democratization is no longer as high, and the American approach to the region and to Iran seems less vigorous and aggressive. Thus in the absence of any definite intentions to overthrow the Iranian regime, there is scope for an analysis of the diplomatic strategy in the more isolated nuclear dispute.

The analysis argues that the American diplomatic strategy in the nuclear issue has evolved from relying solely on coercive measures to becoming increasingly accommodative. A shift occurred in 2005 when the US decided to put its weight behind the EU3 diplomatic talks with Iran. After that point, the US pursued a two-faced strategy in which the threat of force remained present, but the promise of reward simultaneously gained importance. Although the positive incentives promised to Iran are tangible, they do not seem to rectify broader Iranian grievances. The diplomatic advances have not addressed Iran's security concerns or the regime's legitimacy as a member of the international society. As such, the analysis suggests that the US has failed to erect an incentive structure that may be conducive to an agreement in which Iran suspends enrichment. In addition, I argue that the US has not managed to convince Iran that the US does not ultimately desire a change of regime, thus making it more difficult to persuade Iran to suspend enrichment.

5.3.1 The First Bush Administration

In June 2003 the IAEA found Iran in non-compliance with its obligations under the Safeguards Agreement as it had, among other things, failed to declare imports of uranium and those facilities where uranium was stored and processed. The IAEA report (2003) acknowledges that the amount of uranium is not "large" and that the

material would “need further processing before being suitable for use as the fissile material component of a nuclear explosive device”, however, the fact that Iran had not fully cooperated with the agency constituted a “matter of concern”.

On September 12 that year IAEA calls for Iran’s full cooperation with the agency’s inspectors and demands the cessation of uranium enrichment by October 31. The US declares that this resolution is Iran’s last chance; failure to comply will result in referral to the Security Council (Chubin 2006: xvi). On October 21 the EU3 managed to reach a deal with Iran where it agreed to temporarily suspend enrichment. The Economist (2003) questioned the Tehran agreement at the time and asked whether Iran actually wanted full transparency with the nuclear watchdog, or merely wanted to buy time. The EU3 did, however, also hint at possible nuclear help to Iran in exchange for full cooperation and transparency (ibid).

A month later the IAEA’s conclusions from a report on Iran’s nuclear program were leaked. Despite clear breaches, the agency had found no evidence that Iran was seeking nuclear weapons or that Iran had a nuclear weapons program. In response, John Bolton held that the findings “were impossible to believe” because a “massive and covert Iranian effort to acquire sensitive nuclear capabilities” made sense “only as part of a nuclear weapons program”. Moreover, an October Time article (Karon 2003) claimed that members of the administration had leaked stories of the possibility that Israel could attack Iran’s nuclear facilities from the air, thus communicating veiled threats of military action.

In mid December 2003 Iran signed the Additional Protocol to the NPT, which gives the IAEA the right to conduct more intrusive inspections; however, Iran’s domestic institutions must consent to the agreement before it may enter into legal force. As of today, Iran has failed to ratify the agreement (IAEA 2008b).

Late December that year Libya pledged to dismantle its nuclear program. Bush (2003c) held a press conference in response where he remarked that:

The United States and our allies are applying a broad and active strategy to address the challenges of proliferation, through diplomacy and through the decisive action that are sometimes needed.

As for Iran's nuclear program Bush (ibid) stated that "[the US is] supporting the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency to hold the Iranian regime to its treaty obligations" but concurrently pointed to the example of Iraq should states choose not to follow Libya's example:

We obtained an additional United Nations Security Council Resolution requiring Saddam Hussein to prove that he had disarmed, and when that resolution was defied, we led a coalition to enforce it. All of these actions by the United States and our allies have sent an unmistakable message to regimes that seek or possess weapons of mass destruction. Those weapons do not bring influence or prestige. They bring isolation and otherwise unwelcome consequences (Bush 2003c).

However, Bush (ibid) did outline the prospect of relaxation of tensions in the American-Iranian relationship:

And another message should be equally clear: leaders who abandon the pursuit of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and the means to deliver them, will find an open path to better relations with the United States... Libya has begun the process of rejoining the community of nations

The administration thus encourages Iran to halt its enrichment program and signals its willingness to pursue the diplomatic track. However, by referring to the case of Iraq and "decisive action", the threat of military force is also implied, should diplomacy fail. The president refers to possible entry into the "community of nations" in case of Iranian compliance; however, the vagueness of such a promise leaves uncertainty as to the American willingness to reward Iran for suspending enrichment.

The president (Bush 2004) commented on Iran's nuclear program in a speech given at the National Defense University on 11 February 2004 and explained that:

Iran is unwilling to abandon a uranium enrichment program capable of producing material for nuclear weapons. The United States is working ... to ensure that Iran meets its commitments and does not develop nuclear weapons.

In addition Bush (ibid) proposed that one "should refuse to sell enrichment and reprocessing technologies to any state that does not already possess full-scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing plants", thus outlining the twin US goals of

preventing Iran from mastering the fuel cycle and altering the non-proliferating regime to close what the US perceives as a loophole.

One may argue that the first Bush administration was largely preoccupied with the war on Iraq, and that the nuclear dispute was not prioritized by the administration with respect to the attention it received and the urgency with which it was dealt. Apart from the EU3's unconfirmed suggestion that Iran could be admitted some technological help, the accommodative option went largely unexplored, although Bush communicated that Iran would gain entrance to "the community of nations" should it decide to abandon "its pursuit of nuclear weapons".

The first Bush administration seemed largely to define its posture toward Iran through the term Axis of Evil, which communicated a possible intention to overthrow the Iranian regime. The perception that US desired a regime change may have been reinforced by the 2003 Iraq invasion. Moreover, the fact that Iran's 2003 offer was rebuffed may have strengthened Tehran's perception that Iran "was next". The administration did little to counteract the Iranian threat perception.

In conclusion, one may assert that the diplomatic strategy heavily emphasized coercion and downplayed accommodative measures. However, one should also note that the diplomatic strategy toward Iran did not fully evolve until Bush's second term when the nuclear issue gained importance and assumed a more central position on the US foreign policy agenda.

5.3.2 The Second Bush Administration

During president's Bush second term the diplomatic initiative gained some momentum. The following analysis argues that the coercive aspect of the diplomatic strategy has remained strong, but negotiations with Iran have also become increasingly accommodative.

Early 2005, rumors spread that the US was planning a preventive military attack on Iran. In February that year the president was confronted at a press

conference in Brussels with the allegations and replied that, “this notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous. And having said that, all options are on the table”. The last remark was followed by laughter (Bush 2005b).

On March 11 that year the US signaled that it had slightly modified its stance on Iran’s nuclear program by joining the EU3 diplomatic initiative and announcing that if Iran met American demands, the US would drop its opposition to the Iranian membership in the World Trade Organization and “consider, on a case-by-case basis, the licensing of spare parts of Iranian civilian aircraft” (Rice quoted in Weisman 2005), thus offering limited incentives. As for the European diplomatic track, Rice (quoted in *ibid*) said that the US shares “the desire of European governments to secure Iran’s adherence to its obligations through peaceful and diplomatic means” and that her administration was “prepared to take practical steps to support European efforts to this end”. In return, the EU3 accepted the American demand that failure to cooperate would result in Iran’s referral to the UNSC, the institution which has the authority to impose sanctions (*ibid*).

The willingness to support the European diplomatic approach marked a shift in the US diplomatic strategy in the nuclear dispute as the president has on several occasions rebuffed European demands to join the European led diplomatic effort (*ibid*). According to Weisman (2005), the administration had been averse to join the EU3 for fear of legitimizing the regime in Tehran and rewarding Iran for bad behavior.

Although the administration accepted the European position of offering inducements, the vice-president (quoted in BBC 2005) made it clear that the positive incentives only constituted one side of the coin: “[If] the Iranians don’t live up their obligations and their international commitments to forego a nuclear program, then obviously we’ll have take stronger action”.

On March 13 the Sunday Times revealed that Israel had drawn up plans for a combined air and ground attack on Iranian targets that had been authorized by the then prime minister Ariel Sharon. According to the news paper, the plan had been discussed with American administration officials who had “indicated provisionally that they would not stand in Israel’s way if all international efforts to halt Iranian nuclear projects failed” (Mahnaimi 2005).

Iran resumed its nuclear program in August after the negotiations broke down. In response, Condoleezza Rice (2005), now secretary of state, encouraged China and Russia to stand behind the US threat of sanctions against Iran, thus enabling a concerted approach from the UN veto powers that could include economic sanctions. According to Rice (ibid), a “unified message” was needed because “it is not acceptable for Iran to enter into negotiations ... and then summarily walk out of them and break the agreement”.

Later that month the IAEA (2005) declared that Iran was in “non-compliance” with its obligations under the NPT and urged Iran to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment. In addition, the nuclear agency (ibid) warned that if Iran failed to comply with this resolution, and given the “absence of confidence that Iran’s nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purpose”, Iran could be referred to the Security Council.

Around that time Russia offered to enrich uranium on Iran’s behalf. The nuclear fuel was to be used in the Russian constructed heavy water reactor in Bushehr and transported back to Russia once spent. Putin thus presented a way out of the diplomatic standoff that reduced the risk of proliferation. The proposal was well received by Bush and his administration during the meeting with Putin in South Korea on November 18. According to National Security adviser Hadley (2005) the administration found it “an interesting idea ... [and] a potential avenue out”. As to the question if this solution would prove acceptable to the administration, Hadley (ibid) replied that it was supported by the EU3, “who are taking the lead in the negotiations” and “we think it’s a good avenue to explore”.

On February 4, 2006 the IAEA reported Iran to the Security Council. After Iran's referral, the confrontation between the US and Iran intensified. In response to the nuclear watchdog's vote, Iran announced it would resume enrichment and be less cooperative toward the agency's inspectors (The Daily Telegraph).

The vote was made after Iran early January declared it would resume small-scale enrichment activities, thus complicating the prospective Russian resolution of the conflict. Iran's actions in January were criticized by the US as they had, according to Rice (quoted in Bernstein and Weisman 2006), "shattered the basis for negotiation", and thus paving the way for referral to the Security Council and possible punitive measures. Robert Joseph (quoted in *ibid*), under secretary of state for arms control and international security, explained, however, that going "to the Council provides a menu of options that can be used to try to get Iran to reverse course" and does not "signal an end to negotiations".

The dispute heated up as the international pressure on Iran grew stronger. The US worked to persuade its European allies, Russia and China to support sanctions, and attempted to isolate Iran by hindering Iranian political and economic cooperation with other states, and more specifically, by preventing arms sales and the transfer of "sensitive" dual-use materials (Burns and Joseph 2006). The administration's stance hardened as Robert Joseph (quoted in Sanger and Sciolino 2006) declared that the US was determined to make sure that "not one centrifuge spins" in Iran. Concurrently, the Iranian president Ahmadinejad proclaimed that suspending enrichment "is our red line, and we will never cross it" (quoted in *ibid*).

On the last day of May that year the US made an offer to Iran to join the EU3 in the diplomatic talks, should Iran suspend its enrichment activities, thus ending a nearly three-decade policy against direct talks with Iran. The proposal represented a shift in the US position. Prior to this decision the administration had judged that joining the diplomatic overtures would serve to legitimize the regime (Weisman 2006a). According to the New York Times (Sanger 2006), members of the

administration described this change as a test whether Iran actually wanted closer relations with the US more than it desired the capability to enrich uranium.

As Rice (2006) promulgated the change in the American position, she also outlined a choice for Iran – “two very clear paths”; it could either cooperate by suspending uranium enrichment and implementing the additional protocol, and reap the benefits in the form of “long-term security” and “progressively greater economic cooperation,” or if Iran chose not to work together with the IAEA, the US would impose “great costs” in the form of “international isolation and progressively stronger political and economic sanctions”. As for the military option, Rice (ibid) refused to rule out the use of force and said that the president “is not going to take any of his options off the table,” however, she went on to assure that the administration was “committed to a diplomatic solution”.

On June 5, Javier Solana, the EU’s foreign policy director, comes to Tehran with a diplomatic package of “incentives and disincentives” agreed on by the veto powers and Germany (Cooper 2006a). The offer stipulates that Iran’s civilian nuclear program is to be supported through building a light water reactor and that economic sanctions toward Iran are to be partly lifted, thus allowing Iran to generate electricity through nuclear power, import spare aircraft parts and buy agricultural technology. In addition, the US would agree to join direct talks with Iran and withdraw its opposition to Iranian WTO membership. The incentives were contingent upon Iran’s willingness to suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. Should Iran fail to comply, the package also set forth a set of punitive measures to be implemented. They included a travel ban against the Iranian leadership and a freeze of selected Iranian bank accounts (ibid).

As Iran failed to accept the June offer, the Security Council (UN 2006a) on July 31 issues resolution 1696 which “*demands* ... that Iran shall suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development” by the end of August. In the event that Iran would choose not to cooperate, it would “face possible economic, diplomatic sanctions”, however, “further decisions will be

required should such additional measures be necessary". The US thus succeeded in persuading the other veto powers to vote in favor of a resolution that condemned Iran's enrichment program and threatened to impose punitive sanctions, although the text was rather ambiguous as to the prospect of punitive measures.

In response to the "package", Iran makes a counteroffer approximately three weeks later. The first formal reaction of the administration noted the inadequacy of the proposal. Although it "fell short" of expectations, a spokesman for the administration promised that "we will review it" (Cooper 2006b). In the counteroffer Iran did not promise to suspend enrichment, but did propose "serious talks" over the nuclear program as a whole (ibid).

As Iran failed to address the primary US concern, the administration pressed quietly ahead in its pursuit of sanctions. According to Cooper (2006c), the US toned down its reaction to Iran's refusal in order to appear patient, measured, and reasonable. A more moderate American response would "keep the temperature down", thus making it easier to maintain unity among the veto powers. On October 6 R. Nicholas Burns (2006), then under secretary for political affairs, gave a briefing announcing that the US had "no alternative but to proceed along the second path".

In an effort to avoid sanctions Javier Solana travelled to Vienna to meet Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Larijani, hoping to clarify ambiguities concerning the refused incentives (Dempsey 2006). Meanwhile, the US decided to single-handedly raise the pressure on Iran by barring Bank Saderat, one of Iran's main state owned banks, from interacting with the US financial system (Weisman 2006b, New York Times 2006).

As the US found it difficult to unite the EU3 and Russia and China over the need to introduce sanctions and as Solana's efforts seemed to be making some progress, secretary Rice softened the US position slightly by declaring that the US would be willing to halt its efforts to impose sanctions if Iran suspended enrichment (Bilefsky 2006).

As Iran refused to meet the American demands and failed to present an acceptable counteroffer, the US, in cooperation with the EU3, drafted a Security Council resolution text which is given to Russia and China. The draft included a prohibition of any technical or financial assistance to Iran's nuclear program and a travel ban on Iranian citizens involved in activities related to the nuclear program. In addition, the document suggested that Iranian students should be prevented from studying nuclear physics abroad. A spokesperson for the state department conceded that the draft resolution would have been somewhat harsher if the US were the sole author (Cooper and Shanker 2006).

At the end of October the US holds a daylong military exercise in the Persian Gulf 20 miles outside Iranian waters. The US insists that the training maneuver which included, among others states' naval units, British and French warships, merely constituted an effort to develop coordinated procedures for intercepting vessels believed to be transporting unconventional weapons, and was not related to the ongoing nuclear dispute (Fattah 2006).

The draft proposal failed to bring agreement among the veto powers. China and Russia, in particular, voiced reluctance to support stiff punitive sanctions (Cooper 2006d). Six months after the incentives were offered, Rice (quoted in *ibid*) announced that "unity is not an end in itself" and in the absence of agreement among the six states the US would put a resolution up to a vote, thus making Russia take a stance in public. The continuing discord between the six states blocked a resolution from the Security Council.

Against the background of international debate and disagreement over sanctions, the US deployed two aircraft carriers with supporting ships to the Persian Gulf on 20 December. According to Shanker (2006), who cites anonymous sources, the ships were to be stationed within quick sailing distance off Iran, but this display of naval power should not be perceived as a preparation for the use of force, although no aircraft carrier had been inside the gulf since July. The anonymous officials did concede, however, that the capacity to project power had increased and that the

administration hoped to communicate to its adversary that, despite an overextended army, the US still had the capacity “to watch Iran” (ibid).

Three days later the Security Council through resolution 1737 (UN 2006b) imposed sanctions on Iran after months of discussion. Its punishing measures were non-military and included trade prohibitions with respect to Iran in three areas: enrichment, processing, and heavy water projects. In addition, the resolution forced a freeze of assets belonging to key individuals and companies connected to the nuclear program. Acting American ambassador to the UN, Alejandro D. Wolff (quoted in Gootman 2006), noted that the resolution should be viewed as a “first step” and that “we [the US] will not hesitate to return to this body for further action if Iran fails to steps to comply”. The constraints imposed on Iran through resolution 1737 were weaker than those outlined in the joint American-European draft as, among other things, the travel ban was removed (ibid).

According to Cooper and Weisman (2007), the US and its European allies did not believe that the sanctions had sufficient bite to alter the Iranian calculus with respect to its enrichment program. Therefore the US instead sought to isolate Iran financially by persuading other governments and financial institutions to minimize their dealings with Iran. The outcome of this unilateral tactic aimed at hurting the Iranian economy was far from certain as those countries that were willing to cut their financial ties already had little involvement with Iran (ibid). In addition, the effort to convince banks to stop doing business with Iran could backfire, given that Iran would possibly be forced to sell its oil in a different currency, thereby possibly weakening the position of the dollar as a reserve currency (Weisman 2006b).

In a January 10 speech the president (Bush 2007d) struck a more confrontational tone on the rhetorical level toward Iran, as he formally announced that a second aircraft carrier was on its way to the gulf, and that the US was about to deploy a battery of Patriot missiles.

According to Cooper and Mazzetti (2007) central figures within the administration, including Rice and Hadley, had grown tired of Iran's stonewalling and the slow pace of diplomacy and decided that in the absence of an accommodative move from Tehran, the American initiative to engage Iran had finished.

A week later Robert Gates (quoted in Garamone 2007), secretary of defense, downplayed the risk of military action assuring that the US was not contemplating a military option because "nobody wants another conflict in this region". Gates warned, however, that Iran was "mistaken in believing it has the United States at a disadvantage". On February 10 Gates (quoted in Kozaryn 2007) again pledged that the US had no plans to use military force against Iran:

I don't know how many times the president, Secretary Rice and I have had to repeat that we have no intention of attacking Iran, that the second carrier group is there to reassure our allies, as well as to send a signal that we've been in the Persian Gulf for decades and we intend to stay there

Vice-president Cheney (2007a) also appeared to reduce the emphasis on the military option during an interview in late February, although the reference to the possible use of force was also present:

We hope that we can solve the problem diplomatically. The President has indicated he wants to do everything he can to resolve it diplomatically. That's why we've been working with the EU and going through the United Nations with sanctions. But the President has also made it clear that we haven't taken any options off the table

After the second round of sanctions was passed, the US adopted a more confrontational posture toward Iran as it increased its naval presence in the gulf, although some members of the administration may have attempted to minimize the risk of escalation by toning down the rhetoric. The vice-president's catch phrase 'all options are on the table' may have intensified Iranian threat perception as the statement fell within the context of American naval deployment off the coast of Iran, thus possibly strengthening the perception that the US intended to use its sea and air power to attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

At the end of February, however, the US declared that it is willing to hold diplomatic talks with Syria and Iran over the political situation in Iraq, thus partly

ending its policy of ostracizing Iran from international society. The change of policy toward Iran, albeit on a different issue, marked another step from coercion towards conciliation. As the US had failed to consolidate the rule of the new Iraqi government, Iran was increasingly held responsible for the lack of political development, thus widening the rift between the two states (Milbank 2007). The report from Iraq Study Group (2006) recommended that Iran and Syria should be consulted on the diplomatic level and be included as stakeholders in the Iraqi political process. American policymakers had increasingly blamed Iran for the lack of stability and for the deteriorating security situation in Iraq. The February decision to engage Iran on the Iraq issue may be understood in this light and thus marked a significant movement toward Iran (Milbank 2007).

Concurrently the six states began to draft a new resolution after the IAEA reported that Iran had stepped up its efforts to enrich uranium, thus defying the Security Council. To increase the pressure on Iran, the US now sought stronger sanctions (Cooper 2007a).

On March 24 the Security Council (U.N. 2007) unanimously decided to adopt new round of sanctions to increase the pressure on Iran to suspend its enrichment program. The 1747 resolution tightened the sanctions already in place through the December resolution and expanded the scope of the punitive economic punishments to include the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Command (IRGC). In addition, the resolution added an arms embargo and threatened “further steps” if Iran failed to comply within 60 days (ibid).

According to under secretary R. Nicholas Burns (2007) the administration was “very pleased by the strength” of the resolution and viewed it as “a significant international rebuke to Iran [and] a tightening of international pressure”. However, Burns also expressed hope that “Iran will reconsider [the June 2006 offer] and will come to the negotiating table”. During the press briefing the under secretary was asked why the sanctions targeted groups and areas not directly related to the nuclear program. Burns (ibid) replied that the sanctions should be broad so as to increase

pressure to get Iran to negotiate. In that respect, Burns (ibid) holds, the arms embargo was important because “we see them [Iran] trying to become the most dominant military state in the region” and the US is “engaged” in a policy “to block and contain Iranian power in the Middle East”.

At the same time it became clear that the parallel US tactic of isolating Iran financially achieves its intended effects as more than 40 major international banks had cut off or reduced its business with the government in Tehran or Iran’s private sector. As a result, Iran struggled to finance projects in the oil and gas sector and to pay for imports, and simultaneously failed to attract foreign investors. A chief focus for this tactic was to target the IRGC, thus merging the UN sanctions and the parallel unilateral efforts (Wright 2007).

At the end of March the US held another military exercise in the gulf. The two aircraft carriers dispatched to the region in December took part along with a dozen other warships. More than 10 000 personnel and 100 aircrafts were involved in simulated air warfare. According to Calderwood and Krane (2007) the muscle flexing should be understood as a message to Iran that the US, in spite of its troubles in Iraq still had the capability to project power in region. This was the first time since the 2003 invasion of Iraq that two aircraft carriers had coalesced in the gulf (ibid).

On May 12 vice-president Cheney threatened Iran onboard the deck of the Stennis aircraft carrier, which at the time was anchored only 150 miles off the Iranian coast. Cheney (2007b) forcefully proclaimed that:

With two carrier strike groups in the Gulf, we're sending clear messages to friends and adversaries alike. We'll keep the sea lanes open. We'll stand with our friends in opposing extremism and strategic threats. We'll disrupt attacks on our own forces. We'll continue bringing relief to those who suffer, and delivering justice to the enemies of freedom. And we'll stand with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating this region.

Cheney’s remarks did not represent anything altogether new, although the backdrop against which his statements were made, may have reinforced the coercive aspect of his message.

Two days later IAEA inspectors reported that Iran has solved its technological problems and was enriching uranium on a far greater scale than expected, operating 1300 centrifuges. The IAEA now believed that Iran had the knowledge to enrich, and according to ElBaradei (quoted in Sanger 2007), “[f]rom now on, it is simply a question of perfecting that knowledge”. Given the acquired capability to enrich, Iran had thus crossed a rather ambiguous red line drawn by the US. As such, the diplomatic strategy could be described as a failure given that it had not deterred or convinced Iran from gaining that expertise.

Mid June the New York Times (Cooper and Sanger 2007) reported that diplomatic strategy toward Iran was stirring disagreement within the administration. Allegedly, the internal debate pitted secretary Rice against vice-president Cheney. Some members of the administration had reportedly grown impatient with the diplomatic “track” and perceived its chance of success as quite meager. Instead the US should seek to further isolate Iran and contain its influence, and reflect more on the military option. Only two weeks earlier Rice had rejected any internal division and had assured that the US was committed to diplomacy and that there was no split between her and the vice-president on the issue, “we are on a course that is a diplomatic course [which] is supported by all of the members of the cabinet, and by the vice-president” (Rice quoted in Cooper 2007b).

Whether the alleged divide between Rice’s state department and Cheney’s office was real or an orchestrated division that facilitated Washington’s carrot and stick approach toward Tehran is a judgment considered of lesser importance here. In a speech Bush (2007e) held in September, however, he made the case for “staying the course” in Iraq and appeared to have sided with the assumed more bellicose faction with respect to Iran:

If we were to be driven out of Iraq, extremists of all strains would be emboldened.... [A free Iraq] will counter the destructive ambitions of Iran

In the meantime, however, the two aircraft carriers deployed to the gulf were replaced by a single carrier, thus weakening the American military presence in the gulf, and possibly undermining the tough rhetoric (Thompson 2007).

On September 21 secretary Rice met with the French foreign minister and made no reference to the possible use of force. Instead she (Rice 2007a) argued that the US was seeking to increase diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran, and through emphasizing the standing offer to join the European led talks, she simultaneously extended an olive branch:

we have set out a diplomatic path that includes negotiation as the preferred means by which to resolve this issue [but] we also have a UN Security Council track [and] we will seek further sanctions [if Iran does not] take up the negotiating track.

Rice also stressed the American willingness to talk and said that “the question isn't why won't the United States talk to Iran; it's why won't Tehran talk to the United States,” (ibid) thus partly shifting the responsibility towards Tehran for lack of progress on the diplomatic track.

In stark contrast to Rice's more moderate view stood Bush's (2007f) remarks on October 17 when he argued that if Iran were to possess nuclear weapons, it could lead to World War III, thus one “ought to be interested in preventing the from have [sic] the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon”. By implication the presidents seemed to suggest that preventive action should be taken in order to avoid such an outcome. However, Bush (ibid) concurrently attempted to tone down the rhetoric and said that his administration “will continue to work with all nations about the seriousness of this threat. Plus we'll continue working the financial measures”. Bush (ibid) concluded by summing up the diplomatic strategy toward Iran:

[T]he whole strategy is, is that at some point in time, leaders or responsible folks inside of Iran may get tired of isolation and say, this isn't worth it.... [M]y intent is to continue to rally the world to send a focused signal to the Iranian government that we will continue to isolate you.

Bush's pointed warning to Iran came at a time when the US attempted to persuade the EU3 and Russia and China to support stronger sanctions.

Later that week the vice-president (2007c) also ratcheted up the pressure on Iran and called the state “a growing obstacle to peace in the Middle East”, and promised to “impose serious consequences” if Iran were to “stay on its present course”. Most importantly, Cheney (*ibid*) appeared to draw a new red line:

The United States joins other nations in sending a clear message: We will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

According to David Makovksy (quoted in Stolberg 2007), scholar at the Washington Institute, up to this point members of the administration had said that it was “not acceptable” for Iran to have nuclear weapons. Cheney’s remark thus indicated a stronger commitment to keep that from occurring. In addition, Cheney (2007c) also took a swing at the Iranian regime:

Given the nature of Iran's rulers, the declarations of the Iranian president, and the trouble the regime is causing throughout the region -- including direct involvement in the killing of Americans -- our country and the entire international community cannot stand by as a terror-supporting state fulfills its most aggressive ambitions

Within the context of Bush’s threat to Iran, Cheney’s remarks piled a significant amount of pressure on Iran. At the time, in some media (e.g. Stolberg 2007), Cheney’s speech was interpreted as laying the groundwork for military action, either to strengthen the multilateral approach or because the US actually intended to use force.

At the end of October the administration announced a new set of unilateral sanctions aimed at increasing the economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran by designating the Quds Force, an elite unit of the IRGC, and four state-owned banks as supporters of terrorism. According to Rice (2007b) these measures would provide “a powerful deterrent to every international bank and company that thinks of doing business with the Iranian government”. Despite these unilateral actions Rice (*ibid*), did pledge that her administration was “fully committed to a diplomatic solution with Iran“ and reiterated the offer of joining the talks, thus mixing caution with hostility.

Anthony Cordesman (quoted in Cooper 2007c), the Middle East and national security specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, perceived the

unilateral sanction as a “warning” and argued that this move was “more a demonstration of restraint than a signal that we’re going to war”. However, the administration’s actions marked a turn toward more a unilateralist diplomatic strategy.

In a later article Cordesman (2008) wrote that there had been unofficial contact between Iran and the US to “make it clear that the United States continued to pursue diplomatic options and was not preparing for war”, thus supporting the notion that the tough rhetoric was most likely aimed at allies in order to drum up support for more punitive sanctions.

The release of 2007 NIE on December 3 2007, however, severely weakened the credibility of the bellicose American rhetoric and the administration’s judgment regarding the threat from Iran, thus complicating the multilateral efforts to agree on a third round of sanctions. According to Litwak (2008), the intelligence assessment “removed the onus” from Russia and China to support further sanctions. The administration succeeded, however, in maintaining the coalition of six as the Security Council (U.N. 2008) voted for resolution 1803 on March 3 2008. Although the six powers had already agreed on a draft on December 1, the final resolution, as a result of the negotiating process, was rather weak. The resolution did little to add to the pressure on Iran, although it increased the scope of the travel bans and the asset freezes and authorized inspections of goods suspected of containing prohibited equipment from and to Iran. The Security Council gave 90 days to respond, and in case of compliance, the six states promised to restore economic relations with Iran (ibid).

At the end of April 2008 president Bush (2008d) revealed that the September 2007 Israeli air strike on Syrian territory was a bombing mission aimed at destroying an alleged facility of a nascent nuclear program. Bush (ibid) argued that fear of “confrontation” or “retaliation” in the region had caused his administration to wait over half a year to disclose this information. In addition, according to Bush (ibid),

we have an interest in sending a message to Iran, and the world for that matter, about just how destabilizing a -- nuclear proliferation would be in the Middle East, and that it's essential that we work together to enforce U.N. Security Resolutions aimed at getting Iran to stop their enrichment programs

A modest interpretation of Bush's statement would be that he tried to remind Iran that, despite lack of domestic support and an overextended army, the military option is still being considered as the US still has command of the air and the sea.

On April 30 it is reported that the US have two aircraft carriers in the gulf. Secretary Gates (quoted in Miles 2008) maintained, however, that "[the] size of our naval presence in the gulf rises and falls constantly [and] this deployment has been planned for a long time" and should not be interpreted as "an escalation", although "it could be seen ... as a reminder".

In the beginning of May the six states agreed on a new package of incentives to Iran. Although the details are yet to be disclosed, the incentives are said to be "modest" and build on Javier Solana's June 2006 proposal. Among the incentives stipulated in that offer there was a promise to support construction of light-water nuclear reactors, thus signaling willingness on part of the six states to provide Iran with help to build a modern nuclear program that may produce electricity. In addition, the six states pledged to allow the sale of commercial planes, hold a regional security conference, and develop their economies ties to Iran (Sciolino 2008).

The May proposal concludes the analysis of the diplomatic strategy. The next subchapter summarizes the findings and attempts to connect those with the administrations' key strategic belief and image of Iran.

5.3.3 Linking the Belief and the Image to the Diplomatic Strategy

The diplomatic strategy evolved as the nuclear dispute assumed a more central position on the American foreign policy agenda. During the period under study the diplomatic strategy toward Iran has developed. The first Bush administration gave the issue little attention as Bush and his advisers were most likely preoccupied with the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq and perhaps approached the nuclear issue

through the prism of its new strategic vision for the region. The nuclear dispute heated up as Iran in defiance of the Security Council pressed ahead in its pursuit to gain the knowledge to enrich uranium. The second Bush presidency saw developments both in the coercive and the accommodative aspects as the US pushed for stiffer sanctions but also provided stronger incentives.

The coercive part of US diplomatic strategy, as defined here, may thus be divided into three subparts. The US has, first, sought to punish Iran through multilateral sanctions imposed by the Security Council, second, attempted to squeeze Iran's economy further through unilateral sanctions, and third, tried to increase the pressure on Iran by hinting to the possible use of force and reinforced those words by deployments of US naval forces in the Persian Gulf. In addition, the US has promoted ambiguity as to the possibility that Israel single-handedly may attack Iran's nuclear facilities from the air.

The accommodative aspect of the diplomatic strategy has been less developed as concessions to Iran remain rudimentary. The June 2006 proposal does most likely not, from an Iranian perspective, amount to a serious offer. In addition the US offered in May of 2006 to meet its Iranian counterparts if Iran suspends enrichment, thus partly reversing its policy over 27 years of isolating the regime. That carrot may have been deprived some of its attractiveness given that the US in 2006 agreed to meet Iran unconditionally on the Iraq issue. Although the American accommodative moves most likely are perceived by US policymakers as generous, the US has failed to alleviate Iranian security concerns, thus possibly causing the incentives to lose some of their appeal.

In sum, throughout the period under study the coercive measures have formed the gravity point of the diplomatic strategy, although the concessions to Iran have increasingly become more important. A central premise for the diplomatic strategy seems to have been that sanctions and threats of force do not undermine diplomatic advances, but adds to the American bargaining power by hurting the Iranian position, thus giving the US more influence.

The sub-analysis of the belief suggested that the bandwagon proposition prevailed during the first Bush presidency but as the intended effects failed to materialize, the balance tilted toward the balancing proposition. As for the image, the sub-analysis argues that a modest change occurred throughout the period under study as the image evolved gradually from being strictly revolutionary to becoming slightly less so. According to the theoretical model one should thus expect the diplomatic strategy to initially rely primarily on coercion to gradually develop into becoming more conciliatory.

Although the predictions of the theoretical model are to a certain extent congruent with the developments during the period under study, the research design and the preliminary character of the analysis preclude the inference that changes in the key strategic belief and the image are related to the evolution of the diplomatic strategy. However, the results strengthen my intention to further develop the model by expressing it more clearly to reduce vagueness and by more explicitly specifying the conditions under which it may be useful.

6. Conclusions and Discussion

The diplomatic strategy evolved as the nuclear issue received more attention. The first Bush administration met Iran's defiance with an aggressive posture which downplayed the possibility of accommodative measures. As the nuclear issue gained importance, the stick remained dominant, although the US increasingly offered limited concessions. The two-track diplomacy neatly reflects the theoretical construct as the US has tried to present Iran with a choice between two outcomes; one, agree to the suspension of the enrichment program and receive the concessions stipulated, or two, remain defiant and reap increasingly stiffer punitive measures. It seems apt to portray the American strategy as a mixed approach in which minor concessions are coupled with possible major repercussions. As of today the diplomatic strategy has failed given that Iran has refused to halt its enrichment program.

The analysis of the key strategic belief concluded that the first Bush administration held the bandwagon proposition as a valid hypothesis as to how states act in the face of threats. As unintended effects of the prescriptions of the bandwagon proposition may have gradually weakened the American position in the Middle East, preliminary evidence suggests that the competing balancing hypothesis became the premise on which the diplomatic strategy was formulated.

As for the administrations' image of Iran, the analysis suggested that the image of Iran as an essentially expansionist power had been sustained by both administrations, although that perception had weakened somewhat. Given the inherent difficulty in reading an adversary's intentions and the cloud of uncertainty surrounding the Iranian nuclear program, I hypothesized that the policymakers' image of Iran could help them reduce ambiguity and facilitate an interpretation of Iran's rationale for its nuclear program. If the decision makers held that Iran's program was intended to meet military needs, then I assumed that their inference was based on an expansionist image of Iran. Conversely, if the policymakers believed that

the nuclear program was civilian in nature, then I took their interpretation as an indication that their image of Iran corresponded to that of a status quo oriented state.

Furthermore, I added a distinction between the intention to develop *nuclear weapons* and the intention to develop the *capability* to do so. In the former case the image of Iran as a revolutionary power would be strengthened, and in the latter I assumed that the decision makers still held an image commensurate with that of an expansionist state, though a somewhat weaker one.

Throughout the period under study the perception that Iran was set on developing nuclear weapons grew weaker and the perception that Iran most likely intended to achieve the capability to produce such weapons became stronger, thus suggesting that the image of Iran remained expansionist, although it became slightly less so throughout the period under study.

6.1 Policy Implications

It is beyond the purview of this thesis to explain why the strategy has failed. However, a few observations may be called for. I have emphasized the role of cognitions and believe them to be important in the decision making process. Although the policymaker must make decisions under pressure and time constraints on the basis of insufficient information, and therefore interprets events in light of beliefs and images, those cognitions should from time to time be reassessed. The first American president, George Washington, is reported to have said that:

The nation, which indulges toward another a habitual hatred, or a habitual fondness, is in some degree a slave.

Although the thesis has not been preoccupied with the question of the most accurate image of Iran, US policymaker should perhaps revisit their assumptions regarding Iran, and in particular, reassess the notion that Iran's Islamic revolution extends beyond its borders.

The diplomatic strategy has failed to create an incentive structure that may induce Iran to comply. Instead the US has played its hand in such a manner that may have reinforced Iranian security concerns; the US has not managed to convince Iran that the suspension of enrichment is not a subgoal of a broader ambition to strip the regime of its power, thus possibly strengthening Iran's motivation to press forward with its nuclear program.

As Thomas Schelling (1980) noted, threats do not work unless the coercer simultaneously communicates a credible promise not to realize the undesired action if the other party chooses to comply. If Iran's leadership cannot change its behavior *and* remain in power, threats of punishment will not have the desired effect; it is entirely rational to refuse to give in to the stronger power if the fulfillment of the initial demand cannot satisfy the other party.

Although the analysis has only dealt with the substantial aspect of diplomacy, a brief comment on the style of American diplomatic advances toward Iran may be in order. Holsti (1992) argues that in most cases, hostility begets hostility. The manner in which the US has pursued the "diplomatic track" and the somewhat naïve belief that the nuclear dispute may be approached in isolation from other issues, thus allowing "democracy promotion" in Iran and the extensive use of disrespectful language, impinge upon a central presumption concerning dealings between states; any diplomatic overture that fails to acknowledge the other state as a peer will most likely not succeed; dialogue can only succeed among equals. For instance, the phrase 'change its behavior' is illustrative, although also adopted here for the sake of convenience, as it implies that the US does to perceive Iran's standing as equal to its own. In addition, the US policymakers have been little attentive in both words and actions to the possibility that Tehran perceives its nuclear program as perfectly legitimate.

As Jervis (1989: 7) writes, "[i]f state A can convince B of its good will, that is, of its friendly intentions toward B, B may be more willing to cooperate since it will not fear that A is trying to draw it into a trap".

Takeyh (2007) argues that the diplomatic strategy itself is predicated on a false idea because “coercion, sanctions, naval deployments” may undercut the “diplomatic track”. Others (e.g. Levitt 2007) reach the opposite conclusion and hold that coercive measures bolster American influence, and thus strengthen the diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to accept the incentives in return for suspending enrichment. I will not assess the merit of these arguments, but I would like to comment on the implementation of the diplomatic strategy.

The analysis portrayed to some degree a muddled image of the diplomatic strategy which from the vantage point of a strategist could be criticized for several reasons. For one, the diplomatic strategy seems to lack a high degree of coordination; perhaps the president has failed to exercise leadership to ensure a clear and consistent attitude toward the matter. Possibly Iran may have exploited US indecision in the nuclear dispute.

Second, American red lines have been ambiguous, though clear and definite enough to damage the American image as perceived by the Iranian policymakers. By forcefully proclaiming that “not one centrifuge will spin” and “we will prevent Iran from acquiring the knowledge to enrich” the policymakers have laid down markers for themselves which they have not met.

In a given conflict both the balancing and the bandwagoning perspective assume that reputation is an important quality for states. If the stronger power is perceived by weaker side as a paper tiger, threats will no longer be credible, and as a result, they will become meaningless. Should the US develop the intention to take military action and voice its determination to strike Iran’s nuclear facilities from the air, in the absence of a reputation for living up to threats, Iran will most likely not back down, thus possibly increasing the risk of a violent confrontation.

Perhaps the diplomatic strategy should have been aimed at altering Iran’s calculus by persuading Tehran that it would be in its interest to refrain from enriching uranium. Instead the US efforts may have strengthened Iran’s intention to press

forward with its enrichment program. Given the findings of the 2007 NIE which concluded Iran had halted its nuclear *weapons* program, the US should perhaps avoid compelling Iran to restart it.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The theoretical model posited two causal mechanisms as explanation for the diplomatic strategy. The analysis found correlation between the independent variables and the dependent one; however, given the research design, one cannot prove that the hypothesized mechanisms were present. The truism that “correlation does not imply causation” applies here, as I cannot preclude errors of measurement or the possibility that important variables were omitted. Moreover, the rudimentary character of analysis further undermines the possibility of inferring causality. In addition, the deduced predictions were vague, given that they merely included an expectation as to the direction of the co-variation. Thus the analysis cannot be described as a full-fledged congruence procedure, and the prospect of establishing causal mechanisms is severely undermined.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, one may argue that my efforts, to some extent, have been fruitful as the model did survive; the analysis could not prove that the hypothesized causal mechanisms were absent. Moreover, given that the development of the model is at an early stage, one could perhaps describe this project as a moderate success.

For the sake of the argument, I assume in the following discussion that causal mechanisms between the independent variables and the diplomatic strategy have been identified.

The tentative causal model assumed that the image is a more immediate factor than the key strategic belief. Could the case study shed light on the question of relative impact of the independent variables on the diplomatic strategy?

Despite some concessions, the US has not extended a security guarantee to Iran. In the absence of security, accommodative measures inevitably lose some appeal. To provide a state perceived as revolutionary with an assurance that its sovereignty will not be violated, and thus tying one's hands, could not be considered a prudent policy.

Furthermore, the analysis argued that the bandwagon proposition as the key strategic belief was largely replaced by the balancing perspective. Throughout the period under study the accommodative aspect has to a certain extent grown more important, but the coercive part of the strategy, threats of force, naval deployments, sanctions, etc., has remained strong.

Moreover, as the analysis of the image revealed, the US was concerned that Iran would acquire the *knowledge* to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Many states have the know-how to produce nuclear weapons, but have concluded for a variety of reasons that it would not be in their interest to do so, thus suggesting that the image of Iran as a state plays an important role.

Given that the US has failed to reassure Iran that it will not violate its sovereignty; and that the weakening of the balancing perspective was not accompanied by a moderation of the coercive aspect; and the fact that the diplomatic strategy has been aimed at denying Iran the necessary technical expertise to enrich, in sum one may speculate that the image may play a more central role than the key strategic belief for the formulation of the diplomatic strategy. The choice to assume that the image was a more immediate factor than the key strategic belief thus seems partly justified.

The model assumed no interplay between the key strategic belief and the image, i.e. the policymakers' belief and image were conceived as products of distinct cognitive processes. By extension, I argued that a decision maker, who subscribes to the belief that states in most cases join the bandwagon, may concurrently hold that the relevant adversary is oriented toward the status quo. One of the characteristics

that separates those who believe that states as a rule balance against threats, from those to who hold that power attracts, concerns the attentiveness to security dilemma. In relation to the image, a status quo oriented power investing in its power resources is presumed to react to external stimulus perhaps hoping to rectify legitimate security concerns. Given that the balancer ascribes more weight to the security dilemma, he may be more prone to perceive the behavior of adversaries as contingent upon conditions imposed on them from the outside, thus possibly affecting his image of the opposition toward the status quo type. The presupposition that the key strategic belief is unrelated to the image thus seems too simple.

The analysis argued that the image of Iran as expansionist largely remained in place over the six years, and that the belief that states act according to the balance proposition grew stronger to the detriment of the standing of the bandwagon hypothesis.

Assuming instead that the bandwagon perspective had retained its dominant position as the key strategic belief throughout the period of study, would the image also have remained the same? Two factors suggest that the posited mechanism in which the balancer is more inclined to perceive adversaries as oriented toward the status quo than the bandwagoneer, thereby possibly weakening the revolutionary image of the opposition, may have been at work here.

First, the general perception of Iran as conveyed by the president endured throughout the period under study; the perception of Iran's rationale for its nuclear program, however, was altered and implied a greater role for the security dilemma as Iran no longer was assumed to be set on developing nuclear weapons, but instead seeking the capability to do so, thus allowing for the possibility that Iran's intentions could be affected by the international environment. Second, the administration's reaction to the intelligence community's threat assessment, where Bush and his advisers acknowledged that Iran had halted its nuclear *weapons* program, but warned that it could be restarted any time, may indicate, as argued by Jervis (1976: 68), that images are resistant to change. The administrations may, on the one hand, altered its

perception of Iran's rationale for its nuclear program, and on the other, maintained the image of Iran as essentially a dangerous state.

One may therefore question to wisdom of conceiving the two cognitive constructs as entirely unrelated as the change in the image, given that it was measured through Iran's perceived rationale for its nuclear program, may be accounted for by the weakening of the bandwagon proposition, thus to a certain extent invalidating the theoretical model.

According to tradition, the student should in conclusion assess the contribution of the thesis in a larger perspective. As noted in the introduction the model presented here represented something different, and the case study could neither confirm nor disconfirm it. At the very least, the model as a structuring device helped describe the diplomatic strategy in a precise manner.

In its present state the model cannot render any more than vague probabilistic predictions and for that reason is hard to falsify. Perhaps at some point in the future the model could benefit from process-tracing in which the researcher tries to trace the links between the key strategic belief and the image, on the one hand, and the diplomatic strategy, on the other, by examining now classified documents, memos, and perhaps conducting interviews with central policymakers where their reflections could be revealed.

In the end, we all choose our gods. The thesis is based on the conviction that international politics cannot be fruitfully conceived as a sphere that is ruled merely by rational laws. Rather, I would propose an interdisciplinary approach into which insight from history and psychology could contribute to a higher level of understanding of the dynamics of international politics.

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