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American Foreign Policy towards Iran:

Between Values and Interests
or Beyond?

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Map of Iran



Source: Katzman, 2007, 51

Foreword

The United States and Iran – the relationship of these two states stands for one of the most sensitive and tensioned rivalries of societal concepts and policies in the contemporary world. The relationship since 1979 – or more precisely the non-relationship – is an excellent example of an escalation trend that may have arisen from a lack of communication, but also from misguided perceptions and strategies.

There can be no doubt that apart from the Israel-Palestine conflict and the uncertain future of conflict settlement in Iraq, it is the Iranian role that will matter most for maintaining sustained stability of the wider Middle East. Most US administrations after that of James Earl Carter hoped to topple the reign of the Mullahs through a policy of isolation and political pressure from the outside. Consequently the US, for example under George Bush Sr., behaved in a partisan manner during the Iraq / Iran war and supported Saddam Hussein with weapons and money although his suppression policy and even his war crimes were already well known in Washington at that time. While after the war Iraq was put under sanctions, the US still did not care much about Iran's role in the Middle East and did not show interest in getting Teheran involved in a stabilizing framework for the region. Only after the first signs of a possible nuclear weapons program had become visible did George W. Bush's administration start to worry about a further not dealing with the "Iranian threat". Yet the strategy that was chosen has been selective, has become based on single issues and has been guided rather by moral values than by sound interests. This approach has limited the prospects for a successful policy, because it has made a positive result implicitly dependent on a change of the regime in Teheran. And this policy may have contributed to backing the power of the Mullahs because they were able to redirect public interest toward what they called external threats.

The likelihood of a regime change from within, however, has been and will remain very low, at least for the time being. But traumatized by the past and incapable of projecting a comprehensive and coherent concept for the Middle East that really takes into account the recent changes in realities, the US still focuses on a ideological, simplistic and short-term vision of how to curb Iran's regional aspirations. Ironically, it is only the painful and perpetuated Iraq crisis that has again made the Iranian case a strategic issue for the US. Although still driven by primary concerns about nuclear proliferation and how to apply counter-proliferation policies, other issues have spread and new interests arisen, such as the suspected external influence on the Shiites in Iran and on H'izbollah in Lebanon and Teheran's energy collaboration with Russia and China. Moreover, growing concerns about a military strike – either commanded by Israel or at the order of the US Government – have alarmed the lamed foreign and security policy elites in the USA, independent of their political affiliations or preferences.

Long- and short-term considerations have become intertwined and triggered a debate and process that tells a lot about how US foreign policy is constructed and generated.

Constanze Quosh, who has soberly and comprehensively analysed the US Iran policy, wrote this piece of work as her masters thesis in the Program "Master of Peace and Security Studies" at the University of Hamburg and under supervision at the Center for European Peace and Security Studies (ZEUS). During her studies she was given the unique opportunity of a six-month internship in the US legislative branch. Her fine-tuned theoretical approach, together with her first-hand insights from talking with many politicians and experts inside and outside of Washington's bureaucracy, provides an informative overview of the causes and driving forces behind the foreign policy process in the United States that goes far beyond the Iran case. The result of her research was awarded the Best Master Thesis of 2006 / 2007.

Hans J. Giessmann

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AMD	Anti Missile Defence
BMENAI	Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CCFR	Chicago Council on Foreign Relations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DoD	Department of Defense
ECG	Export Credit Guarantees
EFP	Explosively Forced Projectile
EIA	Energy Information Administration
EPCA	European Payments Consulting Association
EU3	Triple of Germany, Great Britain, France – Iran negotiation partners
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan)
FMET	Federal Ministry for Economy and Technology
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
G8	Group of Eight
GWOT	Global War on Terror
H.R.	House Resolution
H. Con. Res.	House Concurrent Resolution
H. J. Res.	House Joint Resolution
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
ISG	Iraq Study Group
ISLA	Iran and Libya Sanctions Act
ISA	Iran Sanctions Act
MEK	Mojadehin-e-Khalq Organization
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIAC	National Iranian American Council
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
NPT	Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapon
OVP	Office of the Vice President
PMOI	People’s Mojadehin Organization of Iran
PSI	Proliferation security initiative
P5	Permanent members of United Nations Security Council
RDF	Rapid Development Force
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSC Res.	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
US SPR	United states Strategic Petroleum Reserve
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

1. Theoretical Frame & Methodology

1.1 Introduction

The relationship between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI)¹ is characterized by a deep mutual mistrust that reaches back for decades, far beyond the conflict about the nuclear program. Iran was unintentionally strengthened through the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, due to which America has lost moral and material authority. This alteration of the balance of power has elevated fears and influenced threat the perceptions that mediate interests, which in turn influence foreign policy and security policy choices. Despite the emphasis on polarizations there are also similarities. Shared interest in stability in the Persian Gulf and the region in particular could be a particularly strong motivation for an improvement of the long-shattered relationship. These two dimensions have to be projected against the background of a complex context, domestic and international developments and have to be analyzed in regard to their implications and potentials. An eye will be kept on the cross-sectional issues and patterns of values and interests that apparently guide foreign and security policy. Followed by the description of the research aim, an overview of the content of this masters thesis will be given, embedded in the description of the theoretical frame of the study (see 1.1.3).

1.2 Research Aim and Purpose of the Study

The epistemological interest and significance of research of this study is to fathom and to identify underlying patterns that determine the relationship between the United States and Iran as well as American foreign policy towards Iran. In a first step, different dimensions that play an important role in the relationship between America and Iran will be analyzed, starting with the following questions: how has the relationship developed from past to present; what are its characteristics as seen by the two actors; and which factors are responsible for its construction? The main aim is to extract decisive variables on this basis, estimate their relative importance, and derive patterns that shape current policy. The results will be projected against the historical background as well as the current domestic and international context.

In order to challenge less differentiated perspectives, a reflection on the diversity of the involved actors as well as their perspectives, decision making processes and struggles for a coherent foreign policy towards Iran will be made. The central question is: which actor is in favor of what option in which situation and why? The seemingly controversial debate surrounding the problem of values and interest drives will be expounded and questions as to how these correspond with different understandings of roles in different fields of action deliberated. To complement the research, current changes in power structures will be examined regarding their potential for change in policy and influence on decision-making.

This study comprises a case-specific consideration that targets rather a mid-range model than an overarching model of American foreign policy making. This more general theme will be considered in parallel, but the emphasis will be on the context and specific circumstances that determine U.S.-Iranian relations. Furthermore, the study is located at the intersection of international relations and psychology. A combination of the two perspectives is deemed to have extended explanatory value in understanding the relationship and policy choices. Since the theoretical approach of constructivism is an ideal bridge between these two subjects, it has been chosen as a supplementing theoretical framework, adding to the underlying foreign policy analysis.

1 The official name of the country is Islamic Republic of Iran; in the following it will be referred to as "Iran".

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Structure and Foreign Policy Analysis

The American political interaction towards Iran is a case of a complex foreign policy situation that can be analyzed through different theoretical perspectives, producing miscellaneous interpretations, depending on which point of view it is considered. In the context of foreign policy analysis as a sub-discipline of international relations, many theoretical approaches have been developed and applied to study and better understand the chosen foreign policy cases and settings. Yet by its very nature, foreign policy analysis is often multidisciplinary and its scope has been developed in a more eclectic fashion recently. This trend has been integrated into this study, since different types of foreign policy phenomena can be more or less adequately explained by different theoretical approaches. They will be indicated and discussed during the course of this master thesis, although the main overarching theoretical framework is constituted by the social constructivism approach (Houghton, 2007; Ruggie, 1998). The main dimensions of foreign policy analysis such as decision-making processes, key actors and context in conjunction with relevant literature have been taken to draw the frame for the study subject (Chittick et al., 2006; Brewer, 1992).

First, the historical development of the relationship between the United States and Iran will be deconstructed and reconstructed through pointing out the most important key events shaping this relationship, especially over the last two decades. The collected empirical data provide a bridge and an insight into the connection between current perceptions and possible conceptualizations of significant and influential historical key events. Those events impact identity formation and collective memories, which in turn influence threat perceptions that affect political decision making.

After describing the background of the contemporary situation, this study will examine the current American strategy towards Iran, the choice of applying unilateral and multilateral policy instruments and the American objectives regarding Iran and the Middle East² region, while considering as well the ongoing theoretical debate about values versus interests as driving foreign policy making. This will be complemented by looking at contextual factors like the roles and influences of international regimes, transnational and regional actors.³

Since foreign policy analysis is characterized by an agent-specific focus, the third part of the study will look at the structural component of the case and context-specific decision-making process in a time-sensitive manner. It will take into account key institutions and their main actors, touching on issues of bureaucratic politics as well as domestic sources and interest groups. Given that the dynamic quality of the components has not received sufficient attention in foreign policy studies, it will be emphasized here through shedding light on current changes. Recent developments in the U.S., especially regarding the interplay of the situation in Iraq and domestic responses, suggest that more attention needs to be paid to explaining the sources of this change, which in the end could provide stronger foundations for predicting foreign policy developments.

1.3.2 Social Constructivism

In certain ways constructivism can be understood as a bridge-builder and meta-theoretical shift; it is a third position in political sciences that has made it possible to overcome the polarizing third debate between positivists and post-positivists of the 1980s (Christiansen, 1999). It contains “significant conceptual moves which allowed for the inclusion of ‘the social’ into the political science” (Wiener, 2007, 5), which had not been taken into account by traditional approaches. Constructivist perspectives have even been described as a “master frame in the social sciences, and, especially a

2 The notion Middle East was invented by the American naval historian Alfred Thayer Mahal in 1902 (Lewis, 1994, 3). “The Middle East ... means not only Egypt, Israel, Iran, Turkey and the Arab states of Asia, but also Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan: the entire arena in which Britain, from the Napoleonic Wars onward, fought to shield the road to India from the onslaughts first of France and then of Russia in what came to be known as ‘the Great Game’ ” (Fromkin, 2000, 16).

3 The members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) play an important role in shaping the transnational non-proliferation and the embedded sanctions regime. In the Iran case it was extended to a P5+1 framework including Germany due to its particular role in the EU3 (Germany, Great Britain, France) negotiations.

collective action frame, which has been conducive towards communication among IR [*international relations*] scholars of different stripes” (Ibid, 8). The central assumption of the moderate version of social constructivism claims that reality is socially constructed, knowledge relative and that human beings construct the world according to their experiences with the world and in interaction with its actors. Ideas, values, norms, contexts, and social identities are the central units of analysis (Katzenstein, 1998; Risse, 2003). These features that are specifically displayed in discourses, which in turn also influence decision-making as well as international relations and make communication, learning experiences and change therefore possible. Constructivism challenges the pure rationalist theories as it by assuming that foreign policy behavior is norm-based. Norms and values define the actor’s identity and preferences, which in turn determine its goals and behaviors. Decisions are made based on norms and values as well as subjective factors, historical-cultural experiences and institutional integration (Schaber et al., 1994).

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Beyond the Qualitative - Quantitative Research Paradigm Divide

Qualitative research is the method of choice to approach the research question at hand, which aims to extract agent- focused variables and patterns in the relationship between the two countries and America’s foreign policy towards Iran, because the central aim of qualitative research is to reconstruct collective knowledge, shared experiences and tacit rules of social actors (Flick et al., 2003, 12). While methods like participant observation, semi-structured interviews and document analysis are widely used for these purposes and build the empirical foundation for this study as well, it is difficult to determine a strong position on one or the other side of the quantitative-qualitative research paradigm divide. Many scientists try to position themselves between the soft and hard poles of social and natural sciences, but I⁴ tend towards Schnapper’s viewpoint, who asserts in looking at sociology that

“there are no two sociologies. Sociological understanding is one; it does not consist only of the analysis of data produced by statistical observation, nor by the interpretation of observations and discourses collected in the field by means of those methods employed by anthropologists. Interviews, observations, and statistical correlations, which too, have to be subjected to critical scrutiny, have the same scientific status and share the same ambition, namely to contribute to the elucidation of social relations”
(Schnapper, 1999, 118).

With the predominance of the emerging methodological eclecticism, a mixture of methods seems to be more adequate than a purist approach. Therefore, the empirical foundation of this study rests on a triad of classical methods that have been combined into one structure:

- Open and systematic participant observation
- Semi-structured expert interviews
- Documents and literature analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Since all of these research methods have their limitations, a combination of the three different methods is meant to achieve a more valid, reliable and comprehensive understanding of the study subject. The combination of a situative sample with a sample consisting of individuals results in an intersection. It and is also a special form of ‘triangulation’, which refers to combination effects as economic and improving mutual validity (Denzin, 1978, 310). The chosen approach consists of an interplay between deductive and inductive elements as well as partially abductive components that especially bridge the phase of data gathering, clustering, and integrating into the theoretical framework.

4 Since the empirical foundation of the study is based on a qualitative research design there is no need to deny or objectify the personal involvement of the researcher in the process and therefore the ‘I’-form can be used.

1.4.2 Participant Observation

Background, Aim, and Research questions

The method of participant observation became well known through American cultural anthropology and British and French functionalism with their representatives Boas and Malinowski. It is described as “the most characteristic anthropological contribution to social and behavioral sciences” (Crane et al., 1974, 63) and characterized by a conscious and dialogical openness that has also been applied here.⁵

The goal of immersing myself into the field of the study subject was to obtain different information and a deeper understanding of the environment and situation than that, which could be gained solely by analyzing documents, literature and disconnected interviews. It was to gain first-hand knowledge of the socio-cultural environment of decision-making in Washington, since “our knowledge of the world is built up principally of other people’s observations and not our own. It is inevitable that we should admit second-hand knowledge” (Magde, 1965, 120). “Direct personal knowledge is our only means of ensuring that our theories are grounded on empirical facts.” (Ibid., 122) In concert with the other two methods, this technique especially fulfils the validity requirements of scientific procedure.⁶ The combination of methods limits the scope of subjectivity and observer effects, while a constant reflection on one's own perspective and its alterations accompanies the research process. Nevertheless, it does not assert the claim of complete objectivity, but follows the argument line of reflective advocates of qualitative social research that more ‘scientific’ measuring devices do not necessarily display fewer biases (Bruyn, 1966). The realization of the participant observation leans towards the empirical approach, which emphasizes an in-depth systematic study of a specific setting (Zelditch, 1962). It was conducted in an open and systematic way.

Guiding research aims and questions were formulated in advance of the participation. A central goal was to observe and participate in the change of power structure that occurred through the outcome of the congressional November 2006 election. This was particularly focused on policy issues towards Iran:

- How does Congress deal with the Iranian file?
- Which people make the decisions? Who are the people whose opinions count the most?
- How is the issue perceived and which strategy and tools are favored and introduced?
- How much influence does Congress have in determining foreign policy towards Iran?

Thus, the observation was geared towards systematically answering or revising these questions.⁷

5 However, it was actually developed by the American sociologist Lindeman in the 1920's (Bruyn, 1966, 13). Different notions subsume the same exploratory methods of participation and observation: field work, ethnography, community study etc. (Seymour-Smith, 1986, 216). Scientific participant observation distinguishes itself from ‘naïve’ daily forms of observation through its systematic and conscious approach (Spradley, 1980, 53; Kluckhohn, 1968, 97).

6 Different authors assume automatic validity of participant observation (Kirk et al., 1986, 31) and say “validity of participant observation derives from being there” (Lindlof, 1995, 135). Nonetheless, this has been authenticated by the critical written analysis of the gained results.

7 The participant observation was conducted shortly after the November election of the Congress of the United States in 2006, which resulted in the majority shift to the Democratic Party. Since much hope was associated with this change, the first half year of the establishment of the new Congress was perceived as decisive. The observation took place in the form of a fellowship at the Congressional Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, which provided direct involvement in the international relations work of Congress as well as access to Administration activities and resources. The fellowship was sponsored by Tom Lantos, the current Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and lasted from February 11th until May 31st, 2007. According to Dechmann (1978, 179), this duration is appropriate for exploring the research question.

1.4.3 Semi-structured Expert Interviews

Aim

The core of the empirical data was generated by expert interviews embedded in the participant observation.⁸ Several dimensions of interest were extracted from the literature and document analysis conducted during the preparation of the study. They are reflected in the structure of the framework from which the guiding questions for the interview were drawn (see Table 1).

The focal points of the outline constitute pre-formulations for relevant categories of the analysis. Although it is debated among the scientific community whether pre-formulated guiding questions are suitable for effective expert interviews, this method was considered beneficial for this study. Guiding questions provide a basis

for comparability in the analysis of the results. Therefore, questions specifying the categories were developed (see Appendix 1).

Research Dimensions/ Interview Structure:
- Threat assessment and perception
- Historical relation and perception
- Strategy, policy elements, objectives, values versus interests, context
- Structure/key actors of political decision making

Table 1

Hypotheses

Another subject of debate is the question of whether hypotheses should guide qualitative research and whether the frame of this research branch is adequate to test hypotheses (Flick, 2003, 258). Many qualitative researchers reject ex-ante hypotheses with the argument that this narrows and influences the research process. Since this question cannot be answered here, and since pre-knowledge and pre-conceptions will always have an impact on studies, independent of hypothesis formulation, the solution for this study is to apply a pragmatic approach. Hypotheses have been derived from the literature review, the research question, and the frame of the questions but should rather be understood as a reflection on the pre-assumptions of the researcher than as classical hypotheses that are to be tested. Nonetheless, openness and flexibility standards of qualitative research have been applied as well. The guiding hypotheses are:

8 Expert interviews were chosen because they specifically target and access a particular knowledge of the interviewees in the institutional and organizational context of concern. A systematic sampling of experts to be interviewed was assembled during the first observation phase. The category of experts is broad but generally refers to a functional elite that is part of the field of action being studied. The research questions and the institutional structure were the primary guiding principles for defining and finding potential experts. For the purpose of this study, it makes sense to distinguish between three abstract subgroups of experts: politicians and administration officials in leadership positions; staff members in key institutions and experts inside the field of action but outside the key institutions (see Appendix 2 for a description of the groups). Every group has its exclusive knowledge of the field of study, experiences and influence. They are the major puzzle pieces of the decision-making reality in Washington and the focus of the interviews. The triadic combination of experts is important in terms of validity and reliability aspects. While there is an emphasis on leadership and decision makers in the literature because they assume the highest level of responsibility, there is also a certain limitation to their depth of knowledge as well as their resources. Therefore, the groups mutually complement the shortfalls of the other. A list of the interview partners, their dispositive, professional roles and affiliated institutions, date and time of the interviews is attached (see Appendix 3). The composition of the experts according to the groups and the numeric distributions according to the institutions can be found in Appendix 4.

Dimension 1 (Chapter 2) - History and Perception

- There are central traumata⁹ on the Iranian and American sides which still impact decision making to date.
- There is a general failure to connect the two historical discourses.
- The biggest potential threat that America associates with Iran is the nuclear program.
- Dimension 2 (Chapter 3) - Strategy, Objectives, Values, and Policy Components
- No actual American foreign/security policy strategy has been developed for Iran.
- The applied tools are clearly formulated, made transparent and implemented, but their success is questionable.
- U.S. interests in the region and in Iran do not match the U.S. threat assessment of Iran.
- There is an acute likelihood of a military attack against Iran during the remaining months of the Bush administration.
- Interests derive from values in this case.
- Dimension 3 (Chapter 4) - Key Actors and Current Changes
- There are huge differences in opinion within the administration and key institutions regarding how to determine, which policy elements should be applied in order to deal with Iran.
- Congress itself has limited influence in shaping American foreign policy towards Iran.
- There have been significant changes caused by the Congressional November election in November 2006, which altered both power structures and American policy towards Iran.

Conduct of the Expert Interviews

32 interviews were conducted in the time between February 12th and June 4th, 2007. The sample represents all institutions and key decision makers that are part of the decision-making process regarding the foreign policy towards Iran. Two variances can be assessed in groups 1 and 2: there is more vertical weight on Congressional experts due to the context of the participant observation, and no interviewee could be won from the Office of the Vice President. This difficulty reflects the general reality of access denial displayed by this office and is described in the literature as the phenomenon of gatekeeper power (Burgess, 1984, 48). This discrepancy will be balanced through secondary sources in the evaluation of the data.

Data Analysis

The results have been used to examine the validity of the hypotheses in the applied theoretical framework. Due to its focus on key elements, the technique used to analyze the data of the expert interviews was based on guidelines for qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2003). The text of the individual discourses was subsequently sequenced and categorized deductively into the main study dimensions as well as inductively into additional new dimensions that play a role for the overarching research question but that had not directly been considered. In the following step, a cross cutting clustering process that subsumed and unified the dimensions provided the basis for the comparison of similarities, differences, and contradictions. The analysis and interpretation of the data was utilized to confirm, revise or falsify the hypotheses and to draw general conclusions, which were then put back, integrated and reflected in the wider theoretical framework of international relations. The confrontation of empirical data and theoretical approach is to examine the explanatory power of the theoretical perspective. The context-oriented interpretation and sequential text reconstruction are important for validity aspects.

9 "The word 'trauma' is a descriptions a of highly stressful event ... Current psychological theories of trauma distinguish between the traumatic situation, the trauma, and the symptoms resulting from trauma." (Gergen et al., 2007, 4) The definition of a traumatic event is broad. But it is the "subjective experience of the objective events that constitutes the trauma ... The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatized you will be" (Allen, 1995, 14).

1.4.4 Literature Review and Document Analysis

Basic knowledge and framing was acquired through literature review and document analysis of primary and secondary sources. This method had different levels of importance at different stages of the research process. It dominated the study phase prior to the participant observation in order to extract research dimensions and explicate first hypotheses and questions for the expert interviews that were developed during the first month of the observation. During the time of the participant observation, the observation itself and the conduct of the interviews preponderated. Literature review and document analysis prevailed again after the evaluation and during the theoretical integration of the research data. The method of deconstruction that goes back to Derrida (Culler, 1982; Caputo, 1997) and became a core of constructivist methodology intensified with parts of reconstructions has been applied¹⁰ in analyzing existing text and discourse.

1.4.5 Limitation of Research Design and Data

The generalization of the data is limited to the empirical material. Although the combination of the methods as triangulation contributes to fulfilling the objectivity requirements, there has been criticism as to whether those combinations are indeed effective (Flick, 2003, 309). The application of different weights to the methods attempted to circumvent this pitfall. However, the researcher always influences the data with his or her own 'perspective'. The available material is limited through the role played by the researcher. Although the participant observation provided the opportunity of taking a role as an insider in the American Congress, the process of acquaintance was still ongoing after three and a half months and the setting surely determined the perspective of the researcher. It is unfeasible to establish good relations with all subgroups of the area of exploration (Junker, 1960, 90). Gatekeeper phenomena and natural as well as systemic segregation limit access to information (Dechmann, 1978, 112). The conduct of the interviews was based on voluntary participation by difficult to access and highly occupied experts. It is therefore needless to say that 32 experts do not represent the whole expert community and the results and interpretations can not be generalized beyond the empirical material. Complete observation of complex social procedures is impossible (Atteslander, 1969, 126). It is furthermore to question, if information gained from expert interviews deliver objective facts, since the perception of the individual expert is influenced by roles, experiences and institutional backgrounds. However, in a constructivist sense this study does not aim for producing objective facts but rather identifying shared assessments and underlying patterns.

*"In truth, people never can reach absolute certainty.
Therefore: Impeccability in scientific matters is irresistibly funny to me."
Peirce quoted by Reichertz, 2003, 286, translation C.Q.*

10 In a strong Derridaian sense deconstruction cannot be applied but comes from oppositions within a text; social sciences, constructivism, and literary study use it as a method of reading and interpreting.

2. U.S.-Iran Relationship & Perceptions

“Anyone who cannot master that history, cannot understand how to move beyond it.”
Pollack, 2004, xx

2.1 Historical Development of Relations Between the U.S. and Iran

Current relations between America and Iran can only be understood by looking at the history of the two countries and their relations over time.

“Contained in that history are all of the elements of our current impasse. Most Iranians know that history – or some warped version of it – too well. Most Americans know too little ... Much of the ferocious hatred each side reserves for the other was born from the pain each has felt at different times when they believed they had been betrayed – jilted may be a more appropriate term – by the other.”¹¹

It is therefore important to look at the recent and distant past in order to understand policy choices, noting that for more than 25 years relations between the U.S. and Iran have been characterized by animosity, suspicion and deep mistrust.

The historical development of the relationship between the United States and Iran has already been studied by many excellent scholars¹³. The central goal here is therefore to look at key events in that relationship which have shaped perceptions that are still pivotal. For a timeline see the box below, indicating the points of improvement and worsening of the relationship. Many other points, of less significance for the collective memories¹⁴, had to be omitted in order to synthesize the traumatic influence of characteristic fixations.

Timeline: U.S.- Iran Relationship	
Improvement of Relationship	Worsening of Relationship
1856	Commercial treaty between Iran and Great Britain ¹⁵
1906	Constitution and Constitutional Revolution
1907	Great Britain’s and Russia’s influence dominates (Anglo-Russian Agreement)
1930’s	Economic Depression - Iran’s oil becomes important (esp. for Great Britain)
1941	Mohammad Reza shah takes over the throne from his father
1941-1946	“occupation” of Iran by allied forces
1951	Mossadeq becomes Prime Minister, nationalizes Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
1953	Mossadeq Coup (backed by U.S. and Great Britain), the pro-American sha Mohammad Reza is reinstated
1963	White Revolution, launched by Mohammad Reza shah
1964	Khomeini is exiled
1978 – 1979	Iranian Islamic Revolution – establishment of Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI)
Oct. / Nov.	the shah is permitted to enter the U.S. to receive medical treatment,
1979 – Jan. 81	seizure of the American embassy in Tehran - Hostage Crisis (444 days)
April 1980	tensions over negotiations severe, President Carter’s attempt to rescue the hostages fails
Sept. 1980	Saddam Hussein’s Iraq invades Iran - the Iran-Iraq war starts and lasts 8 years
Jan. 20, 1981	American hostages are released, immediately after inauguration of Reagon
1981	Khamenei becomes president
1982	Iran involved in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley
1983	Marin barracks attack in Beirut, attacks on American embassy
1984	Second American embassy attack

11 Pollack, 2004, xx.

13 See for example: Abrahamian, 1982; Goode, 1997; Nasr, 2006; Pollack, 2004; Takeyh, 2006.

14 Definition of collective memory: “a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of a people” (Eyerman, 2001, 4).

15 Ansari, 2006, 245.

1985 – 1986	Iran-Contra affair
July 3 rd , 1988	Iranian passenger plane shot down by USS Vincennes
July 18 th , 1988	Iran and Iraq sign a UN cease-fire resolution
Jan. 20, 1989	President G.W. Bush inaugural address “Goodwill begets Goodwill.” ¹⁶
1989	Ayatollah Khomeini dies, Ayatollah Khamenei becomes Supreme Leader, Rafsanjani becomes President
1990-1991	Iran stays neutral during the Gulf War
Nov. 1991	Madrid Conference
1993	American policy of “dual containment” implemented under Clinton, Rafsanjani is re-elected as President
April 1995	Trade embargo signed by President Clinton
June 1996	Khobar Tower bombing
August 1996	American sanctions against Iran are tightened, Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ISLA)
1997	Khatami becomes President and promotes “Dialogue of Civilizations”
July 1999	Student demonstrations in Iran, America eases economic sanctions
March 2000	America (Madeline Albright) acknowledges role in Mossadeq coup in 1953
2001	President Khatami re-elected
July 2001	The American Congress extends economic sanctions for five more years
Sept. 11, 01	9/11
Oct. 2001	Iran’s cooperates in war against Taliban in Afghanistan Khatami ¹⁷ : “Afghanistan provides the two regimes with a perfect opportunity to improve relations.”
Dec. 2001	Bonn Conference Iran instrumental in crafting interim Afghan government
Jan. 2002	Iran gives \$350 million for Afghan reconstruction
2002	Interception of an arms shipment to the Palestinian resistance by Israel (Karine-A)
Jan. 29 th , 02	Pres. Bush’s State of the Union speech makes Iran a member of the axis of evil
2002	Leaks about Iran’s nuclear program
May 2002	Khamenei calls negotiations with America useless
2003	Iranian proposal for a Grand Bargain channeled through the Swiss embassy in Tehran dismissed by the State Department, Tehran Agreement with EU3, Iran agrees to ratify and implement Add. Protocol
2003	Bam Earthquake
Nov. 2004	Paris agreement between EU3 and Iran
2005	Hardliner take over with Ahmadinejad elected President, Deadlock in negotiations
2006	Iran restarts Uranium enrichment, EU formally ends negotiations (Solana continues informal talks), IAEA refers Iran to the UNSC
Dec. 06, March 07	UNSC Res. 1537, 1547 – 3 rd Res. in preparation
May, 2007	Talks concerning the situation in Iraq

The underlying hypotheses of this research dimension were openly formulated, stating the existence of the above key events and a lack of connection between the historical narratives. Based on pertinent Anglophone literature, these events were narrowed down to four critical points in order to specify the first hypothesis. These four events have repeatedly received more room in public discourse and are likely to be permanently imprinted on collective memories. The interviewed experts were accordingly asked to answer open questions related to the historical development of the relationship, the key events therein, their possible impact and the resultant threat perceptions (see Appendix 3). The results are used to reflect on the selection of key events made based on the literature and are then integrated into a wider theoretical frame.¹⁸

16 Kemp et al., 1998, 31.

17 Quoted in: Abrahamian, 2004, 96.

18 Before giving an overview of the four selected key events during the last two decades - approximately a lifetime memory span - it is necessary to mention that the relationship between the two nations, of course, started a lot

2.1.1 Iran's Trauma: The Mossadeq Coup, 1953

Many contemporary U.S.-Iran stories start with 19 August 1953, which contained an event that haunted memories not only in Iran but also in the Western world, especially in the United States and Great Britain. Its victim was the Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq, deposed due to American concern over the Soviet Union and Communist expansion (Goode, 1997, 7). Mossadeq was known in Iran for his high standards and integrity. He respected the constitutional monarchies of Western Europe, but he also opposed the influence of foreign powers. Pointing out the harmful effects of foreign influence on Iran during previous decades, he was hesitant to adopt Western ways. Mossadeq believed in "the fundamental principles of freedom for his people and independence for his country" (Goode, 1997, 8).¹⁹ He and the National Front earned little attention from America until 1951, the year in which he was elected Prime Minister of Iran. Mossadeq planned to pursue a path of neutrality; he was highly suspicious of the strategic interests of the great powers and his course of negative equilibrium²⁰ was welcomed by the Iranian people.²¹ At the time America perceived the Shah as the source of stability, even though his support arose mainly from the army. The popular leader Mossadeq was not perceived as a stabilizing factor. Additionally, the American perception of Iran that it is a nation incapable of taking care of its people was not reflected upon.²² In late 1948, an oil dispute started over revenues of the Anglo-Iranian oil company (AIOC). The Americans tried to mediate but their dependence on British support in Asia gave Great Britain considerable influence over them. Mossadeq made the mistake of thinking it would be easier to negotiate with Eisenhower than Truman and became more obstinate towards the end of the negotiations. Despite Mossadeq's nationalist aspirations, due to misunderstandings and misreading of statements the Eisenhower administration was mainly worried about an eventual Communist takeover of the oil-rich region.

"Iran is the dam which keeps Soviet power from flooding the Middle East Corridor ... Should the Soviets breach that barrier its troops would quickly reach the Persian Gulf, around which lay the world's greatest oil reserves. Western oil companies had huge investments there." (Goode, 1997, 70)

Finally, a British-American operation to overthrow Mossadeq was prepared in the form of a military coup. After widespread rioting and with help from the CIA and British intelligence services, Mossadeq was defeated and General Fazlollah Zahedi, the leader of the military coup, became prime minister, with the Shah returning to power. In the eyes of America and Great Britain, this countered the threat of Communist expansion and also ensured support for Western oil interests. Despite much of the historical discourse there had been chances to be allied under Mossadeq, but many misunderstandings prevented this from happening. According to Goode (1997), misunderstandings originated in the different cultural backgrounds, biases and preconceived ideas.

2.1.2 America's Trauma: The Hostage Crisis, 1979 – 1981 - 444 Days

Covert frictions started after the overthrow, with the creation of a government perceived by the Iranians as a marionette government dominated by Western powers. It came as a shock for the people that a freely elected government should be replaced by a regime which would become known and hated for its cruelty.²³ Despite modernization through the White Revolution and the breaking with

earlier. During the country's early years relations with America were very friendly, but changed after World War II, in the light of America's different role on the international stage.

19 Having returned from imprisonment and house arrest to the parliament (majlis), already in 1944 Mossadeq started opposing oil concessions to escape entrapment between the oil interests of powers like Great Britain and the Soviet Union (Abrahamian, 1982, 204). Despite his strong support from the Iranian people, the Shah defeated him in the elections of 1947.

20 Contrary to positive equilibrium, which leans towards another power in order to gain certain advantages, negative equilibrium stands for a denial of favor to any power (Goode, 1997, 11).

21 In a next step he attempted to limit the Shah's power by cutting the tie of the Pahlavis to the military in order to limit royal power.

22 Diplomats emphasized the image of "childlike simplicity of the Iranians ... lacking faith in themselves due to a real spirit of inferiority" (Goode, 1997, 14).

23 Nevertheless, relations seemed very friendly from the 1950s until the late 1970s; the Nixon and the Ford

centuries-old religious traditions, the Shah developed an autocratic regime which included a secret police force, secret prisons, extensive torture and assassinations of dissidents.

The regime was brought down by a popular revolution in 1979. The U.S. was mystified by the leaders of the rebellion, who blamed the long years of desperation on America. The U.S. support for the Shah prevented a growing democratic development and “the Islamic revolution was the only outcome left” (Interview Miller, 12, 1).²⁴ Ironically, America was but the latest nation to maltreat the Iranians and became their enemy number one.

“Iran took over the American embassy, but if it would have been 20 years earlier it would have been the British embassy. The bad guys were originally the Brits and the Russians. How short memories are.” (Interview Coleman, 32, 2)

A causal factor for this sentiment was the connection between the coup and the repressive Shah regime, which remained one of the most painful experiences in the nation’s memory. “Over decades, as history faded into mythology, Mossadeq would assume a commanding presence in the Iranian imagination.” (Takeyh, 2006, 84) Today, Iranians still believe Mossadeq would have brought much improvement to the country. Although the myth of Mossadeq might be exaggerated, the coup is responsible for the reversal of a progressive political path and causes suspicion towards any external attempt at regime change. The emotionally charged association turned Iran’s friendly perception of America into suspicion and mistrust.

After the successful revolution in Iran and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini, the exiled Shah was reluctantly allowed by President Carter to enter the United States for medical treatment in October 1979. On November 4, 1979, revolutionary students seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took 66 of the embassy employees hostage, demanding that America send the Shah back to Iran to stand trial. Ayatollah Khomeini fundamentally opposed American and Israeli interests and thousands of protestors supported him. After a while thirteen of the hostages were released, while the other 52 remained in captivity for 444 days.

This is the event that Americans most negatively associate with Iran: the hostage crisis. It was a humiliating experience for Americans, leaving a deep wound in their collective memory. Since that time there have only been very limited diplomatic relations and direct talks.

The freeing of the hostages became a priority for the Carter administration, though it failed to succeed. The situation did not improve for a long time, because neither of the parties was capable of responding to the demands of the other side or of negotiating a compromise. Iran became a theocratic regime, subtly guided by Ayatollah Khomeini. He used the prolongation and manifestation of the hostage crisis to play out domestic forces against the American ‘Great Satan’. On the other side, seeing the Iranian people chanting ‘Death to America’ and “turbaned Old Testament-like figures who repudiated their country, its values, and its traditions” (Takeyh, 2006, 84) every day on TV was incomprehensible to Americans. Carter’s approach and the political circumstances contributed (Farber, 2005, 31) to the mediated fixation that amounted to a crisis, which falls into the category of cultural trauma (Alexander et al., 2004).²⁵ The crisis worsened after a secret rescue mission to free the hostages failed.²⁶ This fact was exploited by Khomeini and America was humbled once again. Finally, after intense months of negotiations, the remaining hostages were released, just

administrations had especially good relations with the pro-American Shah, but this support was limited to the political elite.

24 Interviews are cited in the following form: Interview Last Name of the Interviewee, Interview number, page of citation in the transcript; example: Interview Miller, 12, 1; for a list of all interviews see Appendix 3.

25 The theory of cultural trauma has been developed in a constructivist approach by Alexander and other sociologists (2004, 1-31) to understand social and cultural processes that give meaning to such social nightmares as the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, 9/11 and other events. Cultural trauma develop “when members of a collective feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways ... trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society” (Alexander, 2004, 1-2). They are imprinted into collective memories, which are basic parts of collective identities. To understand those processes that make a trauma, an analysis of the historical and socio-cultural context is required. The trauma itself is a response and “socially mediated attribution” (Alexander, 2004, 8) to abrupt changes that disturb well-being (Ibid., 3).

26 This had to be aborted after three of the eight helicopters suffered mechanical failures due to a sandstorm and another one collided with a refueling plane.

minutes after Ronald Reagan was sworn in as U.S. President on January 20, 1981. The release gave Reagan a massive boost at the beginning of his presidency, during which he continued a policy of containment towards Iran. Nevertheless, after the delight over the return had subsided, uncomfortable and never-fully-answered questions arose. Critics still believe that Reagan's campaign team conspired to postpone the hostages' release until after the election to prevent it from helping Carter to return to office. On the other hand, this prolongation of the crisis can also be perceived as a counter-coup by Khomeini against Carter. In the end Khomeini won the game, using the prolonged time of the hostage crisis to secure his domestic power and to defy opponents. However, he paid a very high price for his victory, as America sided with Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war.

2.1.3 Iran – Iraq War

During the time of the hostage crisis, Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980 and started launching strategic air strikes. The war was the longest conventional war of the 20th century, raging for 8 years and killing millions of people. Though the U.S. supplied weapons to both sides, they mostly favored Saddam Hussein's Iraq, which led to further resentment in Iran, especially because of the use of chemical weapons (Hiltermann, 2004, 153). This war and the fact that America sided with Iraq is yet another painful experience that led to the strong bitterness of the Iranian people against America. It was revived with the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and paired with fears concerning the American agenda.

2.1.4 Iran Contra

"Nowhere is the amorality of politics more pronounced than in the Middle East. Under the banner 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend', Jerusalem began selling arms to Iran soon after Iraq's invasion."
Takeyh, 2006, 105

On top of the humiliating experience of the hostage crisis, America embarrassed itself with the Iran-Contra affair. This was an attempt to trade arms for the release of American hostages held in Lebanon. U.S. officials devised a covert plan in which Israel also had a hand²⁷, believing that Iranian-backed operatives of Hezbollah were responsible for the kidnappings. Iran was running out of military supplies in the war with Iraq, and Israel favored assisting Iran in order to weaken Iraq. The U.S. Congress had banned the sale of American arms to countries that sponsored terrorism, including Iran. President Reagan was nevertheless advised to strike a bargain, in which arms were secretly sold to Iran in order to get the hostages back to the U.S. (Bill, 1990, 313). The money from the sale was secretly and illegally used to support the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, who were fighting to overthrow the pro-communist Sandinista regime. This happened although Congress had passed the Bohlen Amendment, prohibiting assistance to the Contras.

"Perhaps only in the Middle East could such disparate events involving covert Israeli-Iranian arms dealings, hostage taking in southern Lebanon, and an American president's anguish over his countrymen's captivity fit seamlessly into the same narrative." (Takeyh, 2006, 106)

Since there were many actors with different motivations involved, the plan was exposed. Made public, it was condemned as a failure because it violated the law and the policy of refusing to negotiate with terrorists. The investigations and prosecutions that followed the Iran-Contra Affair showed that many high-ranking officials had broken laws, symbolizing the biggest crisis of Reagan's presidency.

This event caused shyness and avoidance in further approaching Iran in the following years. The elder Bush made an attempt at rapprochement when he appeared to reach out to Iran in his inauguration speech on January 20, 1989, saying that "Goodwill begets goodwill" (Kemp, 1998, 31; Interview Sick, 2, 4). Iran remained neutral during the Gulf War, but the rhetorical attempt never developed into anything material and the relationship remained tense. The Clinton administration

27 At that time, Iraq was a greater threat to Israel than Iran (Interview Hart, 26, 1), which led to the Israeli preemptive strike on Iraq's atomic installations in 1981.

can be divided into different phases, but it was mainly characterized by a policy of dual containment against Iran and Iraq. Clinton missed opportunities that were provided when Khatami gained power in 1997 and proposed the ‘Dialogue of Civilizations’.²⁸ Iranian hardliners countered his offers and Warren Christopher²⁹ denounced Iran’s effort (Interview Clawson, 9, 1). Only in 2000, three years after the election of Khatami, did the U.S. respond. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright acknowledged the U.S. role in the 1953 coup that overthrew Mossadeq, but she ended up blaming Iran for “remain[ing] in unelected hands” (Pollack, 2004, 340). With this she helped the hardliners who denounced her speech, but not Khatami’s efforts of rapprochement. Following in the footsteps of the Clinton administration, George W. Bush initially continued the policy of containment and isolation, but the tremendous American trauma of 9/11 opened another opportunity when both countries found themselves on the same side against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Iran could have become seen as a constructive and cooperative partner. However, another rare opportunity of rapprochement was hampered a few months later by declaring Iran a member of the infamous axis of evil.

This synthesis to the ‘core-traumata’ of the American-Iranian encounters during the last two decades indicates the importance of the events that cast their dark shadows over the tense relationship. The empirical results will shed more light on qualitative differences of their impact.

Moreover “this past has produced a nation deeply averse to international dictates ... to resist American pressure is to validate national dignity ... With this historical narrative shaping Iran’s approach to the nuclear debate, the Bush administration’s assumption that calibrated pressure will yield Iranian acquiescence is doomed to failure.”

Kupchan et al., 2006, 3

2.2 Empirical Results

2.2.1 Cultural Traumata: ’53 & ’79 and Beyond

The analysis of the empirical data clearly confirms the assumption about central key events. All experts who answered this question refer to the central importance of two events. The overarching assessment shows unanimously that there is one central trauma on each side: the hostage crisis on the American side and the Mossadeq Coup on the Iranian side.

The findings indicate what Sick summarized: “Whatever you want to say about the U.S.-Iran relationship you have to start with the hostage crisis. This event is as traumatic as Vietnam. It was the first foreign politics crisis piped into every single American living room, for 444 days as the number one issue on all media. It basically left a permanent scar on the American psyche. That event has shaped policy and the whole approach towards Iran, which is to isolate them; we cannot deal with them because they are hopelessly dangerous. Politicians figured that this kind of approach brings votes” (Interview 28, 3). However, contrary to the unanimity regarding the existence of key events, the opinions diverge regarding the degree of their influence. A minority of experts downplays their effects, claiming for example that “the hostage crisis does not play that much into perception” (Interview Clawson, 9, 1) and a mid-level State Department official said that those are “historical issues that haven’t gone anywhere. We want to move past those issues to a more constructive relationship” (Interview, 16, 1). While most of the experts mentioned both key points, not even half of them made a connection between the events, despite the link that has been demonstrated above. “It is lost in public attention. We don’t like to pay attention to history ... People usually don’t draw a line but for the Iranian side it is very connected.” (Interview Thurmond, 18, 1)

Although the other two events, the Iran-Iraq War and the Iran-Contra affair, did not receive the same attention as the events of 1953 and 1979, interviewees repeatedly mentioned that the concepts of containment and isolation have dominated American policy during the administrations following the Iranian Revolution and were especially reinforced through the Iran-Contra experience. Four

28 In a famous interview with CNN in 1998, he praised ‘the great American people’ and invited communication between the two peoples (Takeyh, 2006, 112).

29 Chief negotiator during the hostage crisis.

interviewees referred to the fact that Iran had become a member of the axis of evil (Interviews Mustafa, 21, 2; Pedersen, 15, 1; Parsi, 13, 1; 29, 1), which hit the Iranians hard after they had cooperated with America in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan. From the Iranian perspective, an Iranian diplomat said that “the U.S., instead of trying to correct, its wrong policies towards the Iranian nation have added to that in putting Iran on the axis of evil” (Interview 29, 4).

There is a broad gap in public awareness that fuels the situation. On the one hand Ahmadinejad receives enormous attention and is, apart from Bin Laden, the most visible Muslim in the U.S. (Interview 23, 2). One reason is that “Ahmadinejad is perceived through the prism of our own [American] president, although he does not have the power we think he does. This is mirror imaging and Ahmadinejad milks that because he likes to be perceived like that” (Interview Clemons, 7, 1). Shortly after Ahmadinejad’s election some of the American hostages identified him as one of their hostage takers, which was later proven wrong, but this shows how alive and immediate the association still is between today’s Iran and the hostage crisis still is (Interview Hart, 26, 1). On the other hand, the same public awareness is missing of the fact that Iran was a cooperative and constructive partner in stabilizing Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002 (Interview Clemons, 7, 1). During the construction of the Afghan constitution it was Iran and not America that insisted on including the notion of democracy. Nevertheless, there is no public image and no intention of creating one of a constructive Iran. Nor is there much knowledge about a proposal by Iran for rapprochement that was channeled through the Swiss embassy³⁰ in Tehran in 2003 and dismissed by the State Department and the Bush administration (see Appendix 5).³¹ Leverett, a former National Security Council (NSC) employee, stated that the exposure of the dismissal is “embarrassing and politically difficult” for the administration, since they just rejected proposals for dialogue by the Iraq Study Group (ISG), expanded military power in the Persian Gulf, and confronted Iranian agents in Iraq (Leverett cited in Kessler, 2007, A18). It was argued that shortly after the fall of Baghdad, America was in such a strong and confident position in contrast to an Iran fearful of the U.S. taking over its neighbor Iraq, that there was no need for the administration to respond to the offer (Interview Sick, 28, 3³²). According to Parsi, the refusal has been perceived by Iran to mean that America has no interest in negotiations and rapprochement but speaks the language of power (Interview 13, 2).

The question of whether these traumatic experiences, memories and images are purposely reused by the political elite, produced divergent answers from those interviewed. It was denied by current administration officials, while experts of Congress were divided in their response, as were think tank experts. On the one hand, the idea was embraced because “it’s politically expedient to have fears, it opens a way of demonizing each other” (Interview Miller, 12, 1) and “there is no better way of creating an enemy [*than*] with referring to aggressive actions taken” (Interview Pedersen, 15, 2). On the other hand, it was denied on the grounds that enough knowledge about Iran and other features exist to play on (Interviews 23, 2; Clawson, 9, 1). These answers are not mutually exclusive and with some degree of certainty it can be assumed that negative images and experiences are at least unconsciously repeated in a biased way.

According to the interviewed experts, 9/11 did not change relations between America and Iran immediately, but did heighten the sense of vulnerability to catastrophes. It also shifted the focus initially to Afghanistan and Iraq. “Whenever there is a shock in that region, it gives Iran the possibility to show its strategic value.” (Interview Parsi, 13, 2) Nevertheless, it also established a greater sensitivity to sponsors of terrorism, which in the end sheds a different light on Iran again.

30 There has been no American diplomatic representation in Iran since 1980; the Swiss embassy has therefore generally been used as a communication channel.

31 Questions about the procedure just surfaced recently, after the majority in Congress shifted to the Democrats and the opportunity for more critical questioning opened up (Kessler, 2007, A18).

32 According to Sick, there is however no very detailed information available about the 2003 Iranian offer of a discussion agenda. The original texts were published by Nicholas Kristoff in a column in the NYT (Interview Sick, 28, 3).

2.2.2 Threat Perceptions

The empirical results provide an order of perceived threats. There is an absolutely clear pattern that the Bush administration perceives Iran’s nuclear program as its greatest threat, followed by the threat through state sponsored terrorism (see Table 2). There is a “fear of Iranian Islamic radicals and terrorism, which is now amplified by the exaggerated sense that they are about to have nuclear weapons they could use on us [*Americans*] or our allies” (Interview Hart, 26, 1). In comparison with the other sample groups, interviewees from group 3³³ were more careful and slightly more diverse in their threat assessment.

Order of Perceived Threats:	
No. 1	Nuclear Capability / Weapons
No. 2	State Sponsored Terrorism
No. 3	Backing of Insurgency in Iraq and Threat to Stability in the Middle East
No. 4	Threat to Israel
No. 5	Oil Prices Human Rights “Concern”

Table 2

A minority of experts thought there is no or no direct threat to America. “I don’t think there is any immediate direct threat for the homeland, even if they acquire nuclear weapons, and I think containment is possible in the long term.” (Interview Lalwani, 10, 1) Some presented Iran as a manageable power and were in favor of accepting Iran as a regional power. Parsi pointed out that all the listed threats are potential but not actual threats and mentioned the inherent difficulty of drawing a line between potential and actual threats (Interview 13, 1). “The U.S. faces greater risks from its own policy than from Iran.” (Interview Parsi, 13, 1) The general assessment of the experts was that the administration operates on the assumption that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is intended. They were divided, though, over which option Iran is trying for and in which time frame. Only Parsi mentioned the notion of asymmetric threats but nobody deliberated on this (Ibid., 1). However, a congressional expert expressed the broad agreement that “nobody ever says we have irrefutable proof that they build a bomb; this is a case of deductive reason and widely shared in Europe and internationally” (Interview 20, 1).

This interpretation is reflected in the public opinion, although there is a gap between the administration’s and the public threat assessment. The administration has a more nuanced but exaggerated estimate of threat; “while many in the public think that Iran already has nuclear weapons” (Interview Hart, 26, 1). This pattern clearly reflects that people in decision-making positions and other administration officials have or express far stronger and more focused threat perceptions than people in Group 3. Experts with more moderate assessments are also characterized by more direct contact with Iran and Iranians and adhere more to a liberal political ideology. Respondents from the conservative spectrum and experts with close ties to the Israel lobby articulated stronger threat perceptions and tended to use a more polarizing language.

According to Ahrendts, “from the outside the American perspective seems to be influenced [*by the fact*] that there were hardly any relations between the countries. The American perspective must be different from the European because Europe was always in contact. Regarding the nuclear program we are on the same page. Both perceive it as a threat to peace and stability in the region” (Interview 30, 4). “How to live with a nuclear capable Iran is not possible to imagine here, especially think tanks play with that idea” (Interview 25, 3). The American and European threat assessment regarding the nuclear program seems to be similar, although there are different perspectives on the relationship and how to handle it.³⁴

33 Group 3 includes experts from think tanks, academics, politicians and employees of European and Iranian governments, and lobby groups (see Appendix 2).

34 Compared with the European perspective Coleman (Interview 32, 2) expressed that “we are not totally on the same page. There is a suspicion that the U.S. policies make things worse. The U.S. has the responsibility and the burden of the world’s policeman. We see criminals around every corner and perceive the glass as half empty. The EU is not a police man or is frightened to see it. The EU sees the glass as half full. Europeans have a different calculus. They don’t see Iran as big a threat as many in the U.S. ... and are more willing to hear reformists” (Ibid., 2). According to Siemon, the European relations are different and longstanding, “we [*the Europeans*] don’t have the deep rooted distrust that the US and Iran share explainable by traumatic historical events as Mossadegh and the hostage crisis.” (Interview 24, 2, private note).

During the interviews it was further asked how far the threat assessment is fact-based in order to examine the distinction between the assessments of nuclear capability and Iran's intentions. "The administration thinks of Iran as a very real threat based on their interpretation of facts" (Interview Lalwani, 10, 2) and all together, the results were indeed two-fold. Approximately half of the experts confirmed that assessments are absolutely fact-based, but mainly referred to the assessment of the capabilities. The other group denied that assessments are based on facts but focused more on intentions.

Several experts referred to notions of the democratic peace theorem. "The President's connection between dictators and terrorism is debated but objectively true to a certain degree; he put it unfortunate ... A world free of dictators would be a world free of wars ... dictators are the actual problem, we have to get rid of them." (Interview Palmer, 8, 3)

From the Iranian perspective, a diplomat of the Iranian UN-mission in New York reported that "America's actors know that no major challenge comes from Iran" (Interview 29, 1). Iran "invited American nuclear scientists to provide solutions and suggested them to the U.S., which rejected. The problem of the U.S. is not coming from the nuclear concern, because they are well aware that Iran's nuclear program is completely peaceful, but from a deep other politically motivated agenda" (Ibid., 3). Asked what causes the concern, the interviewee said it is more about U.S. hostility towards the Iranian nation after the Islamic Revolution, a revolution through which the U.S.-backed Shah's regime was overthrown (Ibid., 3). Kissinger confirmed this assumption in an interview, referring to the different regime types and relationships, to explain the initial American encouragement for an Iranian nuclear program (Linzer, 2005, A15).³⁵ According to an Iranian diplomat, "false paradigms are complicating the whole situation" (Interview 29, 4).

2.3 Integration of Results & Conclusion

Obviously, the Iranian historical narrative shaping the current relationship between the two countries starts in 1953 and the American narrative in 1979. In the American discourse, the hostage crisis is completely disconnected from the Mossadeq coup, which was so traumatic to the Iranian people that Mossadeq became a myth. It can also be argued that America has not fully recovered from the experience of the hostage crisis, is not working consciously on reconciliation and might even re-use constructed memories in manipulative ways for political aims.³⁶ Only experts who were not part of the current administration gave responses suggesting purposeful re-use of memories, and they must therefore to be interpreted with care. The impact of the traumata can be traced through the discourse, but it is re-constructed according to different contexts and political purposes. On the one hand, this re-use has an underlying long-term effect, which is brought to the surface, when needed, while on the other hand, certain circumstances - such as shifts in interests - make it seem less influential. However, the relationship is characterized by complexity and exhibits perpetual patterns of missed opportunities. Reasons for this can be rooted in the deep mistrust, which requires time to validate offers and gain confidence. This delay can be perceived as refusal by the other side and makes constructive interaction difficult.

It can be argued that the hostage crisis has the quality of a cultural trauma that creates a fixation on the causing event. Although there is a difference between individual and collective trauma, a virtually universal reaction to trauma is its re-experiencing, establishing a fixation on certain events or topics (Yehuda, 2003). This has clearly been manifested in the American collective memory with a strong association between the experience of the hostage crisis and Iran. Another effect of trauma is avoidance, which could be detected after the Iran-Contra affair and especially during the first years of the Clinton administration. Avoidance and the narrowing of one's own mind are also strategies for denying one's own responsibility for what happened. The Iran-Iraq war and the Iran-Contra

35 Iran's nuclear program started in 1957 and was encouraged by America because it was seen as beneficial at that time by America. In "1967 the first research reactor was built by the U.S., at a time when oil and gas resources were higher and prices lower" (Interview 29, 3).

36 While there is research on the manipulation of enemy images and shared identities (Flohr, 1991; Risse, 2003, 121), the extent of this manipulation is very hard to measure, providing ground for provocative claims by the opposition.

affair do not have the quality of cultural traumata, but they have nonetheless strongly impaired policy choices.

For the American perspective on the hostage crisis, it is important to mention that it was solely a mediated experience, which clarifies the role of the media concerning perception but also reflects on the selection mechanisms that are applied. Those mechanisms can in turn be traced back to cultural and national identity as well as self-image. Traumata that shape collective memories also do not necessarily have to be experienced personally and directly; they can be passed on through generations as secondary traumata. However, there is the hope that their strength will slowly diminish over time. Nevertheless, their unifying power that can be used to consolidate the 'we' should not be underestimated. The evolving collective identities that are based on traumata are also connected with and defined by the 'outside'. They build on a strong notion of 'otherness' to form a defining counterpart to the 'own identity'. This can be identified as a construing procedure that goes back to Derrida's logic of binary opposition (Culler, 1982, 85-88). This logic acknowledges a human tendency to think in terms of opposition.³⁷ Fortunately, these constructions are reversible because they are inherently artificial and can be understood, reflected on and then changed through de- and reconstruction.³⁸

For the Americans another enormous trauma was added in 2001: 9/11 left a scar on the American psyche and at the same time altered power structures in Washington. The political discourse became highly moralized and the neoconservatives reached a much higher degree of political influence. 9/11 provided an opportunity of rapprochement, due to common interests in Afghanistan, but this vanished after Bush's axis of evil speech and leaks about Iran's nuclear program. In particular, neoconservative antipathy for Iran grew and "by 2002-2003, the joke making the rounds in Washington was: Everyone wants to go to Baghdad; real men want to go to Tehran" (Cumings et al., 2004, 101). Relations have not improved since, but spin around the nuclear issue as the most significant threat that America has to tackle. Besides the fact that threats are perceived to be counterproductive to interests and security, they also menace collective identities, which are in turn shaped by historical experience.

The response patterns of the empirical data correlate with degrees of responsibility and knowledge. The perceptions of leaders and administration officials is furthermore likely to be influenced by accountability, voter judgment and the burden of decision making. An expert working for a think tank or academia has much more freedom in developing and discarding ideas, while a decision maker is accountable for his decisions and actions and has to take political agendas and possible ambitions for re-elections into account, which all determines different cognitive or displayd schemata.

This pattern could also be shown in the examination of the factual basis of the nuclear threat assessment. This evaluation is not solely based on capability considerations but also on partially fact-based and partially interpreted intentions.³⁹ It also explains why it was the U.S. that originally suggested an Iranian nuclear program during the pro-American Sha time: they did not fear any compromising intentions (Linzer, 2005, A15). The situation has changed dramatically after the revolution, and has worsened with the hostage crisis and by the recent provocative rhetoric of Ahmadinejad. A focus on him as the most important public voice of Iran and a lack of differentiation between rhetoric that targets the domestic and the international audience further elevates discrepancies. These developments even provide Ahmadinejad with material that he can use for his domestic agenda.

To summarize, it can be stated that the way of perceiving Iran plays into the assessment of intentions, which is a crucial part of the evaluation of the threats associated with Iran. The evaluation

37 Nonetheless, in a Derridaian sense they might need each other as defining counter parts because the one is defined by the other in terms of what it is not.

38 For example a classical binary construction was created, reinforced, and finally diminished by the Cold War. However, today, there is a politically manipulated binary construction emerging with the dissociation of a 'Western' and a 'Muslim' world.

39 Threat assessment can be divided into two parts: the evaluation of capabilities and intentions. The assessment of capabilities in this case is further complicated by the dual use character of nuclear programs. It blurs the line and provides room for misinterpretations that can be used by either side.

pre-assumes characteristics of the other actor that determine decision-making processes. The results and underlying approaches challenge the assumption of a deterministic relationship between power and threat through assessing capabilities. This assumption is represented by realist theory to only be of partial explanatory value (Waltz, 1979, 117-119). Another central factor in the assessment of threats is the subjective evaluation of intentions. The theory of democratic peace suggests a link between regime type and threat perception, implying general animosity towards non-democracies that are perceived with suspicion because they contradict the normative foundations of democratic nations (Doyle, 1983, 325).⁴⁰ This indicates that especially domestic norms of democracies are projected onto the international stage. In the case of Iran concerns are elevated in two ways; in addition to the projection of own norms there is the fear of an export of Iran's ideology. However, other case studies show that it is not the absence of democracy, but rather the will to cooperate that determines threat assessments and better explains different treatments of dictators (Farnham, 2003, 396). While more factors funnel into threat assessments, democratic pre-dispositions play a role in interpreting intentions.

Regarding the comparison of the American and European perspectives, the results of the evaluations of the Iranian threats are similar. Processes to reach conclusions on threats are different since they depend on cultural and subjective factors that include roles, ideas and identities. These differences are not only reflected in partially diverging policy approaches but also in line with constructivist conceptualizations in general.⁴¹

According to Rousseau "there is a reciprocal relationship between shared identity and threat perception" (2001, 2). Growing threat erodes shared identities and diverging identities increase threat perceptions, which leads to circular reasoning and mutually reinforcing mechanisms of polarizations. Those polarizations can be aggravated by natural tendencies to construct binaries in order to explain one's own identity based on an antipode. However, in the end the actorial grouping of assessments has to be broken down to the levels of a single actor; each actor used different and subjective approaches to assess the Iranian threat. The results might therefore be similar because they are put in the same categories, but if there were space to deconstruct these categories, it could be shown that they are actually labels with different contents. Nevertheless, the perception and the creation of categories and labels by elites are important because they are mediated to the public, which normally, depending on the level of knowledge, does not develop its own dimensions but adopts mediated information until a crisis emerges. Often, those categorizations are only critically questioned after the consequences of a crisis are felt, but at that point those re-constructions, which are based on reflections of original constructs, build the foundation for the revival of democratic institutions and lead to engagement. However, they can also lead to fatigue.

"Ignorance of history makes current policy challenging."

Interview Nasr, 5, 1

40 Some even argue that the decline of conflict between democratic societies might have exacerbated conflict between democracies and non-democracies (Doyle, 1983, 324).

41 The comparison of threat assessments between America and Europe yields similar results, yet the difference lies in the roles assumed, these are based on different self-images, historically grown strategic cultures, and different contexts that might also lead to different perceived degrees of responsibility and actions. The value gap is more reflected by different policy approaches than threat perceptions. The differences lay in the process of the assessment of threats and indicators used as well as in preferences for dealing with conflicts. Distinct roles have been created by historical experience and socialization. Europe favors institutional mechanisms of cooperation while America needs the option to act unilaterally beyond such a framework. On this basis, different resources have been developed; America "is the only country capable of projecting its power any place in the world" (Chittick, 2006, 200). Furthermore, the U.S. listens and talks to different voices in Iran and from the Iranian Diaspora than Europe does. There have been many constructive suggestions for a better American-European functional alliance, which already works in certain parts as intelligence-sharing but also diverges with identities and a phase of growing Anti-Americanism that might characterize another binary serving the current European identity formation process. An 'Americanization of the EU and a Europization of the U.S.', however, is still outstanding (Rummel, 2004, 279), but might be about as globalization proceeds, which in turn also produces counterweights searching for coherent national identities.

3. Strategy, Policy Components, Interests, Values & Context

After the Cold War, the concepts of security and threats became temporarily diffuse. With the inauguration of the Bush administration and especially after the traumatic experience of 9/11, a clearer picture of what constitute threats to the U.S. was presented. The global war on terror (GWOT) and non-proliferation moved up on the American political and security agenda. This is reflected in the main perceived threats (see Chapter 2) that America faces from Iran: the nuclear program and the perceived intention to build nuclear weapons as well as Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. These central concerns have dominated the development of the National Security Strategy and were paired with Bush's agenda for freedom and democracy promotion. They will be touched on in the first part of this chapter, which addresses American strategies followed by the policy components intended to deal with the Iranian case. America's interests in the region and associated values will be discussed in the second part of the chapter. The image of Iran is, however, more complex, as President Bush pointed out in a speech in September 2006:

"The Iranian regime has clear aims: They want to drive America out of the region, to destroy Israel, and to dominate the broader Middle East. To achieve these aims, they are funding and arming terrorist groups like Hezbollah, which allow them to attack Israel and America by proxy ... The Iranian regime and its terrorist proxies have demonstrated their willingness to kill Americans -- and now the Iranian regime is pursuing nuclear weapons." (Bush, 2006, 2)

3.1 The Main Strategies

3.1.1 Background

It has been argued that the rogue doctrine was developed by military strategists after the Cold War to justify the continuation of a high level of military spending. However, in the shadow of 9/11, these justifications were no longer necessary. Moving away from classical containment, the Bush administration developed a policy of pre-emption that entered into the National Security Strategy of 2002 (NSS), which at that point did not mention Iran directly. Confrontation and isolation are still the two strategies intended to stabilize the Persian Gulf in order to promote American interests. Bush addressed the Iranian case in the State of the Union Speech of 2002 by naming Iran as part of the axis of evil. The State of the Union Speeches continued to mention the associated central problems in 2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007.⁴² Only with the NSS of 2006 did Iran move up in a strategic sense; this NSS still claims that "the proliferation of nuclear weapons poses the greatest threat to our [American] national security". However, in regard to Iran it reflects the threat assessment of the interviewed experts and states:

"We [*the United States*] may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran. For almost 20 years, the Iranian regime hid many of its key nuclear efforts from the international community. Yet the regime continues to claim that it does not seek to develop nuclear weapons. The Iranian regime's true intentions are clearly revealed by the regime's refusal to negotiate in good faith; its refusal to come into compliance with its international obligations by providing the IAEA access to nuclear sites and resolving troubling questions; and the aggressive statements of its President calling for Israel to "be wiped off the face of the earth" (NSS, 2006, 41).

Global management and multilateral cooperation are perceived to be crucial for tackling the problem of proliferation in general. For this reason, dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue is compartmentalized into a multilateral and a unilateral approach. Therefore,

"the United States has joined with our EU partners and Russia to pressure Iran to meet its international obligations and provide objective guarantees that its nuclear program is only for peaceful purposes. This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided"(NSS, 2006, 41).

42 During the campaigns for what would turn out to be Bush's second term, neither Bush nor his opponent Kerry focused on Iran. Both saw nuclear proliferation as the single most serious threat to national security but focused on Russia's loose nuclear weapons.

The American general strategy is to isolate Iran economically and politically and to ensure that its nuclear program is used for civilian purposes.⁴³ Internationally, the case of Iran has been dominated by a two-track approach, consisting of negotiations and a sanctions regime. This approach is not opposed by the U.S., but security concepts and non-proliferation are of higher importance (Perthes in Klein, 2002, 77). Additionally, the Iranian case can be seen as a challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to its instruments⁴⁴, thus also pointing out necessary changes in the structure of the regime itself.

3.1.2 Empirical Results

The first hypothesis of this dimension questioned the existence of an American strategy towards Iran. The answers can be divided into two groups with the result that the assumption could not be confirmed, since half of the experts agreed with Clawson that “America almost always has a strategy” (Interview 9, 2) and with what Miller called “a fairly coherent policy” (Interview 12, 1). Herro Mustafa, the Middle East advisor to Undersecretary of State Burns, explained that “you have to have a ‘carrots and sticks’ approach ... The strategy is trying them to come to the table, all they have to do is to suspend enrichment. We will also suspend UNSC actions including current UNSC and domestic sanctions as dual suspension. If Iran shows that they don’t pursue nuclear weapons we will allow nuclear power. The suspension is actually low bar” (Interview 21, 2). According to a congressional expert, the “administration’s strategy is to squeeze Iran financially until it gives up its pursuit of nuclear capability. They say all options are on the table” (Interview 20, 1). Jesper Pedersen, another congressional staffer, pointed to the fact that the strategy of isolation and sanctions is coherent regarding the current restriction of American capabilities; “many want a more comprehensive approach but the U.S. is almost brought to its knees in Iraq” (Interview 15, 3). Several other experts also referred to America’s vulnerable position at the moment.

The other half of the experts, who belonged mostly to the opposition or the liberal spectrum, did not think that the U.S. has a coherent strategy or a strategy at all. Clemons summarized it with the words: nonexistent, confused, dysfunctional, not serious, and fragmented (Interview 7, 2). “We are improvising and I would argue we didn’t have an Iran policy for six years. There were internal battles that were not solved” (Interview Sick 28, 3). Two experts indicated a lack of intellectual ability (Interviews Parsi, 13, 2; Nasr, 5, 2). According to Clawson such an evaluation can also be caused by the fact that the existing strategy “makes many people uncomfortable” (Interview 9, 2).

The strategy can be summed up in a ‘sticks and carrots’ approach that contains: economical and political isolation through sanctions, containment through military power projection, limited public diplomacy and multilateral engagement on the two-track approach, but also a suspicion towards direct dialogue especially because of a lack of trust.

Some experts pointed at the difficulty of communicating what the U.S. really wants to happen; “clear is what we are doing but not which change we want” (Interview 23, 3). The strategy is clear in phases “but not where it is leading to” (Interview Thurmond, 18, 1). This is caused by the fact that the different actors cannot agree on how to deal with Iran (see Chapter 4). “There is a dissent in our government today [about] how to continue” (Interview Coleman, 32, 1). This is also related to the criticism of the more than 30 year-old containment strategy that has been frustrated at several points.

According to some experts, the EU and U.S. share the same strategy of a two-track approach. The UNSC resolutions are the “position of the entire international community” as well as an important leverage (Interview Ahrendts, 30, 2). Crucial points are that doors remain open to dialogue and that it is made clear that it is Iran’s choice where the approach will lead. While there have been steps towards more transparency, “Iran still needs to convince the international community of its intention of peaceful use” (Ibid.).

According to Undersecretary of State Burns, America supports the EU process but does not talk directly (Interview 4, 1). Moreover,

43 From a European perspective, a holistic regional strategy for peace and economical development is missing.

44 Regimes can be defined as “social institutions consisting of agreed upon principles, norms, rules, procedures, and programs that govern the interactions of actors in specific issue areas” (Levy, 1995, 274).

in March 2005 the President went to Europe and decided to rebuild the transatlantic alliance. He came back and with Secretary of State Rice decided to work with the EU on that issue. He never said at that time that Iran has the right to nuclear energy but said we expect cessation of conversion and enrichment. In the next step conversion was dropped. After that, it became suspension, and now it is only suspension for the period of the negotiations. The suspension of sanctions is significant but we have not been good in delivering the message also because the U.S. does not have a presence in Iran. If you start negotiating without conditions, how do we know they suspend? We do have a history and we don't have trust (Interview Mustafa, 21, 2).

From the Iranian perspective, "there seems to be a deep misunderstanding because of a lack of communication between the two governments" (Interview 29, 3). There is "not enough appropriate knowledge but it is based on false and defect[ive] information and analysis [which is] based on not right paradigms and historical differences and misperceptions" (Ibid.). An Iranian diplomat suggested looking at common interests and exploring opportunities. Iran would like to see a serious and honest approach with mutual respect that does not intend to harm Iran but to relax bilateral relations (Ibid.).

3.2 The Multilateral Component – Two Track Approach

3.2.1 Counter-proliferation and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime

Iran is an important test case for nuclear the non-proliferation regime and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is monitoring closely.⁴⁵ Covert activities and the concern about Iran's nuclear program that surfaced in 2002 have led to renewed interest in proposals for fully transparent nuclear fuel cycle facilities, operated and monitored internationally. The level of concern has risen due to the existing black market, especially with the activities of the Khan network, which also sold technology and design to Iran and which was able to circumvent traditional controls and international safeguards (Katzman, 2007, 16). On the other side, through the inherent discrimination of the NPT -- discrimination which exists in the same way in the UNSC -- Iran and other non-nuclear states have developed a certain bitterness over the one-sided, non-compliant, vertical proliferation by nuclear powers.

3.2.2 EU-3 Negotiations

On a separate diplomatic track, Germany, Great Britain, and France (EU 3) started a negotiation process with Iran in 2003 that has sought to obtain objective guarantees of the purely peaceful intentions of Iran's nuclear program.⁴⁶ In March 2005, President Bush expressed his support for the diplomatic track but would not join it. The Paris agreement broke down when the EU3 waited until after the 2005 presidential election in Iran and the new president Ahmadinejad rejected the final settlement plan as insufficient. After more than two years of intensive inspections, the IAEA con-

45 "The nuclear non-proliferation regime as established by the NPT [*Non-Proliferation Treaty*] in 1968 suffers from severe erosion" (Schaller, 2006, 3). It nevertheless contains mechanisms of international control and surveillance of nuclear weapon acquisition and capabilities. This regime, to which Iran is a party, also mirrors the general dynamics of multilateral cooperation (Parker, 1998, 8). The situation is complicated by the fact that there are different strategic cultures addressing the problem. Thus the European Anti- Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) strategy gives rise to new multifunctional approaches towards addressing proliferation; this involves conditional application of the full range of political, economical, and military instruments of the international community. On the other hand, the American strategy places great emphasis on pre-emptive military intervention and does not give much importance to the role of the UNSC (Ahlström, 2006, 45). Nevertheless, the U.S. has played a major (two-sided) role in counter-proliferation efforts, but currently it is possible to observe a reconstruction of roles, which has to be examined in regard to its potential.

46 Europe is convinced that a negotiated solution of the Iranian nuclear issue is the best guarantee for long-term cooperation. In October of 2003, Iran agreed to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol of the NPT, disclose its past nuclear activities, and suspend uranium enrichment activities in order to obtain in return the right to peaceful nuclear technology. The Additional Protocol was signed in December 2003, but has not been ratified by the Iranian Parliament (Majlis). Iran abrogated the agreement after IAEA reports of violations of the NPT were published. Under growing pressure, Iran signed the Paris Agreement in November 2004, in which it agreed to suspend enrichment activities in exchange for talks on trade and aid.

cluded that Iran had violated its international obligations, and to date is still not able to answer the remaining open questions.⁴⁷ The decision to bring Iran before the UN Security Council in 2006 was initially aimed at reasserting the IAEA's authority and generating political pressure so that Iran would comply with the appeals made by the IAEA's Board of Governors. After Iran broke the IAEA seals on its facility in Esfahan in August and began conversion, the IAEA Board voted Iran to be in non-compliance with the NPT and referred the issue to the Security Council in September 2005.⁴⁸

In June 2006, a new group of negotiating parties was formed (P5+1; EU3+3 consisting of the EU3, China, Russia, and the U. S.), after the U.S. joined the nuclear talks under the condition that Iran would suspend its enrichment. A new offer of incentives and sanctions was presented to Iran by EU representative Javier Solana (see Appendix 6). Despite the continuation of talks between Solana and Iran and the commitment on both sides to proceed, there are no results to date.⁴⁹

3.2.3 Nuclear Non-proliferation in the Form of a Sanctions Regime

According to Article 41 of the UN Charter, the Security Council can impose sanctions against nations that pose a threat to international peace and security.⁵⁰ The controversy over Iran's nuclear program has raised serious questions about the non-proliferation regime, drawing particular attention to its weaknesses in establishing a comprehensive sanctions regime. Following Iran's failure to comply with Security Council Resolution 1696, which made mandatory the suspension of all Iran's uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions against Iran, first in December 2006 and then in March 2007, with the purpose of preventing the nuclear program and resolving the conflict (UNSC Res. 1737, 1747).⁵¹

While sanctions are capable of isolating the Iranian economy, they are not necessarily able to produce anticipated political outcomes. Additionally, the central criticism of sanctions resolutions targets the fact that they are mostly based on the smallest common denominator without paying enough attention to context factors. Often they reflect more the national interests of powerful states than the objectives of the international community. While it is already difficult to reach a common

47 Since the international climate is characterized by mistrust towards Iran, the international community expects Iran to implement a number of confidence-building measures, which in particular include the suspension of its most sensitive nuclear activities.

48 In November 2005 the U.S. supported a Russian proposal to establish a uranium enrichment facility for Iran in Russia, but this was dismissed by the Iranians (Katzman, 2007, 17).

49 This seems to be further complicated since, after several unconfirmed former attempts, the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani resigned in October 2007. Saeed Jalili, who is seen as an Ahmadinejad loyalist, has taken over from Ali Larijani, who held the post for over two years and was believed to hold a more moderate line, but resigned after falling out with President Ahmadinejad over the handling of Iran's nuclear case. "However, Larijani will still attend the talks with Solana in Rome in October 2007 alongside his successor as secretary of the Supreme National Security Council" (AFP, 2007).

50 Although it is difficult to get the UNSC to agree to sanction resolutions, the 1990s have been declared the decade of sanctions (Cortright et al., 2000). Sanctions are considered to be a mild and cheap measure of the UNSC's limited toolkit, but history also shows that sanctions are of limited effect in forcing governments to change their behavior. Effectuating change is particularly difficult if sanctions target things that are very important to governments. In spite of the fact that humanitarian costs have become better understood and concepts of targeted and smart sanctions, which shield civilians from harm have been developed, the efficacy and impact of sanctions is still highly debated. Much controversy surrounds the mechanism, since some sanctions eventually gave way to the use of military force, others had little influence, and others appeared to reach the objectives without the use of military force as in the case of Libya. The call for modifications to the sanctions approach became louder in the 'aftermath' of Iraq, a certain 'sanction fatigue' occurred. Nevertheless, the United States are heavily defending the sanctions regime, even pushing for unilateral and bilateral sanctions despite the existence of multilateral ones. "Getting sanctions right has often been a less compelling goal than getting sanctions adopted. The ad-hoc and politically charged approach that often prevails can preclude reflection on how sanctions could be made more effective in each particular case" (Cortright, 2000, ix).

51 The sanctions include the prohibition of sales of technology that could be used for uranium enrichment or heavy water processing activities and also aim to freeze financial assets of certain nuclear and missile firms. The sanctions have been extended by UNSC Res 1747 to arms transfers and calls for reporting on travel activities by sanctioned persons. It is expected that the third round will extend these measures by reduction of diplomatic travel, banning of international flights, banning of oil exports, financial sanctions, arms sales, and extensive UN inspections regarding WMD (Katzman, 2007, 39-40).

resolution text, another challenge lies in the implementation and monitoring of the sanctions in regard to compliance with the rules. Finally, the question of efficacy, humanitarian costs, political effects like the rally around the flag effect (Selden, 1999, 21) and economic effects cannot clearly be answered because of the lack of applicable indicators and means of measurement.

3.2.4 Empirical Results

According to a mid-level State Department employee, the American strategy is hard to separate from the international strategy; the U.S. tries to work in coordination with its allies and the UNSC resolutions are the primary flagship (Interview 16, 2). During the last two years, the government has acted in a far more multilateral fashion and the international community has overcome significant differences thanks to the support of America. Thurmond explains that diplomacy comes first but it is questionable how long this way will be pursued (Interview 18, 2). Together with the Europeans, financial measures are applied, but there is a general dissatisfaction with the Europeans because they do not put enough pressure on Iran in the eyes of the Americans (Interview Payne, 27, 1). According to Jo-Anne Hart, the conflict resolution process has been complicated because the U.S. is very outspoken at the international level, which “made it harder for Iran to accept the deal, because it is a question of national pride” (Interview 26, 2). According to an employee of the European mission to the UN, very different rhetoric has been used by Europeans and Americans during the UNSC sessions, symbolizing a division of labor in New York into good and bad cop while pursuing the same goal (Interview 31, 2).⁵² Despite the UNSC, the American role is most important to Iran: “they want to be taken serious[ly] and respected by the U.S.” (Interview Ahrendts, 30, 2). From the Iranian perspective, it was mentioned that they appreciated the package, but “the main element was absent ... we want to have the right to enrich uranium for peaceful uses ... we are not a poor country, we do not need help from others” (Interview 29, 3). However, the first sanctions resolution caught Iran by surprise, “they did not anticipate that” (Interview 25, 3) and was an important diplomatic signal (Interview Clemons, 7, 2). Several experts stated that it is important to send a unified message (Interview 16, 2). Different clocks (Interview Berman, 19, 2) motivate the U.S. to pressure for a ratcheting up of sanctions. There is a fear that the “nuclear program could come first” (Interview 23, 2). The next round of sanctions is important but will be complicated by Russia’s and China’s positions and the parallel IAEA processes.

3.3 Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)

“As important as are these nuclear issues, the United States has broader concerns regarding Iran. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism...”
Bush, 2006, 41

“Any government that chooses to be an ally of terror, such as ... Iran, has chosen to be an enemy of freedom, justice, and peace.”
Bush, 2006, 16

The war on terrorism, purposely defined as a new kind of war, is at the center of America’s security policy; being at war also generates different patterns of perception. This change was caused by the traumatizing effect of 9/11. America realized its vulnerability and perceived it as an existential threat, which created a notion of fear and was understood as an attack on Western values and interests. The event led to a reorganization of government institutions and to more aggressive and restrictive policy components. This refers to various political, legal⁵³, and military actions, to the use of force and to the new doctrine of ‘preemptive war’. Certain arguments target a trade-off between securitization and the limitation of civil rights. Chittick (2006) summarizes the reasoning behind

52 The Iranian Foreign Minister waited outside and entered the room only at the end of the session, right before his speech, targeting his speech mainly at the domestic Iranian audience (Interview Ahrendts, 30, 3).

53 For example, the debated Patriot Act that allows greater domestic surveillance.

these changes: security policy is usually motivated by fear and the level of measures to be sought depends on the extent to which a threat is perceived (Ibid., 201).

GWOT has been criticized for many downsides, such as its inefficacy, the violation of international laws, and double standards (e.g. towards Pakistan). As Kilcullen pointed out, it lacks differentiation between the entities that use terrorism, the tactic itself, and the phenomenon as a social system (Kilcullen, 2005, 592). This metaphorical war is therefore complicated by the fact that it targets a group of people, but has been slow in fighting the phenomenon itself and its causes. An influential factor is the personification of terrorism and the labeling of enemies who might seem fightable, as was done by putting Iran in the axis of evil. This strategy is again at least partly based on underlying ideologies.

“Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but no different moralities.” (Bush, 2002) “In the war against global terrorism, we will never forget that we are ultimately fighting for our democratic values and way of life.” (NSS, 2002)

This reflects a common notion in the American understanding: American national values are the scale by which to measure and the ideal to follow. In order to implement this idea, the use of force is a legitimate means. Despite this normative foundation, a central aim of America’s security policy is to protect its independence as well as its political and economic integrity.

3.4 “Unilateral” Policy Components

Since 1979, the U.S. has developed and used five different mechanisms and policy components in order to limit Iran’s capabilities and counter associated threats, which will be introduced in the this section. A differentiation and attribution of preferences to the key actors involved in the decision-making process will be provided in Chapter 4. While President Bush advocates international cooperation and a diplomatic solution, he makes clear that

“the world’s free nations will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon.” Violent Islamic radicalism “oppose[s] the advance of freedom in the region. Imagine a world in which they were able to control governments, a world awash with oil and they would use oil resources to punish industrialized nations. And they would use those resources to fuel their radical agenda, and pursue and purchase weapons of mass murder. And armed with nuclear weapons, they would blackmail the free world, and spread their ideologies of hate, and raise a mortal threat to the American people ... I’m not going to allow this to happen” (Bush, 2006, 3).

3.4.1 Sanctions

Background

Unilateral and multilateral sanctions have been imposed on Iran in order to increase the pressure on its regime. The U.S. puts much emphasis on its wide range of unilateral sanctions. Particularly economic sanctions have been applied since 1979 for the stated reason that Iran is sponsoring terrorism. With growing tensions over the nuclear issue, America is trying to tighten unilateral sanctions parallel to the UNSC sanctions, while pressuring other countries to follow its example.⁵⁴

American sanctions include counter-terrorism, foreign aid sanctions, proliferation sanctions, counter-narcotics, financial sanctions and trade bans. The central aim is to isolate Iran economically. For example, financial and banking sanctions limit credits to Iran, Iranian banks and other businesses. The U.S. is also trying to persuade European governments to limit their export credit guarantees.⁵⁵ Such pressure has been successful, since a significant reduction can already be per-

54 Nevertheless, the EU has been critical of American unilateral sanctions but gives way to some pressure in accordance with its own legal framework.

55 There is a lively debate between American and German government officials concerning an American demand to restrict export credit guarantees (ECG) by the German government for German exports to Iran (in German: Hermes Deckungen). According to a German diplomat in Washington, that is not possible “because we do not have the legal foundation for that without a UNSC resolution” (Interview 25, 5). However, according to the annual reports of the Federal Ministry of Economy and Technology (FMET) (2005/2006) they have already been reduced by 1/3 in 2005 as well as in 2006 and they continue to decrease.

ceived, making the funding of the Iranian energy industry more difficult. Due to the dependency of Iran's economy on its oil and gas resources, the additional sanctioning of exports of these goods harms the economical system tremendously, though as a side effect it also increases the cost of these basic resources on the global market.

At present, trade sanctions target general goods originating in Iranian territories, except dried fruits and carpets.⁵⁶ Enforcing sanctions on these goods places very strong pressure on the political system, but hurts the civil population the most.⁵⁷

Empirical Results: Sanctions

One-third of the interviewees stated that sanctions are effective; another third indicated they are ineffective and the remainder preferred multilateral sanctions. Their central purpose is to slow down the nuclear program. Symbolized by the notion of "eating grass to pursue nuclear weapons", several experts pointed at the fact that Iran does not want to be isolated (Interview 23, 3). 'Sticks' were considered a necessary element to complement the 'carrots' in order to have a credible strategy. However, sticks would not work if turned against the population, which would then support Ahmadinejad (Interview Thurmond, 18, 2). It "merits close examination as to how this is really implemented ... you can judge effectivity of sanctions on different levels: in the effectivity in sending a message and the effectivity in preventing things" (Interview Ahrendts, 30, 2). Coleman pointed at the inherent dilemma of sanctions: "they help and hurt, it is hard to assess the net of that" (Interview 32, 2). A German diplomat asked

Who is gaining from that? Especially the government and the Revolutionary Guard because of the flourishing black market ... [*The EU*] is not for broad sanctions, that would be against the people ... [*and*] because it would bring population and government together ... the problem with targeted sanctions is time, some people argue that the sanctions are outrun by the nuclear program, we argue there is still room. The time of applying pressure in a broad fashion depends on the UNSC. We oppose a strengthening of bilateral sanctions (Interview 25, 3).⁵⁸

3.4.2 Containment, Military Build-up of Gulf Allies and Military Strikes

Background

A strategy of containment through power projection towards Iran is implemented with American military build-up and the support and improvements of the strategic and military capabilities of the U.S. allies in the Gulf region. These actions have the ultimate goal of applying pressure from multiple points to weaken the position of Iran.

In what officials have said [*this*] was partly muscle-flexing toward Iran, the Navy has maintained two aircraft carrier battle groups in [*the*] area since early this year and twice held major exercises in the Gulf. (Jelinek, 2007, 1)

As recently as late May the Navy launched a show of force, only days before the U.S.-Iran talks on Iraq.

Bush administration officials have said the U.S. buildup in the Gulf was intended to impress on Iran that the four-year war in Iraq has not made America vulnerable and to assure allies of the U.S. commitment to the region (Jelinek, 2007, 1).⁵⁹

Secretary of Defense Gates and CENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon have repeatedly denied that the military moves are in order to prepare for a military attack, claiming that their purpose is to increase American leverage in support of diplomacy.⁶⁰ One concern is that Iran could international-

56 However, restrictions that have been eased would be re-imposed with the implementation of the introduced House Resolution 1400 (H.R. 1400).

57 Waivers are provided for natural disasters and other emergency situations. With the House Resolution (H.R.) 1400 the ability to waive would also be removed.

58 A concern of Congress is strengthening of the ILSA (Iran Libya Sanctions Act) but the Administration is more hesitant since it sees implicated difficulties for U.S. allies.

59 It might however be that the U.S. is cutting the presence to one carrier, but it is not clear whether this is "a matter of scheduling or funding" (Jelinek, 2007, 1).

60 This option is also meant to retrieve efforts started during the Clinton administration of a U.S.-Gulf state defense

ize a crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the most important sea lanes and trade routes. During a recent visit to the Gulf on May 11, 2007, Vice President Cheney warned that Iran should not try to restrict sea traffic; “[the United States] will keep sea lanes open” (Cheney quoted in Katzman, 2007, 34).

Although senior military officials have repeatedly denied any plan for a U.S. military attack on Iran (Katzman, 2007, 31), there have been discussions as to whether the military build-up will eventually lead to military strikes against nuclear facilities located in Iran. The inherent goal would be to bring Iran’s nuclear plans to a halt or at least cause as much damage as is needed to significantly set back most nuclear facilities. However, there is no doubt that it would be a very difficult military mission lasting at least several days, not comparable to Israel’s mission in Iraq in 1981. Fears of such plans surface periodically and cause strong negative reactions that are heavily influenced by the Iraq experience. Despite doubts concerning American capability to carry out such a strike and despite the fact that there is not much debate about the ethical implications, the repercussions of such an operation are the biggest concern. It can also be assumed that Iran has some latent sleeper capability around the world that could be used for terrorist attacks, leading to regional and global instability. The situation in Iraq would be further complicated and international terrorist organizations uplifted instead of contained. From a regional perspective, a strike on Iran would probably further complicate the relationship with the Arab and Muslim world and could domestically strengthen the Iranian regime. In order to undertake the military option or to replace funds to finance it, the President has been pressured by Congress to obtain Congressional authorization, as stated in several Resolutions.⁶¹ However it is important to distinguish between military deployment and presence in the region as a political means of containment and power projection, and the execution of a military attack, which requires different capabilities.

Empirical Results: Containment, Military Build-up and Military Strikes

The military presence as a means of pressure is supported by significantly more than half of the experts. America tries to constrain Iran by showing military force in the region with a “projection of naval and air power” (Interview 23, 3). In regard to military strikes, “We have to say it is on the table. The President always has the right ... It would be a mistake to let Iran believe that it is not true” (Interview Mustafa, 21, 3). For the Pentagon, the containment measure is a naval matter and “the aircraft carriers are there [*in the Persian Gulf*] to stabilize, not to provoke” (Interview Cotton, 14, 2). The Navy protects the sea lanes and every day conducts maritime intercept operations (MIO) of contraband, illegal cargo, and terrorists (Ibid.). According to a staff member in the United States Congress, “it serves a reasonable purpose ... pulling strings for more transparency ... and focuses everybody’s mind a little bit” (Interview 23, 3). However, the efficacy is questioned “because Iran doesn’t think we would attack” (Interview Payne, 27, 2). According to Clawson, “the Iranian government has persuaded itself that U.S. won’t have realistic military action. Iran is wrong and unfortunately, but the U.S. says it does, we have the capabilities” (Interview 9, 2). Although a minority is confident that the advanced weapons used by the US military would be able to carry out such a mission, many question whether the American military would indeed be capable, and voices from the military itself are doubtful. “We don’t have the capacity to go to war with Iran ... they would retaliate” and the costs are too huge (Interview Nasr, 5, 1). There is also the possibility that Israel strikes first and the U.S. would have to enter, but Israel cannot handle an attack without American consensus and support (Ibid.).

The other group of experts stated that a military strike would be the worst possible approach and pointed to the dangers of the conversion of supposedly military threats into real interventions (Interview Miller, 12, 2). The fact that “military victory is not the same as diplomatic victory” (Ibid.) is part of the debate in this context because it is claimed that the U.S. is not “seeking a military solution but a diplomatic solution” (Interview 16, 2). However, “no government would take away options ... We have to make that statement especially because of Iran’s interference in Iraq” (Ibid.). According to a Congressional expert, to carry out a military action would be to gain a significant

cooperation, now called ‘Gulf Security Dialogue’, and would, apart from boosting the military capabilities of the allies, drive an increase of U.S arms sales to the area (Katzman, 2007, 32).

61 For example: H. Con. Res 391, 33, H.J. Res 14, H.Con.Res 13, S. 759, H.R. 770

delay in Iran's nuclear program, "ultimately we may face the day when we have to decide to let Iran go nuclear or military action" (Interview 20, 2). A reason for doubt is that the U.S. does not have exact knowledge of the nuclear sites and their location, but such a mission depends on intelligence. Some experts pointed at the limitations of American intelligence (Interviews Rickert, 22, 1; Berman, 19, 1) and the new cautiousness of the intelligence community. "The military is wonderful as long as it is deployed politically, to create fear and anxiety" (Interview 25, 3). Nonetheless, such a preparation also carries the danger of destabilization (Interview 23, 4) that could spiral out of control and lead "to an unfortunate escalation", as was pointed out by some experts (Interviews Nasr, 5, 2; Pedersen, 15, 3; Interview 23, 4).

Although "the awareness of the risks of military action has increased", it is still one component parallel to others. It is "not in the foreground, but regardless they want to demonstrate military strength" (Interview 25, 3). Opponents also doubt that political support would be forthcoming from Europe and expect opposition from Russia (Interview Payne, 27, 1). Moreover "the states of the Gulf region discourage such an attack because they fear they will have to pay the price" (Interview 25, 4). According to a Pentagon source, "There is no active plan to attack Iran, and in some ways, we are over-committed elsewhere, but the situation in the Gulf remains in control" (Interview Cotton 14, 3). Correspondingly, an expert from the State Department indicated that a military attack is not likely because "nobody wants it" (Interview Mustafa, 21, 2). Only two experts indicated that there is a likelihood of a military attack during the Bush term. One of them would predict it under the condition of flaring provocations and the other due to the failure of sanctions. Despite two other voices that calculated a 50/50 possibility, all other interviewees assessed that there is very little chance and no political will for military intervention in Iran. "Between January and April [2007] serious discussions took place [about] where to go. An explicit decision was made that another war is not feasible. Another war would be dangerous to the administration as well as to the Republican party ... However much Cheney wants to go to war, Bush won't do it." (Interview Sick, 28, 3)

3.4.3 Regime Change and Public Diplomacy

Background

The strategy of regime change and public diplomacy implies that in order to reduce the threat posed by Iran there would have to be a substantial change in the political forces governing Iran, in particular countering the power of the radical Muslim clerics controlling the military forces, of the three foundations controlling the economy, and of the Iranian president. Practical actions in support of this option include the funding of pro-democracy activities domestically and the mobilization of public criticism against certain political practices of the Iranian government, such as its human rights record (Katzman, 2007, 34). Congress has passed several resolutions granting funds for pro-democracy activities, such as the Iran Freedom Support Act (See also Chapter 3.5.3). However, despite a certain attraction to this idea, not much attention has been paid to it because its success is often only visible after a long period of time and much emphasis in the political process is on short-term results.

Empirical Results: Regime Change and Public Democracy

Simultaneously to putting pressure on Iran, democracy is promoted inside Iran (Interview Clawson, 9, 2). The State Department provides additional funding to reach out to people, but according to a staff member in the United States Congress, this approach "gets the least attention and has least impact" (Interview 23, 2). This is complicated because "more people are reluctant to accept funds because they are afraid to get detained" (Interview Burns, 4, 2). Most of the funding goes to the media and a part of the budget is reserved for cultural and student exchange. The interviewees repeatedly asked the question "Whom do you talk to?", indicating the difficulty of finding the right partners to implement these measures (cp. Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3). Several experts pointed at the irony that the public opinion of America is very good compared to government relations. Some voices admitted that it is difficult to make clear that the administration does not seek regime change but change of behavior.

3.4.4 Negotiations and Engagement

Background

The broader diplomatic dialogue option has been supported by the Bush administration, but under the condition that Iran first suspends uranium enrichment and answers open questions concerning the nuclear program. The current administration has engaged Iran on specific international issues (Iraq and Afghanistan) to a greater extent than any previous one. A U.S.-Iran meeting held in Baghdad on May 28, 2007 was the most public and high-profile meeting to be held since 1979 (Katzman, 2007, 38). However, to date no official dialogue has taken place on the open nuclear issues, and direct talks have not been offered. Concerns are rather being expressed about the possible efficacy of this option and about diplomatic counter moves performed by Iran, but a certain willingness to participate in common meetings and to adhere to the outcomes has been shown by both parties.⁶²

Empirical Results: Negotiations and Engagement

“Everybody invokes the term diplomacy but it depends how you define it. Bush thought he was doing it with while still rejecting to talks” (Interview Lalwani, 10, 2). Several experts pointed at the need to use more diplomatic means (Interviews Miller, 12, 2; Payne, 27, 1; Pedersen, 15, 3). “If we would talk to them, that would change the picture” (Interview Nasr, 5, 2). “The administration put themselves in a corner by calling Iran axis of evil. They couldn’t talk with them anymore and have fallen short on tools and limit themselves actively” (Interview Pedersen, 15, 3). However, there are different understandings of communication. As a congressional expert summarized, “I’m for dialogue and we shouldn’t be afraid, we tell our concerns and listen to theirs. I don’t think it would change basic facts ... I don’t think Iran wants to engage. It is one of the great misperceptions that the U.S. is not willing to engage” (Interview 20, 2). Although this is not a perspective expressed by the majority of the experts, it was confirmed by some other interviewees who added “we think they are irrational ... They want the nuclear weapon because they want regional power. We can see them reaching out. With the different government now and the statements of Ahmadinejad it is hard to predict what they would do. We are not sure if Ahmadinejad wouldn’t use it against Israel” (Interview Mustafa, 21, 2). It is also a problem that “part of the [American] population is against diplomatic actions because the administration created an atmosphere where this is not possible” (Interview Pedersen, 15, 3). This is partially caused by the fact that “chief policy makers don’t believe in the strength of diplomacy because of mistrust, lack of diplomatic tact, and [because] the belief in power and democracy blinded us” (Interview Lalwani, 10, 3). In addition some are concerned to negotiate from a weak position (Interview Woolsey, 11, 3).

3.5 Interests

Basically three central historical interests can be observed that have lasted through the different administrations since the 1970s. Their order of importance changes according to perspectives, circumstances, and influences of interest groups but is best characterized by the governing party line. Secure access to oil resources is usually in the foreground during conservative administrations, while the security and well-being of Israel is a classical liberal concern that evolved from the ‘special relationship’ with Israel. This has been complemented by security concerns about non-proliferation and terrorism and by the freedom agenda of the Bush administration.

62 Alternatively to negotiations, the U.S. rather seeks to “engage” Iran under the current legislation of the treaties that it has subscribed to. This engagement includes inspections of the IAEA at suspected nuclear sites and also considers inspections under the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to force Iran to eliminate possibly existing undeclared chemical weapons.

3.5.1 Empirical results: The Hierarchy of Interests - Oil as Priority Number 1

The data of the interviews were quantified and indicate a hierarchical order of interests and objectives. Oil is the main interest in the region. All the other points are significantly less important. The second most important interest is related to stability in the region and democracy promotion followed by concern about Israel's security and national integrity. Merely in the fourth position are non-proliferation and the Iranian nuclear program, limiting Iran's support for terrorism, and geo-strategic interests. Stability in Iraq and human rights in Iran rank last.

Order of Interests:	
No. 1	Oil and energy supply
No. 2	Stability and democracy in the region
No. 3	Protection of Israel
No. 4	Geo-strategic interests Non-proliferation War against terrorism
No. 5	Stability in Iraq Human rights in Iran

Table 3

3.5.2 Oil

Background

The major concern of the American energy policy is the risk of a supply-demand mismatch. The aim of achieving energy independency, which means complete domestic energy supply, is according to Bodman⁶³ (2006) unrealistic and unproductive. Nevertheless there is a trade-off between dependency and security. The major problem here is that most of the fossil fuel supply is located in unstable areas of the world such as the Persian Gulf, which interferes not only with security but also with commercial interests and markets.⁶⁴

Despite the conception that America's foreign policy only started at the beginning of the 20th century, the United States have been engaged in the Persian Gulf since the early years of their foundation. At that time, relations were based on economical rather than strategic and geo-political considerations (Palmer, 1992, 4).⁶⁵ On this basis, it was not difficult for American oil companies to gain a foothold as the oil wealth of the region was discovered in the early 20th century. Since that time, the Persian Gulf has been one of the central energy exporters. The growing importance of oil for the industrialized world was demonstrated during World War I, increased even more with the economic crisis of the 1930s and has from that time on shaped America's relationship with the states in the region. Interests of private companies⁶⁶, national economic interests and security interests have been linked and oil and energy security have been an integral part of American foreign and security policy since the beginning of the 1970s (Watrin, 1989, 93).

This political connection shifted to the forefront after the Cold War bipolar world order disappeared. Access to oil in the Persian Gulf and its supply became focal points of American security policy. However, despite the fact that more than 60% of the world's oil sources are estimated to be in the Persian Gulf (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2000), the U.S. covers only a small part of its demand with oil imports from that region. Imports have even decreased, from 23.3% in 2001 to 16.2% in 2006 (EIA, 2007, table 5.4). The actual reasons for the crucial importance of the region are world economical considerations and the secure access to oil sources for Western allies, since especially Japan and Europe cover their demand from the Persian Gulf region.

63 Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy.

64 It can also be argued that instability is caused by resource wealth, leading to mutually reinforcing relations. However, policies in this sector are influenced by major lobbies like the oil and gas and the automobile lobby. On the other hand, research and initiatives supported by the American government have expanded in order to find more effective ways to diversify the sources and technologies of energy supply and conservation, partnering with many other countries.

65 America was able to gradually develop its trade relations with the region and succeeded in being the most important trade partner by the 1870s while Great Britain remained the leading military power until the 1970s. Relations were strong enough that in 1856 the U.S. had already entered into a trade agreement, the 'Treaty of friendship and commerce', with the Persian Empire (Alexander et al., 1980, 2-4).

66 Many oil concessions and certain exclusive rights are in the hands of American companies.

Although America's own oil reserve is meant to make the country independent from oil crisis situations, the experience with hurricane Katrina increased concerns.⁶⁷ Additionally, America's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (US SPR) is stored in the hurricane regions.⁶⁸ Although the potential impact of major oil shocks on economic growth and recession has decreased since the 1970s, when the Iranian Revolution caused a recession, they are still large enough to cause policy concerns (Larbonte, 2006, 17). Moreover, "one of the original perceptions of the value of a strategic stockpile was that its very existence would discourage the use of oil as a political weapon" (Bamberger, 2006, 4). The growing concern over energy security caused President Bush to ask Congress in his State of the Union speech at the beginning of 2007 to double the reserve capacity (Bush, 2007). Nevertheless, the American national interest regarding energy security and oil supply does not derive from a direct dependency on oil imports, but from an indirect one. It can only be understood in the context of the interdependency of the world market, where a general flow has to be secured in order to keep prices down. In the public discourse, the dependency on oil and its national interest might be simplified and exaggerated in order to justify the U.S. military build-up in the region and related costs. In addition, America plays its role as the world's policeman by securing the Persian Gulf. This may not happen for purely altruistic reasons but, as Mead (quoted in Schwarz et al., 2002, 37) pointed out, to inhibit other countries from creating security doctrines and armed forces that would be sent around the world and which could in turn lead to conflicting interests.

Empirical results: Oil

"Oil is a major factor driving our presence" (Interview Cotton, 9, 2) and to "minimize the political risk to [its] flow is central" (Interview 23, 3). Most experts agreed on the central importance of energy security for the United States. Former CIA director Woolsey added that "it is a pity that oil fields are located there and not under Java. [*That puts it*] in a different relational frame" (Interview 11, 3). He went on to say, in regard to Saudi Arabia and the combination of oil and Wahabism, that it is

particularly difficult when put together with incentives, what economic rent produces to consolidate power; that branch is suicidal ... if you look at Ahmadinejad, the higher the oil prices the more dictatorial the state gets. If you are democratic, you can sort it out ... We in the West are paying for this because we drive on gas ... parts go to madrassas where little boys get educated to be suicide terrorists (Ibid.)

3.5.3 Stability and Democracy in the Region

Background

Although it is central to American foreign policy and the U.S. is its most aggressive proponent, democracy promotion in the Middle East has many supportive voices in general, not only in the Western world, but also in international and regional organizations, NGOs and domestic actors. The democracy deficit is claimed to be a cause of terrorism, has therefore gained importance since 2001 and also indirectly helped domestic reform and democratic movements in Iran.⁶⁹ However, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)⁷⁰ and Freedom House Ratings of 2006 indicate that Iran faces serious barriers on the way to a free market economy and the trend does not describe a positive development. Iran ranks 95th out of 119 nations in the status index. This figure

67 Katarina hit Louisiana and Mississippi in August 2005, diminished refinery capacities, damaged and destroyed oil platforms and impaired key oil and gas hubs along the Mexican Gulf shores, interrupting oil supply, increasing fuel prices, and concerns (EIA, 2005).

68 SPR can hold up to 1 billion barrels crude oil, the largest emergency supply of petroleum in the world. It was established with the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) in 1975 to counter supply shortages that were experienced during the 1973 energy crisis due to America's siding with Israel during the Arab-Israeli war.

69 However, under Ahmadinejad laws and their implementation have been tightened to counter those movements.

70 BTI is an index of the level of development and political transformation towards free-market democracies of 119 countries. It is divided into status index and management index, and the status index is divided into political and economic transformation. They are derived from different criteria and indicators such as statehood, political participation, rule of law, institutional stability, political and societal integration for the scale of political transformation and socio-economic development level, free market and fair competition, currency and price stability, private property, social welfare, performance of national economy and sustainability for the scale of economic transformation. For further information see: <http://bti2003.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de>.

is a slight improvement in rank, but the trend between 2001 and 2005 shows a deterioration in political transformation processes, while the stagnation of the economic transformation does not demonstrate significant alterations.

Especially with the difficulties in neighboring Iraq, questions surface about content, instruments, the relationship between democracy and freedom, and the compatibility of the concept with the characteristics of the region and its cultures.⁷¹ This is further complicated by a growing anti-Americanism and a decrease in credibility due to the application of double standards and measures that were praised as democracy promotion but then exposed as calculated self-interest. Close allies of the U.S. are not pushed as much towards democratization; this selection pattern is perceived with bitterness by the other nations that do not fall into this category, causing negative effects for democracy promotion in general (Beck, 2005, 209).⁷² The debate about the contribution of a democratic order to stability often neglects the stabilizing role of the protection of human and civil rights⁷³, constitutional structures, and the advantages of developed economies. Several factors besides democracy characterize good governance, which also include secular and political cultures as well as a high level of social welfare (Schmidt, 2000, 539).⁷⁴

As has been shown, America has many interests in the region that benefit from promoting democracy, but external promotion also implies many difficulties. Motives for supporting democracy are peace-keeping, stability, and the creation of free market economies (Sandschneider, 2003, 282). The central assumption is that it is easier to cooperate with a type of system based on identical values and similar structural patterns. This is reinforced by the democratic peace theorem and the argument that democracies do not engage in warfare; the main risk derives from non-democratic systems (cp. Chapter 2, Section 2.3). Despite the idea that democracies are less prone to use oil and gas resources as political weapons, the interest in democracy in the region is also due to security considerations.

We are led, by events and common sense, to one conclusion: The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world. (Bush, 2005)

Bush emphasizes that America's security depends on the nature of other systems. Nevertheless, despite these security considerations America also has a more general interest in spreading its own value system. Furthermore, without the vast amounts of energy resources and their tremendous economic and geo-strategic value, the region would not have received so much attention. However, many endeavors failed and initially clear demands became blurred because other security and economical interests ranked higher in the end. Interest constellations influence the choice of applied measures and instruments and their application depends on capacities and political will.⁷⁵ External democracy promotion is also limited because, despite the alteration of structures it is mainly about a modification of values, which can only be commenced by internal socialization processes, which

71 Most regimes in the Middle East are authoritarian and from a Western perspective, democratization is perceived as advancing these systems. However, they are mostly in a liberalization phase and not yet in a transition phase, which is required to establish a democracy. These circumstances can lead to increased aggression and instability that are described by the dilemma of ambivalence, which makes the calculation of external actions in order to counter threats to one's own security difficult.

72 There is a tendency to argue that the region should develop its own order based on its unique circumstances, but there is seemingly also a lack of comprehensive alternatives to democracy, which, however, does not mean that democratic systems do not have downsides either.

73 As highlighted above and in Chapter 2, Iran's human rights record is not considered a threat to American interests but a general concern that gives reason to build international consensus in order to put pressure on Iran (Katzman, 2007, 13). Iran, as party to the international human rights covenants, agreed to periodic monitoring by the Human Rights Commission for Iran that was established by the UN; its Special Representative reported to the UN between 1984 and 2002. In addition, the Bush Administration, together with Europe and Canada, has founded a 'Human Rights Working Group' that monitors and coordinates responses to Iran's human rights practices (Katzman, 2007, 13).

74 Much attention has been paid to the establishment of free elections, but these are merely a structural criterion for formal democracy and do not give a guarantee for stability and rule of law. A distinction must be made between formal criteria and maximum principles of liberal constitutionalism.

75 Examples are the American Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) or the G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative (BMENAI).

in turn depend on the respective context, which has to be understood thoroughly. In order to influence the transformation process, reaching out to and cooperating with the different actors in society is necessary but difficult, a conflict known as the phenomenon of ambiguity (Beck, 2005, 208). Political and clerical elites are important for these processes, but especially in Iran they are also the least supportive. To a certain extent they want to cooperate with the West and satisfy demands of their own population by allowing a development up to the liberalization phase in order to be able to claim modernization and deal with economical and political problems. However, they do not wish to go beyond this point because they want to maintain and strengthen their power, which is derived from the system itself. Because of the fear of losing power and privileges, they have no desire for an essential change of structures. Therefore it seems to make more sense to work with democratic movements through a bottom-up process. However, this can also turn counter-productive because they are often fragmented and accepting support from the West would put themselves at risk of losing acceptance at home for being pro-Western and non-authentic. The ensuing loss of legitimization and influence for these groups makes a seemingly logical action ineffective.⁷⁶ These dilemmas in developing strategies and finding the right partners demonstrate the limitations of democracy promotion and explain why double standards occur.

Empirical Results: Stability and Democracy in the Region

Part of the overall goal of stabilization is the “stated goal of democratic regime change in the region” (Interview 23, 3). According to Undersecretary of State Burns, “we have to be realistic, we cannot control these societies ... We should comment on it but cannot steer ... Bush’s second term agenda is all about freedom. This is a very American idea ... freedom and liberty are central for Americans ...” (Interview 4, 3). Democracy is meant as a tool for stable and economically progressive societies but it is a mixed goal (Interview 23, 2). While America thinks democracy leads to stabilization, “our efforts to establish democracy lead to destabilization (Ibid., 3). Some experts seem to find evidence that there is an interest in promoting democracy to a certain extent “but in my view that is subservient to other interests” (Interview Hart, 26, 3). “I am not convinced democracy works in that region and the goal of oil can be contrary to that. I get the sense that we don’t understand the Muslim mentality” (Interview Rickert, 22, 2). According to Palmer, “in national security we [Americans] are too much for the use of military force, we are not enough focused on political and moral force ... the U.S. is most active in democracy promotion. There is a big fight in this town whether we will support democracy promotion. The President speaks with great compassion about democracy promotion ... more rhetoric than doing. The process has to be led by the country itself but we have a critical role to support [with] expertise and financial resources. This will not come from foreign ministries because of all the other interests like economy and terrorism” (Interview 8, 3).

3.5.4 The Protection of Israel

“We have a special relationship with Israel.”

Carter, 1977, 605

Background

The commitment to Israel’s security and well-being characterizes the relationship between the U.S. and Israel as well as the American Middle East policy. Eleven minutes after David Ben Gurion publicly announced the Declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948, the U.S. under President Truman was the first nation to de facto recognize the new state and its government. Although relations had been tense under President Eisenhower, they positively intensified during the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially after Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War in 1967 when Israel was perceived as a regional power that could advance the U.S. interests in the region, which were in turn determined by Cold War logic. Kennedy coined the phrase of a ‘special relationship’ with Israel and also kept his eyes closed to Israel’s nuclear program, which continued to be tolerated by John-

⁷⁶ As another alternative, it has been suggested to work through constructive dialogue with moderate Islamist opposition groups, because they have deeply rooted support among the population (Hamzawy, 2004). Although this strategy bears great potential, it is complicated by the growing radicalization of those groups, which often base their identity on anti-Western sentiment that makes dialogues with the West inconceivable.

son under the motto 'no denial, no confirmation'.⁷⁷ Under Nixon, the relationship changed from a special to a strategic one and the principle of 'Land for Peace' was created. Due to Vietnam, America had to withdraw its engagement from the Middle East. The policy of détente was continued during the Carter administration, which also clearly demonstrated American interests regarding the oil sources of the region. With Reagan, the polarization between East and West increased and Israel advanced to the position of a strategic ally. Due to the fall of the Shah in Iran, Israel's strategic value in containing Soviet influence in the region grew even more. After the end of the Cold War, America had to pay more attention to regional dynamics but soon the simplifying rogue state doctrine was developed. During the Gulf War, the relationship initially was seriously tested, but developed to an intense mutual reliance. With James Baker as Secretary of State in the George G.W. Bush administration, a comprehensive regional strategy was developed and the Madrid Conference demonstrated new commitment to the Middle East peace process. America grew into the role of the mediator in the Middle East and President Clinton, who inherited the beginning of the peace process, advanced it to its highest level in Camp David in 2000 and Taba in 2001. Unfortunately, the 'strategy of positive incentives' failed in the end, partially due to the continuous change of political forces and violent escalations. The expectations of the Arab world that the new Bush administration would continue his father's policy have not been met. On the contrary, Bush has often been in accordance with the Likud-dominated Israeli government, which became an ally in the war on terrorism. Initially, Bush even refrained from the peace process under the motto 'ready to assist, not insist' but reconsidered his reticence after a growing escalation of violence. In 2002, Bush announced a new peace plan that, besides the need to fight terror, also contained the fundamental idea of advancing freedom and democracy in the region. In 2003, the road map of the Quartet was released but failed, and Bush distanced himself from its program.

Despite certain tensions, the term special relationship is characteristic for the connection between America and Israel, which is based not only on security considerations and national interests but on factors like historical conscience, political and cultural affinities, societal and emotional connections, and shared religious values. Although both societies are ostensibly secular, religion plays a central role and the interconnection is increased by the common reference to the holy land and its significant meaning.⁷⁸ Regarding Iran, the threat perceptions of America and Israel are similar, with Israel's concern being even more serious due to its geographical proximity. The presence of this objection has been intensified through the influence of the Israel lobby in Washington, which will be further described in the following chapter.

The American pro-Israeli posture does, of course, condition the relationship with Iran and other countries in the region. Significant ambivalence persists in the balance of national interests concerning Israel and other states. Finally, the American strategy is a composition of strategic U.S. interests as seen by the administration and consideration towards the pro-Israel sentiment within the American population, which is especially reflected in the stance of the American Congress.

Empirical Results: Israel

Several experts pointed out that the actual, more serious problem lies between Iran and Israel, and that Israel does not have any interest in good contact between America and Iran because that would weaken its own position. According to Sick, Israel would not be happy about talks between America and Iran (Interview 28, 3). From the Iranian perspective: "Israel tries its best to make the relationship between the U.S. and Iran worse" (Interview 29, 3).

"Israel is under a real threat by Iran ... the real danger lies between Israel and Iran." (Interview Pedersen, 15, 3) Parsi stated that Iran poses a medium-size problem to the U.S., but a large problem to Israel (Interview 13, 2). Since the "national integrity of the territory of Israel" (Interview 23, 3) is of central interest to America, "the U.S. will let Israel determine its borders. Ahmadinejad really touched nerves. That is unacceptable" (Ibid.). The Israel-Palestinian conflict is additionally feeding the animosity and would need a capable honest broker (Interviews Pedersen, 15, 4; Rickert, 22, 2). Clemons stated that "Israel's security and Arab-Muslim stability are moral concerns" (Interview 7, 2).

⁷⁷ Financial support, weapons sales and deliveries increased during that time as well.

⁷⁸ Israel receives the highest amount of foreign assistance from the U.S. government, which consists mainly of military aid. The support is not only justified by the fact that Israel is the only democracy in the region, but also by the Holocaust experience.

3.5.5 Geostrategic Interests

Background

Even before the discovery of oil resources, the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea, and the whole region were of geostrategic importance. Iran was seen as a buffer against Soviet expansion, but soon after World War II, its oil and economical potential dominated strategic considerations. America followed economical interests and, since they accepted the existing British hegemony in the Persian Gulf, they did not get involved in the ‘Great Game’ between Russia and Great Britain (Kuniholm, 1980, 178). During the Cold War, the Persian Gulf became important for the containment of the Soviet Union. The initial refusal to remove Soviet troops from Iran in 1946 caused the U.S. to modify its policy and America increased its presence and engagement in the region (Brands, 1994, 10-12). The Mossadeq Coup in 1953 (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1) was the first consequence of this engagement, while the Suez Crisis in 1956 displayed America’s strategic dilemma between support for Great Britain and nationalist regional movements. However, engagement increased gradually and with the beginning of the withdrawal of British troops in 1968, the U.S. had to re-define its role. This was presumably bad timing for America, which was, at that time, searching for a means to retreat due to its losses in the controversial Vietnam War. Additionally, America suffered from an incipient economical recession. The situation was best exemplified by the Nixon Doctrine of 1970, which contained a reduction of military presence in the Gulf region that was meant to be compensated by the ‘two pillar’ concept. Iran and Saudi Arabia were supposed to become policemen of the Gulf (Teicher et al., 1993, 39-48). However, with the fall of the Shah and the Iranian Revolution, the U.S. lost this important ally. President Carter declared the Persian Gulf to be of vital interest for the United States and cautioned against outside attempts to take control of the region. A Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) was set up and displaced by the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM)⁷⁹ under Reagan in 1983 to secure military presence.⁸⁰ During the Iran-Iraq war, America escorted Kuwait’s oil tankers through the Persian Gulf to secure safe passage and finally, with the Gulf War, established a firm presence in the region (Palmer, 1992, 149). To secure this position, it contracted several defense agreements with Gulf States.⁸¹ Despite the disappearance of the central Soviet threat with the end of the Cold War, the U.S. maintained its presence and quickly found new regional threats. America took an even more global orientation and found comfort in its leadership role. George G.W. Bush postulated a model of global order for peace and stability and promoted conflict resolution in a multilateral fashion. Clinton justified America’s global presence with the goal of securing peace.

Empirical Results: Geostrategic Interests

The findings clearly indicate that strategic interests and preserving its own position and dominance are important to America. “The U.S. is looking at the Middle East as a means not an end and is interested in the elimination of other competitors, especially China, that should remain a regional power but not [*become a*] global power. The U.S. needs control of resources [*that*] should not fall in China’s orbit.” (Interview Parsi, 13, 3)

79 Centcom Website: http://www.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom2/Misc/centcom_aor.aspx

80 For a map of the area of responsibility of CENTCOM see Appendix 7.

81 Oman and Bahrain in 1990, Kuwait in 1991, Qatar in 1992, United Arab Emirates in 1994 (Kostiner, 1998, 56).

3.6 Values

“Some have tried to pose a choice between American ideals and American interests between who we are and how we act. But the choice is false. America, by decision and destiny, promotes political freedom and gains the most when democracy advances.”
Bush, 1999

3.6.1 American Values and Global Role

Since, from a constructivist standpoint, it can be argued that interests are based on values, this section will give an overview of American values in the context of this case, which will then put in relation to the interests introduced above. Much of the public discourse in America refers to the fundamental values of political culture: liberty, equality, and property. The major principles of American democracy are libertarian values including freedom, universal suffrage, majority rule, limited government, and popular sovereignty. These values also build the explanatory ground for the idea of righteous war, meaning that good should fight evil, and for what is termed the ‘crusader spirit’.

During the first term of the George W. Bush administration, he often related to enemy constructions, which exaggerated commonalities with allies and distinctions from enemies. This concurs with the concept of relative power, which depends on the perception of friend or foe.⁸²

“The struggle against militant Islamic radicalism is the great ideological conflict of the early years of the 21st century and finds the great powers all on the same side – opposing the terrorists. This circumstance differs profoundly from the ideological struggles of the 20th century, which saw the great powers divided by ideology as well as by national interest.” (Bush, 2006, 41)

Nevertheless, certain parallels can be drawn between these two eras, especially regarding the polarization with respect to communism during the Cold War that is partially applied to the Muslim world today.⁸³

Although Powell emphasized America’s role as the world’s policeman, over the past four years America has lost its moral authority and is perceived widely as a malevolent hegemon if not as an imperial power. Contrary and ironically, Iranian civil society is the most pro-American in the region.

3.6.2 America’s Self Image and National Identity

Historically, one could say that the American Leviathan was built “from the outside in” (Sparrow, 1996). Especially the Second World War and the Suez Crisis mark important points for a redefinition of America’s role in the world. Looking back at the historical development helps to picture the self-conception of the U.S. The way the Americans see themselves was borne out of the Puritans’ approach to mission and dissociation from the ‘Old Europe’. The origin of the American conception of self is founded in the Puritan concept of proselytization.

America’s guiding leadership was perceived more critically in the shadow of the Vietnam War and the Watergate affair. These experiences collided with the self understanding of the Americans as representatives of an exceptional nation. American exceptionalism was and is manifested in its national identity, which developed particularly from a lack of ethnic and linguistic commonality on the basis of idealistic principles and political convictions. The aftermath of the civil war and a strong reference to the values embodied in the American constitution form the basis for a united national identity. Thus, a higher moral level than that of ‘conventional’ nation states was created, and from this derives the special position of America in the world. With the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, the role of the Pax Americana was strengthened and material-

82 Meanwhile, those distinctions have ebbed away, but even so a certain black and white mindset still exists and the stance towards Iran persists.

83 Generally, there is a lack of differentiation in regard to group membership.

ized (Herz, 1989, 42).⁸⁴ This self-confidence was confirmed with the economic boom after the end of World War II, shaken in the 1970s with the beginning of the economic crisis and the decay of U.S. dominance in the world economic system, but reaffirmed when America emerged again as the sole superpower at the end of the Cold War. Nonetheless, there is some pessimism about the current situation. A democratic Representative of Congress indicates:

“we clearly *were* the world leader. In the present we don’t have the same kind of leadership in the world ... With the Bush administration and Bolton at the UN much of the moral authority and global leadership has vanished” (Interview Payne, 27, 1).

The military and the support for the troops are important to Americans, who perceive the use of force and the concept of hard power as legitimate tools as long as they are based on moral grounds. The legitimizations of war and conflict must be based on the idea of the Just War in order to convince the public to give its support.

“Our nation’s cause has always been larger than our nation’s defense. We fight as we always fight, for a Just peace – a peace that favors liberty. 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 peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.” (Bush, 2002)

Although national identities are very stable over time, they can be de- and re-constructed due to experiences and changing circumstances. American foreign policy is characterized by cyclic movements that alternate from nationalist to internationalist orientations that function as balances and counterbalances (Nau, 2002, 15). Realists cover the middle ground between the two extreme perspectives. According to Nau, in times of a major global threat, the support for realism grows away from internationalism.

3.7 Values versus Interests⁸⁵

3.7.1 Background

“The U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests.”
NSS, 2002

It is a quite unique approach to announce that values and interests are united. This complicated the prognosis of action and also led to a broad debate in the academic community as to what might be the major drive of the current administration, reflecting and challenging the ongoing debate about different approaches to international relations.

3.7.2 Empirical Results: “*argue in own interests to pursue values*”

The empirical data seem to present a very clear picture: a significant majority of experts states initially that interests are the major drive for American foreign policy. “Policy is always driven by interests. Maybe in people’s minds there is an alignment of values and interests. It is projected in that way, but there is no way that the U.S. would have gone to war in Iraq because of values, it was about hard interests.” (Interview Coleman, 32, 3) Reasons for claiming interests to be the central drive refer mainly to the situation in Iraq and also to such threats as the nuclear program and state sponsored terrorism. “The administration is rather coldly realistic, they don’t have a choice but dealing with Iran.” (Interview Sick, 28, 3) “Many say, the Bush administration is ideologically foolish and you could not analyze them. I disagree, they are quite capable of learning ... try to do

84 Furthermore the U.S. has the advantage of its geopolitical features. It is rich in natural resources, located between two warm water oceans and has no challenging neighbors. Combining these two factors, the U.S. never claimed to conquer territories, but held up its self-image of proselytization (Froehlich, 1998, 97).

85 No general definition of values and interests is provided, because they are explored in regard to the case specific discourse and in their contextual meaning.

something about their mistakes ... They care about their own survival and party, not about the people in Iraq or Iran.” (Ibid.) A main concern is to maintain the capability to control foreign policy. They “don’t want to loose control and if that means to deal with the devil, they are prepared to do that” (Ibid.). Referring to hardliners or hawks, Clemons stated that they are “genuinely worried about American national security, ideology is involved [*and they are*] still angry because of the hostage crisis, they hate the mullahs, want regime change and fear a nuclear attack on Israel” (Interview 7, 2). It was argued that there is not a strong case for values (Interview Hart, 26, 3) and if “it would be about values it would change with the administrations and would already be resolved” (Interview Mustafa, 21, 3). Since “interests are the main issue, you have a conflict over many years” (Ibid.). Focusing on the initial wording of the experts, it would be difficult to make a strong empirical case for values driving foreign and security policy. Although most experts argued in favor of interests, the explanations of the responses yielded most of the time towards values as well. This is reflected in the argument of some experts that interests and values coexist and that it is difficult to separate them (Interview 25, 4). The concepts are not clear cut: “America is interested in a more democratic world ... the bigger problem is, if we have a friendly dictator, [*but that is*] here in line.” (Interview Clawson, 9, 3) A minority of voices claimed that “it begins with emotions” and the emotions of the hostage crisis have to be contained (Interview Miller, 12, 3). Especially the U.S. has to carry an emotional burden in its relationship with Iran, compared with other countries that have a more relaxed relationship (Interview 25, 4).

One of the congressional experts gave the most comprehensive explanation in referring to Mead’s (2002) historical approach, differentiating dominant foreign policy themes with a matrix of four schools of thought that relate to values and interests: the Hamilton school (national interests and interventionist), the Jeffersonian School (national interests and isolationist), the Wilsonian School (values and interventionist) and the Jacksonian school (tendency to view international relations as extension of personal relations, not interventionist). The Bush administration belongs to the liberal-interventionist school in parts combined with the neo-conservative ideology of the “mission to intervene”, which is more value-driven (Interview 23, 5). “Many grew up in the Cold War [*and learned to value*] doing what’s right ... [*they*] argue in their own interest to pursue values.” (Ibid.) President Bush is therefore apparently a mix between the Wilsonian and Jacksonian schools, Cheney is Wilsonian, and Rice arrived with a Hamiltonian vision and moved more to the Wilsonian school. With the “rhetoric of democracy [*it*] turned to moralizing executive leadership” (Ibid.).

3.8 Context

Since U.S.-Iranian relations do not exist in a vacuum, domestic, regional and trans-regional processes and their implications have to be included in the analysis. In the following a small selection should exemplify these interplays.

3.8.1 International: Russia and China

Background

“The military implementation of the George W. Bush administration's unilateralist foreign policy is creating monumental changes in the world's geo-strategic alliances. The most significant of these changes is the formation of a new triangle comprised of China, Iran and Russia. Growing ties between Moscow and Beijing in the past 18 months is an important geopolitical event that has gone practically unnoticed.” (Gundzik, 2007, 1) Russia is “trying to balance three competing interests: protecting Russian economic interests ..., restraining American “unilateralism” and global dominance and maintaining friendly relations with the United States” (Goldman, 2007, 19). It is important for President Putin to build a counterweight to Bush’s foreign policy as stated during Putin’s visit to China in October 2004, which was symbolic for Beijing’s and Moscow’s disaffirmation of the U.S.. Rhetoric in this context sometimes seems to revive memories of the Cold War. China and Russia emphasized in a joint statement “that it is urgently needed to [resolve] international disputes under the chairing of the UN and resolve crisis on the basis of universally recognized principles of international law. Any coercive action should only be taken with the approval of the UN Security Council and enforced under its supervision” (Gundzik, 2005, 3). Despite Russia’s confrontation of

the U.S. especially in regard to the anti missile defense (AMD) program and the differences concerning NATO's enlargement, there was a friendly personal relationship between Putin and Bush (Goldman, 2007, 16). The famous words Bush offered to describe Putin after the first meeting in 2001 "I was able to get a sense of his soul ... He's a man deeply committed to his country ... that's the beginning of a very constructive relationship" (Wyatt, 2001, 1) have lately lost their charm. Russia and Iran have a lively economic relationship and major trade agreements symbolize the importance of the energy market. Arms sales from Russia to Iran caused the State Department to announce sanctions against two companies in August 2006 due to the violation of the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000 (Goldman, 2007, 21).

China's foreign policy towards Iran is partially similar to the Russian. The Sino-Iranian partnership is meant to build an energy and military cooperation (Douglas et al., 2006, 5). The economical interests and trade relations between China and Iran are longstanding and have been growing in recent years; China is supplying cheap consumer goods and Iran is serving the growing energy needs of China (Rodman, 2006, 18). "Sino-Iranian relations transcend cooperation in the energy sector" (Calabrese, 2006, 43). America is concerned about Chinese assistance to sensitive Iranian weapons programs, including the nuclear program, but not as much as it is about the Russian support. Iran and China are united to oppose America's global power and unilateral global policy (Ahrari, 2006, 53), though Iran is much more confrontational. These mutual economical and political motivations, together with a common feeling of being "victims of Western aggression and conquest" (Ahrari, 2006, 56), drive China and Iran together. Those relations are reasons why China and Russia do not share the same threat assessment as America of Iran, but build a front in the UNSC.

Empirical Results

The experts confirmed the general economic and strategic interests of China and Russia in Iran. According to Clawson, Iran, China, and Russia are working in a new alliance structure against the U.S., he called it a "terrorist super highway" (Interview 9, 3). Although Russia partially shares the concerns of Europe and America it also wants to keep Iran as a strategic partner. This is a balancing act, and "finally they will agree with UNSC sanctions" (Interview 25, 3). The situation is complicated because the U.S. is disregarding Russian strategic interests. "[W]e are blaming them for meddling the Middle East (specifically the boycott of Hamas) but at the same time we meddle in what they believe to be their region" (Interview Lalwani, 10, 4). Lalwani further suggested that such meddling is against American interests and "scuttle[s] a relationship that could be valuable ... [It would be better] to bring them into the discussion, but we don't even consult them" (Ibid.). Another expert indicated that China is always the last to agree to the UNSC resolutions but "it is the question how long the Chinese want to keep that isolation. They also want to be perceived as a responsible partner" (Interview 25, 3).

3.8.2 Trans-regional: India and Pakistan

Background

The position of India is very interesting in this constellation. Similar to China, it is driven by a growing energy need, which is one reason why it supports the suggested construction of a gas pipeline through Pakistan to India -- a project that is strongly opposed by the Bush administration, like any other gas pipeline project involving Iran. India and Iran have cultivated their positive relationship for a long time (Fair, 2007, 1). The "New Delhi Declaration" was signed in January 2003 to launch a strategic partnership between the countries. This and also the support for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) might be reasons why India has a relatively benevolent view of Iran's intentions (Financial Times, 2004). Despite the fact that India does not share America's threat assessment of Iran, however, it does not support a nuclear weapons option for Iran either, but rather has a significantly different perspective on how to respond to Iran. While India is interested in maintaining a good relationship with Iran, especially to secure energy supply, and is not willing to respond to external pressure, the relationship with the U.S. is also very important to India. In recent years this relationship has grown deeper and a joint statement in July 2005 established a U.S.-India global partnership. The negotiations about civil nuclear cooperation between the U.S. and India, which is

not a party to the NPT, has again caused Iran and other member states to question the benefits for non-nuclear-weapons states that remain in the treaty regime. In the U.S., especially members of Congress are concerned that India's policy towards Iran is counter-productive to the U.S. policy of isolation.

In 2006, during Bush's visit to Pakistan, he and President Musharraf issued a statement on their strategic partnership. However, Bush continued to India after this stopover in Islamabad and worked on the civil nuclear cooperation initiative with India. In regard to Pakistan, America is concerned about ongoing Islamist militancy inside Pakistan -- elements within Pakistan that are tied to several terrorist attacks. There is some skepticism about the government's commitment to fight extremist groups. Congress passed legislation that would end foreign aid in the form of military assistance and arms sales to Pakistan in 2008 if it cannot be proven that Pakistan is making efforts (Kronstadt, 2006, 1). In turn Islamabad threatened to end the cooperation on counterterrorism. However, current uprisings and threats from Islamic militants reflect the ever-diminishing power of the Pakistani government. Despite its terrorism and nuclear record the U.S. has tried to maintain good relations, also to prevent Pakistan from turning towards China. However, according to the New York Times Washington intends to use \$750 million of development aid as a counterinsurgency tool in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) over the next five years although oversight is almost impossible. It is part of the "hearts and minds" campaign and meant to win the region from Al Qaeda and Taliban (Perlez, 2007). This is an answer to the grim new intelligence assessment of the National Intelligence Estimate that represents the view of the 16 intelligence community agencies, which claimed that strategies to fight Bin Laden and Al Qaeda in Pakistan have failed (Mazzetti et al., 2007).

Empirical Results

Several interviewees referred to negative repercussions of the U.S.-India nuclear deal and its purpose of creating a stronger alliance with India because of the fear that India would turn to Russia or China (Interview Pedersen 15, 3). "It obviously sends bad signals to Iran and other nations in terms of proliferation." (Interview Lalwani 10, 4)

3.8.3 Regional: Iran and Iraq

Background

With the changes in Iraq and after years of tensions, Iran was provided with the opportunity to have good relations with the Iraqi government, whose dominating parties (like the United Iraqi Alliance – UIA) have good ties to Iran. They furthermore gained strength through the removal of their major rival, leading to a change in the balance of power.

The U.S. is concerned about Iran's financial and material support for the Shiite (and partially Sunni) insurgency that is increasing sectarian violence in Iraq and the main reason for instability and lack of security. "Since December 2006, the administration has stepped up efforts to reverse Iranian influence in Iraq, while also conducting limited engagement with Iran on Iraq." (Katzman, 2007, 1) "In February 2007, U.S. defense officials said that Iranian-made 'explosively forced projectiles' (EFPs) fielded by Shiite militias had been responsible for 170 U.S. combat deaths since the fall of Saddam Hussein, although that is many times lower than the number of U.S. deaths at the hands of Sunni insurgents." (Katzman, 2007, 3) On several occasions evidence for Iran's influence was provided, as for example in a military briefing in Baghdad in February 2007, where EFP's were displayed that had been supplied from Iran to Shiite militias (Katzman, 2007, 4).

Empirical results

"Why we are doing what we are doing now is because of Iraq." (Interview Sick, 28, 4) Iran has much influence in Iraq on Shiites and Kurds but does not have control. The same counts for the U.S. but Iran's influence is in different areas (Ibid.). Several experts pointed at the congruent interests of America and Iran in Iraq: "that Iraq will not split up, no civil war, stability, a democratic country with an elected government ... that's why they are showing interest in conversation" (Ibid.). The decision to hold talks has even been more controversial in Iran and received less atten-

tion in the U.S.; “so little criticism is a signal that neo-conservatives lost power, they cannot find political constituents anymore to back them ... people are tired of that” (Ibid., 5). In contrast, a Pentagon source referred to another Navy officer who claimed that Southern Iraq is essentially becoming West Iran due to the Shia influence, and we could see a repetition of history such as an expansion of Iran (Interview Cotton, 14, 3). “Iran actually wants more dominance in the Middle East; with Iraq we removed the chief key rival.” (Interview Clemons, 7, 3) Despite the delivery of energy and the provision of credits, Iran is accused of being responsible for some of the insurgency in Iraq. There is an ongoing debate about weapons deliveries, which has been denied by the Iranians who explained that the supposedly ‘Made in Iran’ projectiles that were shown during the press conference in Baghdad carried dates that were written in American style, which would not be used by Iranians, who have a different solar calendar that is now in the year 1386 (Interview 29, 4). According to the Iranian perspective, they “had enough of Iraq” and nothing can be better for Iran than a democratic and stable Iraq (Ibid.). The Iranians have a good relationship with the Iraqi government representing the majority Shiite community. “All these things are in line with our interests” (Ibid.). The accusations are made because the U.S. does not want to blame itself for its wrong policies and practices in Iraq (Ibid.). “The Sunni insurgency is not coming from Iran but [from] other neighbors, who are U.S. allies. They are not happy that a situation has been created that is good for Iran.” (Ibid.) In general the talks between Iran and America regarding Iraq are perceived by many experts as a positive development in the right direction, and one that has the potential to improve the relationship (Interviews 23, 4; Pedersen, 15, 4).

3.9 Integration of Results & Conclusion

3.9.1 The Policy of the Super Power

Only in 2006 did Bush mention that there is a clear Iran-tailored strategy. In regard to the interviewed experts, the response pattern already known from the analysis in Chapter 2 re-appeared during the data analysis of this chapter. There seems to be a split in opinion concerning the strategy towards Iran. Experts who denied its existence or claimed incoherence tended to be from the liberal spectrum and in opposition to the government. However, even in the group advocating the existence of a clear and coherent strategy, it was repeatedly mentioned that the goals of the strategy are not clear, or that America is doing a bad job in getting the message across. The link between pre-conceptions of Iran, perception patterns and the choice of strategies and policy elements became clear. A combination of differently weighted policy components implements the strategy. The multilateral two-track approach is widely supported to increase pressure on Iran, but significantly more than half of the interviewees also argued for power projection in the form of military containment, while ruling out the risk of a direct military attack on Iran during the last months of the Bush administration. In terms of the efficacy of applying unilateral sanctions the group was evenly divided into three parts: supporting unilateral, dismissing unilateral, or favoring multilateral sanctions. Much debate was concerned with engagement measures, which are currently blocked due to set pre-conditions and have only partially been loosened in diplomatic talks about the situation in Iraq. The importance of the public diplomacy element ranked low. The implementation of the policy components is restrained by capacity, political will, different preferences and context variables.

The role of America as a hegemonic superpower and as the world’s policeman has grown historically, and is at least partially rooted in values. Over time and also depending on the different administrations’ ideologies, different priorities have been chosen, but engagement in the Middle East has continuously increased. A contextual deconstruction of the main U.S. interests in Iran and the region showed that the applied categories of values, norms and interests are blurry and intermingled. American foreign policy is clearly not solely a reflection of U.S. interests. However, there is a process of projecting American domestic values onto the international stage, as an attempt to set a general scale for evaluation. The investigation into underlying norms and values is nevertheless complicated by the lack of adequate measures. The debate about values and interests has mainly been about competing elements, where some branches argue, as stated in the hypothesis for this dimension, that interests derive from values. They can also be considered complementary but dis-

tinct mechanisms whose boundaries are intertwined and whose influence depends on contexts and respective reasoning power.

3.9.2 Three Foreign Policy Values Match Psychological Motives of Human Beings

Chittick (2006, 13) impressively showed the interface of psychology and international relations, how they integrate and mutually elevate understanding as foreign policy analysis suggests. A long-term study, conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR), showed that people categorize foreign policy issues into three dimensions: community, security, and prosperity (Ibid.). At the same time, these three factors are equivalent not only to the underlying themes of the three major schools in international relations but also to what psychology has identified as the three main motivations of human beings: power, achievement, and social affiliation.⁸⁶ Looking at the current administration's hierarchical order of the three foreign policy value dimensions, security comes first, community second and prosperity third (see Graph 1).⁸⁷

3.9.3 Interests ≠ Threats

As pre-assumed, American interests in Iran are not equivalent to the threat perceptions concerning Iran, as they follow different priorities. Although they contain the same components, the hierarchical orders of the elements are different for interests and threat scales. The components of both constructs are the same and can be subsumed under the main foreign policy values mentioned above (Chittick, 2006, 21). Therefore, it could be argued that they merely provide different lenses for similar appearances, but depending on the priorities that drive political decisions different policy packages will be derived. The elements are displayed in Graph 1 and marked in different colors according to their affiliation with the respective value dimension. Since security concerns are of highest priority on the current political agenda towards Iran, security policy measures became the primary tool of policy choices and shifted others to positions of less priority.

Looking at one of the classical models of psychology, Maslow's (1943) pyramid model, a hierarchy of human needs places security just on top of the basic physiological needs that build the foundation for human life. Only on the basis of the satisfaction of physiological needs followed by security can the higher levels of social affiliation and achievement be addressed. Taking this into account, it seems very logical that after a setback in satisfaction of security needs, as experienced through 9/11, a shift towards lower levels had to occur. Inglehart (2000, 19), who bases his work on Maslow's ideas and his empirical foundation on the most comprehensive available survey on values, namely the World Values Survey, states that only after the fulfillment of basic societal, economic and security preconditions, which are materialist values, can postmaterialist values emphasizing self-expression, freedom, and quality of life be pursued. While there is a general claim for a post-modern shift in values, the new threat environment in today's world might have turned clocks back to a stage of material value concentration.⁸⁸

3.9.4 Threat and its Mediator Affect

However, the application of human motives alone falls short in explaining the elevated security concerns in the case of Iran. The influence of manifested affects has to be taken into account as well; they are not directly included in Maslow's dimensions, but especially negative affects like fear, anger and anxiety produce different information processing patterns (Huddy et al., 2006, 9). They increase arousal and narrow perception, leading to a focus on pre-conceptions and stereotypes that provide fertile ground for black and white thinking. This helps to understand why there is such

86 See Appendix 8 for an overview.

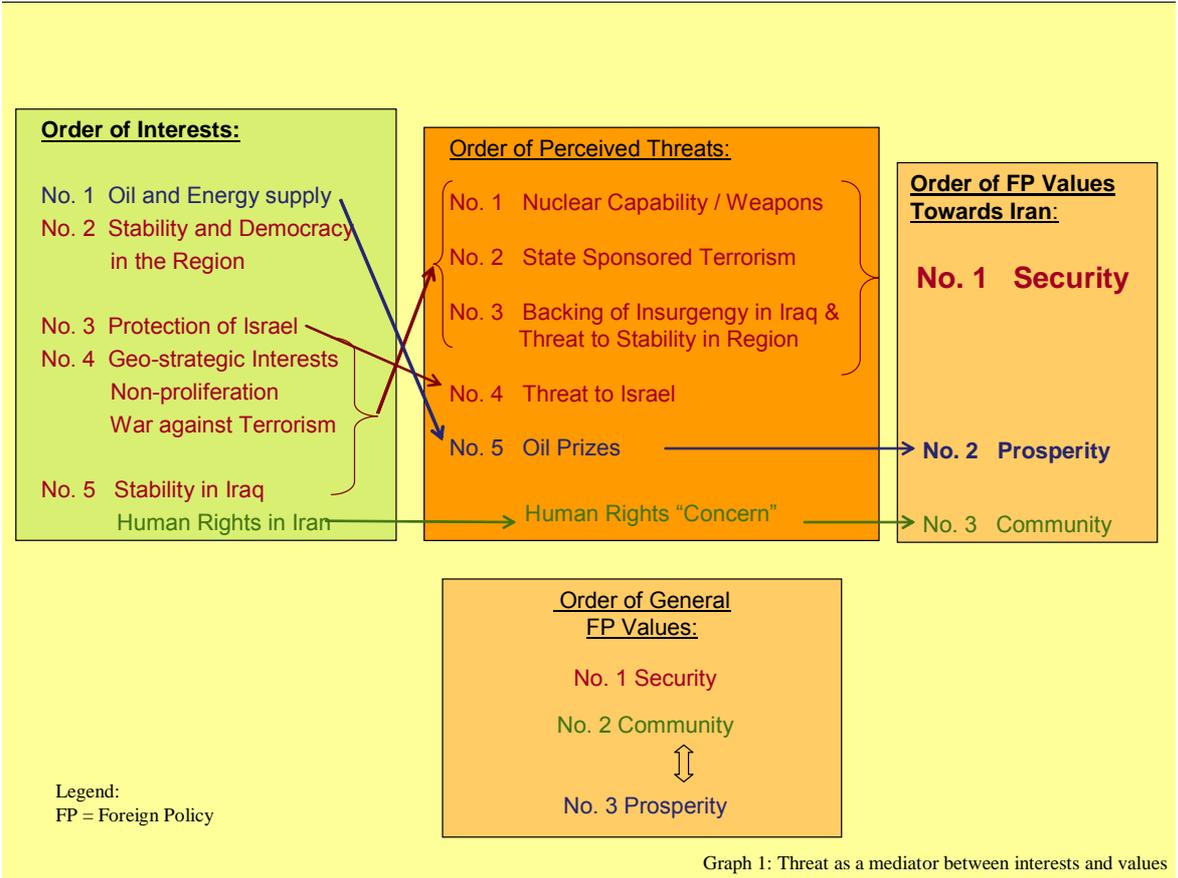
87 In his book about American foreign policy, Junker describes a historical pattern of drives that consists of the indivisible trinity of power, civil religion, and economic interests (Junker, 2003). This is another way of classifying the foundations of American 'interests' and also reflects the underlying logic and value orientations of the three important schools in international relations (Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism), which in turn mirror the three main motives of human behavior.

88 <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com>.

a focus on security measures in the current foreign policy towards Iran, which is also embedded in the aftermath of 9/11. Negative affects, easily triggered through memory cues established and manifested by the traumatic historical experience, increase perceptions of the Iranian risk and threat. This threat perception can therefore be understood as a mediator or filter that further elevates the already primary position of security and reduces the importance of the other dimensions (see Graph 1).

3.9.5 Reversal of 2nd and 3rd Ranking Foreign Policy Values

Chittick (2006, 21) indicates that community values are generally on rank two and prosperity on rank three in the Bush administration. Since Iran is located in an oil and gas rich region, however, in this case concerns about energy supply become much more important than community values. The latter include democracy promotion and good governance as objectives, which are difficult to achieve and require long-term commitment, an investment that is often neglected because it does not yield quick and visible results (cp. Section 3.4.3). The usual order of the second and third ranking foreign policy values of this administration are reversed in the case of Iran, since oil drives prosperity and supply concerns are a matter of security. The hierarchy of foreign policy values is also influenced by the priorities of the governing party and leadership, but constrained through the system of checks and balances, limitations in capacity, domestic and international dynamics, and public opinion.



3.9.6 Rhetoric versus Action

These priorities and constraints can be reasons why rhetoric and action often contradict each other, a conflict also known as the split between declaratory and implementing policy. The divide becomes impressively clear in the case of Iran. The public discourse has remained highly moralized and very confrontational towards Iran while actions have become more pragmatic, as the gradual

decrease of pre-conditions for talks highlights. The moderation of action might partially be explained by a learning experience that America had to go through in the context of the Iraq debacle, which led to more willingness to give in to multilateral approaches and partial engagement. By contrast, the framing of discourse is tremendously important in political rhetoric and well known by speech writers. It consists of two dimensions: rhetoric targeting the domestic audience and that aimed at international actors. The latter can take the form of psychological warfare towards international opponents such as Iran. These two dimensions are not always easy to distinguish. The purpose of some of the discourses is to activate the people's support for a specific action. For this aim it is usually better to focus on negative aspects of the situation, because human beings are more likely to express their support and take risks where losses are concerned.⁸⁹ Furthermore, complexity of information complicates information processing, diffuses attention, and most importantly moderates affect. Therefore, political speech uses these mechanisms and leans towards simplification and polarization, as can be retraced in Bush's rhetoric addressing Iran.⁹⁰

On another dimension, "arguing in one's own interests to pursue values" (Interview 23, 5) does not contradict Bush's claim of uniting interests and values, since so-called 'interests' can be subsumed under foreign policy values. More importantly, publicly arguing for values would be more difficult for people to fathom because values are less conceptualized, while arguing for interests is more exhaustive. In addition, bringing politics of fear into play makes civil rights restrictions and increased security measures possible, which in turn allows for an expansion of executive power. Processes of constructing threat perception on this basis are much less questioned since they also serve identity formation. Applied means are more carefully evaluated in terms of their costs, which are reflected in a more critical light since Iraq. However, pushing buttons to increase threat perceptions helps to override concerns regarding the costs of applied measures.⁹¹

89 Less so concerning gains, cp. prospect theory.

90 Much of the political rhetoric is targeted towards the domestic audience, since they are decisive for election results, influence democratic institutions and have therefore to be persuaded by the politicians, who need their support in order to stay in power. Using messages with which people can identify themselves is more beneficial for persuasion, than presenting facts and logical arguments. Bush often differentiates between 'us' and 'them' in his narrative, which provides space for identity projections.

91 Although utility theory tries to prescribe maximizing behaviors of human beings, individuals permanently violate this assumption. Normatively spoken, it could be expected that actions should be chosen according to the judgment of what is the best alternative. However, such a judgment differs between individuals and a so called rational judgment does not congruently equal choices that are made. One reason lies in the complexity of the case and its context, which requires a balancing act between many different demands that cannot even be directly compared with each other and which also make scientific exploration so difficult and challenging. This cannot simply be described as a trade-off between values or an artificial separation of values and interests because many aspects are non-compensatory; a much more differentiated approach and solution are required. There is unfortunately not enough space here to explore whether a further deconstruction of what is called values would arrive at a point called intrinsic goodness or nonderivatively good (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2007).

4. Actors Analysis, Current Changes & Implications

4.1 Actors Analysis

“Bush is not going to leave office with Iran still in Limbo.”

MacAskill, 2007, 1

“We are doing what we are doing because of Iraq.”

Interview Sick, 28, 4

4.1.1 The Foreign Policy Decision Makers and Influential Actors in Washington

Although the American political system is very heterogeneous in reality, in that it produces contradictory policies, much of the American foreign policy image is embodied by the President, who holds the roles of the Chief of State, Chief of the Executive, Commander in Chief of the military, Chief Diplomat⁹² and Chief of the Party. An interesting characteristic of the Bush administration, which sets it apart from most previous ones, are its many competing voices. The key actors, who hold powerful positions, have different and strong policy preferences, which they try to fight for. The neo-conservatives⁹³ occupied a high degree of power during the first term, but seem to be losing their influence. Bush's previously very clear and straight line appears to be getting more blurry. The central question here is whether the drives that led to unilateralism, power projection, self-justice, pre-emption and missionary rhetoric still hold true in the current situation.

The Executive Branch

Within the executive branch, the Department of State headed by Condoleezza Rice has -- in principal -- primary authority over foreign affairs. Undersecretary Burns supervises the relationship with Iran and the multilateral efforts of the UNSC. Robert Gates leads the Department of Defense, which is in control of all military activities. The National Security Council (NSC), a crucial advising institution to the President, links the major players in foreign and security policy.⁹⁴ Bush's first term of office was characterized by a trichotomy consisting of the neo-conservative camp, the realists and a pocket around former Secretary of State Powell.

The Legislative Branch

The foreign policy counterweight in the system of checks and balances is the legislative branch, with Congress as the representation of the American people.⁹⁵ The committee system of Congress provides certain specializations and a division of the legislative work. Therefore, the chairperson of a committee in particular wields much power over that committee's agenda.⁹⁶ Party affiliations,

92 According to the American Constitution, Article II

93 Neo-conservatives follow a radical strategy including the demonstration of military strength, moral clarity, and unilateralism (Rudolf, 2003, 262), and are described as hybrids drawn in by realism and Wilsonian idealism promoting democratic values and peace, not shy in using power projecting measures to implement their mission. Besides Cheney and Rumsfeld, Bush Junior and many others are very influenced by this school of thinking as well as by their alliance with the Christian right (Rudolf, 2003, 265). While there is no doubt that most neo-conservatives are confident about their ideological claims, many of them are also involved in businesses with clear links to the military and defense, the oil industry and private military contractors that increase their profits from elevated security measures and the war machinery. “It's a milieu where ideology and money seamlessly blend” (Vest, 2002, 2).

94 NSC provides a certain continuity from one presidential administration to the next; it links President, Vice President, Secretaries of State and Defense, Director of Emergency Planning, Director of Joint Chiefs of Staff and Director of CIA.

95 The foreign policy mechanisms are legislative and non-legislative. Despite the procedural legislation, other legislations are usually merely symbolic, while non-legislative mechanisms like oversight hearings, concurrent legislation, reports and diplomatic efforts are more powerful (McCormick, 1997, 325). Congress' ability to influence foreign policy is much higher through indirect means.

96 The current Democratic chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House, Tom Lantos, a Hungarian Jew and the only Holocaust survivor in Congress, together with Ackerman from the House Middle East Subcommittee

constituents and personal background certainly influence the committee's agenda. But the impact of Congress is usually seen as limited⁹⁷, "although Congress plays an important role, the President is the chief architect of foreign policy. The role of Congress is to be a partner, helping formulate policy, acting as a sounding board for presidential initiatives, and providing policy oversight (Hamilton⁹⁸, 1998)."⁹⁹

Interest Groups

There is a lack of valid empirical data proving the influence of interest groups (Kingdon, 1984), but it is a manifested impression that many of them are powerful voices and resources influencing the foreign policy agenda of the United States (Crabb et al., 2000, 137). Although the oil and gas industry as part of the economic interest groups is very powerful, the Israel lobby is probably much more influential in the case of Iran, since Iran is the main focus of their agenda and because they, especially the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), have developed very effective lobbying mechanisms. The new congressional constellation advances their agenda since the Democratic Party is particularly affiliated with the Israel lobby. In comparison, the Iranian lobby in the U.S. is so fragmented and disorganized that its voice can hardly be heard. Much debate arose after the Walt and Mearsheimer article concerning the influence of the Israel lobby in 2005, but many other authors consider such claims to be exaggerated and state that the lobby is without doubt active but not in control of decision making processes (Krell, 2004). However, AIPAC does provide a huge amount of political campaign donations that can be decisive.

The Christian Right is affiliated with the Republican Party and "extremely successful in the penetration of Republican single state institutions (Minkenberg, 2003, 26)". Traditionally they take an isolationist foreign policy stand but contribute general support for troops abroad. Yet, this group does show an imperative responsibility to stand by the state of Israel based on the immutable laws of history.¹⁰⁰ They do not often talk about the fact that their doctrine calls for the return of all Jews to the holy land to make the second appearance of Jesus Christ possible, or that conversion of the Jews to the Christian religion is required if they do not want to perish in the battle of Armageddon (Pott, 2002, 127), and these little details are overlooked by the Jewish community as long as the policy of the Christian Right serves certain purposes.

4.1.2 Key Player Preferences regarding the Iran policy¹⁰¹

The State Department is traditionally more moderate (Greve, 2004, 4). It favors diplomacy and multilateral engagement, views military confrontation as not desirable, and is critical of unilateral sanctions (Burns, 2007, 4). Department of Defense Undersecretary Gates supports the stand of the State Department, but his main reasons in doing so are concerns over capacities, repercussions of a military mission in Iran for troops in Iraq, and doubts about correct intelligence. In contrast, the neo-conservative elements within the Pentagon, such as the Office of Net Assessment (ONA) and the Iranian Directorate, are rather for regime change and military intervention. The intelligence community is concerned about the quality of the intelligence, but does not try to interfere in decision making. The major antagonist to Rice's diplomacy agenda is Vice President Cheney and the Office of the Vice President (OVP). The OVP and the neo-conservative branch clearly favor

and Joseph Biden from the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, are the most public and senior voices on Iran from the Democrats side. Senator McCain and Ros Lethinen as the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee are significant voices from the Republican side. The Iranian case also increasingly occupies the presidential debates.

97 Due to the regional and local focus of Congress members on their districts, foreign policy issues often rank in secondary categories.

98 Representative Lee Hamilton was the Democrats minority leader of the House International Relations Committee in 1998.

99 However, congressional foreign policy activity increased after the Cold War and bipartisan compliance with the government known from those times has decreased significantly (Crabb et al., 2000, Scott et al., 2002). In addition, it is important to account for politics within politics that can tremendously influence political decision making.

100 Rhetoric used by their representatives often serves the schemas of good and bad, which contributes to polarizations and the creation of enemy images.

101 The analysis incorporates data from the expert interviews and the participant observation and refers in parts to analyses of former Chapters 2 and 3.

military containment, military confrontation and a kind of public diplomacy that fosters regime change in Iran (Vest, 2002, 1). They have strong ties to the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and the Israel lobby and therefore promote hegemony in the Middle East to assure the security of Israel.¹⁰² The stance of Congress is more diverse, but Democrats in general favor non-violent means. Some Republicans openly support military components (for example Senator McCain) and even publicly think about using the potential of the Mojadehin-e-Khalq Organization (MEK)¹⁰³ to alter the regime in Tehran (for example House Representatives Tancredo and Poe). Overall, Congress is promoting unilateral sanctions, which in form of the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) have been supported by the Israel lobby, especially by AIPAC.

4.2 Current Changes in Structure and Power and their Implication

4.2.1 Disagreement and Losing Approval

The Pew Research Center's polling results show that support for Bush is dipping low (Stolberg, 2007, 2). Bush is also losing ground in his own party, where several Republicans broke with the President and opposed his positions; "even allies say it could become increasingly difficult for the president to assert himself over his party, much less force the Democratic majority in Congress to bend to his will" (Stolberg, 2007, 1). However, Bush still has enough power to veto and will not write off his last months in office.

4.2.2 The Congressional November Election Alters the Power Structure

The American congressional election of November 7, 2006 cost several of the Republican House members their seats, and the majority in Congress shifted to the Democrats.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Nancy Pelosi is the first female speaker of the House. The Democrats gained much support by riding the wave of anti-war sentiment in the population, which is tired of the disturbing news and related costs of Iraq. Despite the successful campaign, the Democratic Congress has to prove that it can alter policy in the "right" direction before the big run-up to the presidential election, which has already started, captures most of the attention. With this in mind and Congress' possibilities to influence policy, the Democratic Congress members started asking critical questions, introduced legislation to rein in the executive's power and threatened with the power of the purse. Taking their role more seriously than their predecessors, they bring new meaning to the notion of congressional control in the actual sense of the checks and balances system, a system that was not very effective during the years of the Republican Congress that backed the policy of the Republican administration.

4.2.3 Replacements in Leadership and Intertwined Structures

The combination of a Democratic Congress and a Republican administration, also called a divided government, does not necessarily mean that the capacity of the President to act is limited the way it is in the lame duck phenomenon. It is, nonetheless, at least moderated, which can be seen in substantial replacements in the executive leadership. These shifts started at the beginning of Bush's second term and suggested a different direction in policy.¹⁰⁵ The replacements are especially founded in Bush's personal leadership style and his quest for strict loyalty (Greve et al., 2004, 3). Realists like Rice moved up at the beginning of the second term, while the neo-conservatives

102 Recently, there has been much scandal around the OVP concerning the Scooter Libby affair, the Valerie Plame case and many instances of intransparency, which are also reasoned in their general interest in restricting legislative control and support for a powerful state.

103 MEK is designated by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO), another name by which the group is known: People's Mojadehin Organization of Iran (PMOI).

104 229 of the 435 representatives are Democrats.

105 The most important implication for foreign policy was Colin Powell's replacement with former national security advisor Condoleezza Rice, who has a close and loyal relationship to the President. Stephen Hadley moved up to become director of the NSC, while hardliner Douglas Feith, DoD Undersecretary for Policy was replaced in 2005. General Hayden has been C.I.A. director since May 2006; he replaced Goss, who initiated much debate because he seemed to meddle with the C.I.A.'s attempt to remain bipartisan.

started losing influence. After 9/11, the neo-conservatives got the opportunity to take over, but today new demarcation lines have been drawn, a situation which reached its peak in the replacement of the hardliner, neo-conservative Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld after the November 2006 election. The strong and influential neo-conservative alliance between Vice President Cheney and Rumsfeld was broken and Secretary Rice was able to regain power. Robert Gates¹⁰⁶ took the place of Rumsfeld and offered a new and more moderate perspective, but voices within the Pentagon are divided. The Iranian Directorate in particular, which is a copy of the Office of Special Plans (OSP)¹⁰⁷ created under hardliner Under-secretary Feith¹⁰⁸, comprises many neo-conservatives with close links to the Office of the Vice President (OVP) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). The mystical in-house think tank of the Pentagon is headed by the 85-year-old neo-conservative Andrew Marshall, also called the Pentagon Yoda¹⁰⁹, who polarizes the defense community and who was a protégé of Cheney.

4.2.4 Struggle Among the Inner Circle of Key Actors

Officially, the State Department insists that the administration is united regarding Iran. The administration tries to keep the struggle within the inner circle and behind the scenes, but leaks and incoherence shed light on the actual situation. The main tension line today lies between the State Department and the Office of the Vice President.¹¹⁰ Rice, who is a realist promoting global democratic values, supports multilateral efforts and diplomacy in dealing with Iran. Cheney, in contrast, who combines neo-conservative views with idealism and nationalism, opposes Rice's stance and advocates a confrontational military strategy towards Iran. Both are absolutely loyal to Bush, but vary in their positions. Thus the stances of Rice and Cheney are clear, but it seems challenging to classify President Bush's position. Some believe he subscribes to neo-conservative ideology and is obsessed with the democratization of the world. This might hold true for the beginning of his presidency, but since people can learn and change it can be argued that the disaster in Iraq and the dwindling international support with its domestic repercussions might have changed the President's attitude. In a period of competition between the major antagonists, Bush seems to shuttle between the two positions. However, his leadership style is more about communicating a vision and then delegating the micro-management and working out of details to the executive branch, which exemplifies the power of the executive in this case. It has been noted that he listens to competing advice and then makes clear decisions without wanting to get enmeshed in day-to-day decision making, while his presidential management and decision-making style is a mixture of collegiality and hierarchy (Moens, 2004, 4). Within the inner circle there is both a danger of open conflict and a potential for joint creativity. The inner circle tensions run the risk of being reduced to a policy dispute between Rice and Cheney in the form of bureaucratic politics and probably led to the impression of an incoherent strategy. What complicates the situation for Bush in dealing with Iran is that there is no central person he can relate to, since he prefers to handle things within personal relationships but the path of eye-to-eye diplomacy has so far been blocked in this case.¹¹¹

106 Gates was Director of Intelligence under Bush Senior, member of ISG and involved in the Iran-Contra affair.

107 OPS was founded to 'gather' intelligence on Iraq, parallel to the intelligence agencies.

108 Feith was succeeded by Edelman in August 2005.

109 Marshall is a well known legend especially in national security circles, he received his nick name through his work on the U.S. star wars program. He started under Nixon and has headed the think tank since 1973. Marshall was one of the most important promoters of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) but has also worked on a report about climate change, indicating that those risks are much more serious than terrorism. The report has not been distributed widely because of the fear that the Democrats could use it as campaign fuel. ONA itself analyzes regional and global military balances and determines long term trends and threats, its work is highly classified and strategic advice from Marshall can only be accessed by a tight circle of civilian and military strategists.

110 It has also been reported that Rice circumvented the NSC and the Vice President to talk directly to the President, which enraged Elliot Abrams, who holds a key position in the NSC (Crooke et al., 2007, 1).

111 Biographical studies show that „he has had a knack for forming teams that follow him. He depends more on collegial discussion than on reading memos ... he uses a combination of instinctive smarts, traditional conservative values, and quick learning combined with a finely honed skill of reading people to make his choices. What Bush lacks in policy curiosity he makes up for in people curiosity ... Bush's outlook is intensely positive ... Bush is a self-proclaimed hater of introspection, which he calls 'psychobabble' ... Bush is not driven by political ambition ... Bush's compassionate conservatism is an active type of social vision ... Personal responsibility is a recurrent theme

4.2.5 Changes in Policy

The decline of power of the hardliners and neo-conservatives implies a de-emphasis of unilateralism and militarism, which can be perceived through first indicators of a policy shift. At the same time, rhetoric is becoming increasingly more aggressive to serve the interests of Republican voters. Bush came down in favor of Rice and supported the multilateral efforts and the UNSC sanctions. The gradual decrease in demanded pre-conditions for talks and the diplomatic talks with Iran about the situation in Iraq indicate a learning experience that has made Bush more moderate. Furthermore, the administration initially rejected the December 2006 ISG report but has gradually implemented key recommendations, such as talking to Iran. A very interesting but not widely perceived opportunity opened up in the run up to the 2007 G8 summit. Bush indirectly showed interest in talking to Iran “through the environmental backdoor”. Such a development would be an interesting extension of the current engagement, which is limited to talks on Iraq (Globalist, 2007). Bush proposed a conference with the world’s 15 largest greenhouse gas emitters. The list contains the P5+1 as well as Iran, India and Japan. However, since there has not been not much progress it seems Bush has sided with Cheney again, who, although weakened by several scandals, still holds much leverage.¹¹²

4.3 Conclusion

Divisions between the executive and the legislative branch, institutional biases and personal preferences paired with dwindling domestic and international support characterize the current situation. Alteration in leadership and power structures occurred and the beginning of a moderated policy can be perceived. The question that still has to be answered is whether those changes are significant, sustainable changes in style and/or strategy. This question will have to be evaluated in the long term. President Bush has, however, lost the clarity he displayed at the beginning of his terms in office. Reasons for change are to be found mainly in the disastrous consequences in Iraq that summed up to a humbling learning experience and led to a loss of domestic and international support as well as a loss of global moral authority. The new struggle between the State Department and the Office of the Vice President seems to exemplify the alternation of Bush between two opposing positions. This ambivalence leads to re-orientations from time to time and appears to display an incoherent policy towards Iran. This is further elevated by a kind of psychological warfare that is carried out in the media and sporadically accelerates feelings of fear. It must nevertheless be asked whether this wavering again reflects the divide between rhetoric and action; rhetorically Bush reflects Cheney’s view to serve the Republican voters but in practice agrees to implement Rice’s strategy to serve the situation. These two positions are not mutually exclusive. It can be argued that Bush is serving domestic voting interests and toughening the American stand with his rhetoric to reach a better bargaining position. At the same time Bush could prepare a stage where he might even come to talk with Iran, but the process that leads there requires some face-saving.¹¹³ The major link between the two countries is common interests that have the power to drive them together, and current changes bear some hope that they will lead to rapprochement.

... Bush’s genuine conservatism should not be confused with being a mere mouthpiece for right-wing interests or having a blind attachment to ideology ... Bush is quite prepared to be pragmatic and make compromises” (Moens, 2004, 6).

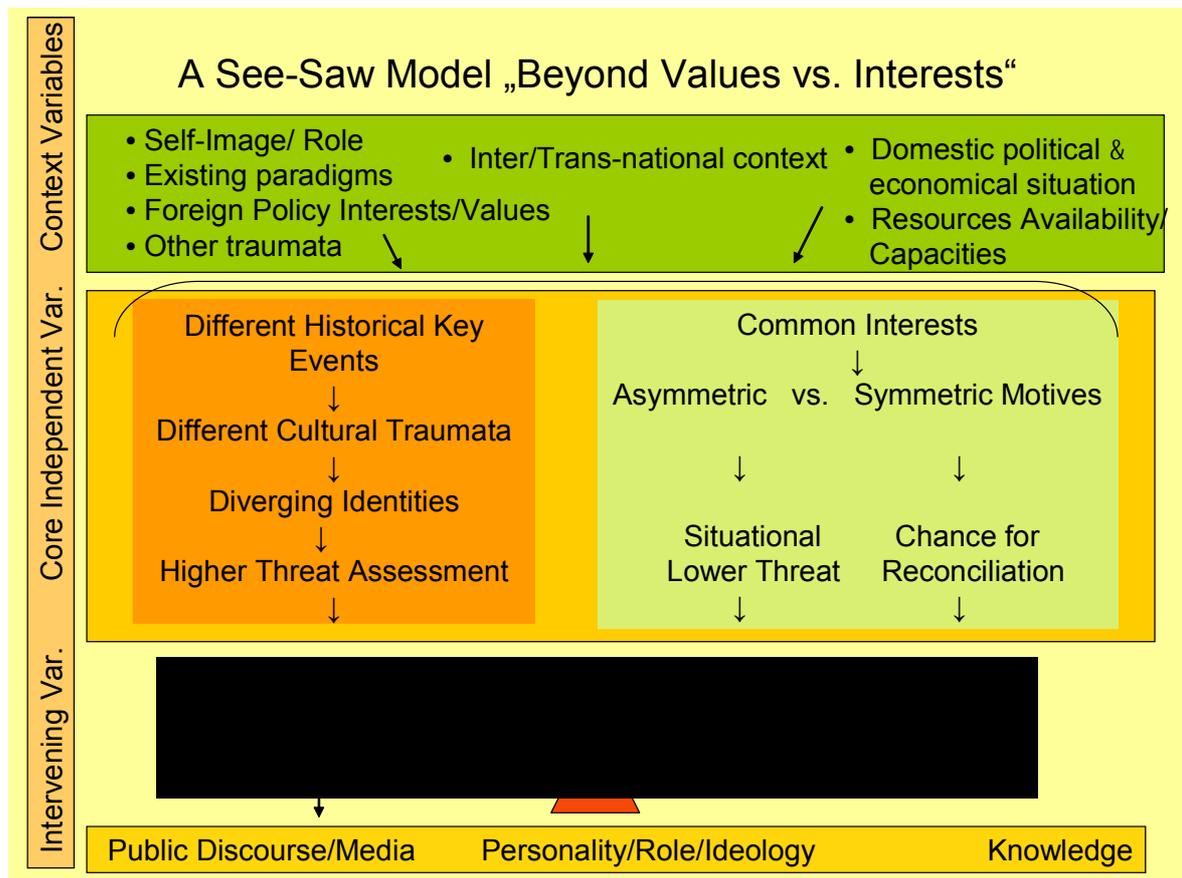
112 Although Bush is alternating between the positions of Rice and Cheney, it seems from time to time that the balance has shifted back to Cheney, who won over Rice and that the President is back to favoring a military solution because he does not trust any successor (MacAskill, 2007, 2).

113 According to a Welt online article from the 13th of July 2007, Iran is also taking steps to calm the situation. It announced that it would allow new inspections by the IAEA at the heavy water reactor in Arak and will allegedly give information to the IAEA that answers the open questions which caused the imposition of the UNSC sanctions.

5. A See-Saw Model – Values versus Interests or Beyond?¹¹⁴

Factors that influence American policy towards Iran and the U.S.-Iranian relationship have been extracted in the course of this study. Based on the literature analysis and the results of the expert interviews, a ‘See-Saw Model’ has been developed. It consists of core independent, context, and intervening variables that influence threat assessment and cooperation (see Graph 2). The core variables refer mainly to the national level, intervening variables apply to individuals, and context variables to a mixture of domestic in relation to international dimensions; the separation can nevertheless be considered artificial.

Through different processes, two core variables built weights that last on the see-saw and determine its direction toward either more threat perception (leading to stronger security measures) or more cooperation (leading to engagement). One process stream refers to the different historical key events that amount to different cultural trauma. A crisis of meaning of this nature is imprinted into collective memories, which are different from actual history and which shape the construction and representation of diverging identities. As has been shown through research studies linking identity and threat perception, diverging identities (between America and Iran) lead to higher threat perceptions and less cooperation (Rousseau et al., 2001, 15) and therefore constitute the main negative weight on the see-saw.



Graph 2

The historical perspective also shows that common interests are capable of overcoming cultural traumata, animating both countries to cooperate. These common interests place a positive weight on the see-saw. Such interests, based on asymmetric motives, have a positive influence on threat

¹¹⁴ I would like to thank Professor Gary Sick from Columbia University for giving me the first idea of a see-saw model; he argued that the see-saw is impacted by power and strength, which at equilibrium provide a chance for contact.

perceptions only for a short amount of time. Ideal conditions for reaching long-term reconciliation of the relationship are common interests based on symmetric motives. Both countries claim to have stability interests in Iraq, and although the underlying motives are different, this still gives hope for an improvement of the relationship while also highlighting the fragility of this opportunity.

Intervening variables that refer to perception on the individual level are diametrical knowledge, which moderates affect and prevents manipulation on the positive side, and receptivity to public discourse on the negative.¹¹⁵ In order to apply this model to individuals a third variable should be included that measures the degree of responsibility and the interplay of role and personality influenced by individual value orientation.¹¹⁶

Additionally, there are different context variables which also determine the situation: Existing paradigms (e.g. nationalism versus internationalism drawing from self-image), other traumata (e.g. 9/11), strategic interests (e.g. geopolitical, resources, historical), the international context (e.g. international sanctions regime towards Iran), responsibilities towards allies (e.g. Israel), the domestic political and economic situation (e.g. a war-tired population in America), and the availability of resources (e.g. limited military capacity due to Iraq war).

Depending on the interplay and weights of the variables and the circumstances, the willingness to cooperate varies. Different packages of variables characterize diverse situations and phases that need to be analyzed for understanding and intervening. In order to establish a cooperative environment there needs to be an equilibrium between the weights of both sides of the see-saw. It can be assumed that although shared identities are manipulable, it is generally easier to trigger them than common interests, which implies a slight tendency of the see-saw to the left side, which would always have to be taken into account as well. This also implies that reconciliation of the U.S.-Iranian relationship would need serious efforts to counterweight this tendency. Overall, it can be assumed that values as well as interests and their interplay are crucial variables for threat assessments and cooperation. Common interests should be promoted and if interests are at least partially derived from values, then looking for similarities rather than promoting a clash of cultures would contribute to a more peaceful way of dealing with each other. The World Value Survey found coinciding global values: Trust and Democracy. These are the main dimensions that should be worked on to reach symmetry of contact and cooperation. However, this analysis was focused on American foreign policy. Since it is a relationship, much of course depends on the behavior of the Iranians as well.

115 In his experiments Rousseau demonstrated that threat perceptions are manipulable in general but also that knowledge prevents such manipulation (Rousseau et al., 2001, 15). An expert in a certain field has a finer threat assessment than an average civilian, who can in fact be informed but even more easily be influenced by certain media representations. People with less knowledge rely on mediated information and are primed in this way. The famous "CNN-effect" has to be considered here. It is extremely important and influential in bringing images and issues to the forefront of American political consciousness, as happened during the hostage crisis. Livingston (1997, 4) also identified three ways in which media can affect policy making: agenda setting, impediment to the achievement of political goals, and accelerating of decision making processes.

Applying this to the current situation it can be said that the media have become far more critical and representative since Iraq, which provides a different ground for decision makers. "The distance they got the last four years is dramatic. You can see that the diversity of opinion and investigative pieces that are more critical has increased." (Interview Lalwani, 10, 5) However, although, as has been argued before, actions have become more pragmatic, the public discourse remains aggressive and is in that way mirrored in the narrative of the American population.

116 For an institutional application, institutional biases have to be taken into account.

6. Policy Recommendations

Since the criticism of deconstruction focuses on a certain depoliticization, nostalgia, the absence of taking a position and “the suspense of the decision in the undecidable which can never take necessary political decision” (Thomson, 2005, 186, 199), this work aims to address this critique by not stopping here, instead giving a clear indication of how to re-construct. The re-construction is meant to provide a more constructive ground for decision making.

The derived policy recommendations are based on the results of this study, which provides a better understanding of the complex U.S.-Iran relationship and America’s foreign policy towards Iran. Nonetheless, there is awareness of the fact that this cannot reflect the role of decision makers in charge, but is rather a pragmatic and applied approach of academia that aims to provide a reflection on old ideas and an inspiration for new ideas from an external perspective.¹¹⁷ Recommendations mainly address the American political system and audience but can be applied in the European and other contexts as well.

1. Strategy

- *Sustainable longterm strategy*: develop a sustainable long term strategy towards Iran and the region, based on a differentiated assessment that includes diverse voices. Take the ISG recommendations into account. Set transparent goals and communicate them .
- *Embedded strategy*: An Iran-specific strategy should be embedded in a comprehensive regional strategy with context-specific instruments and accounting for regional and domestic dynamics.

2. Multilateral Efforts

- *Actively support multilateralism*: To regain the confidence of the international community, to restore own capacities, but also to re-evaluate the benefit of multilateral cooperation, active engagement in multilateral efforts and a strengthening of the role of the UNSC is recommended. The U.S. has to deliver the most important part of an incentive package that should be offered to Iran. Iran longs for the respect of the U.S. and is also interested in security guarantees. America could more effectively use its leverage in influencing the improvement of the non-proliferation and sanctions regime as well as helping to revive negotiation efforts.
- *Engage Russia and China*: America should re-think its priorities. Meddling in Russia’s backyard does not help gain support for the Iranian case. It is recommended to involve Russia in strategic planning. The same applies to China and Europe.
- *Reform IAEA, strengthen non-proliferation regime*: Support the work of the IAEA to establish effective and strict control mechanisms for nuclear facilities in Iran.
- *Pressure Iran to ratify the Additional Protocol of the Safeguard Agreement by offering incentives*: Incentives should include economic incentives, security guarantees and an idealistic re-evaluation of Iran as a more equal partner. Iran is able to mobilize many people in the Muslim and Arab world by assuming a victim’s role and by condemning America; elevating Iran while keeping up pressure could reduce this influence.
- *Implications of a nuclear Iran*: Think about the implications of an Iran with nuclear weapons capacity and develop different scenarios and strategies for how to deal with it.
- *Allow enrichment but under strict international control*: Iran already has the basic knowledge that is needed, but an industrial scale of enrichment needs to be prevented through international controls.

117 The results are limited in scope due to the research design and do not demand to reflect the full complexity of the topic (for further research ideas, see Appendix 9).

- *International nuclear fuel bank*: Since Iran insists on its right to enrichment, the idea of a nuclear fuel bank under international control located in Iran should be developed.¹¹⁸
- *Vertical non-proliferation*: Play an active and supportive part in vertical non-proliferation. This would help to regain moral authority and credibility and would decrease bitterness deriving from the NPT's discrimination against non-nuclear states.
- *Regional WMD free zone*: Although not realistic in the short run, the idea of establishing a weapons of mass destruction free zone should not be given up in the long run.

3. Contact and Engagement

- *(Self-)reflection* versus 'psycho-babble'¹¹⁹: It is recommended to establish mechanisms that allow reflection on interpretation patterns and historical, cultural, social, and political variables. This is important in the Iranian case in regard to the assessment of Iran's intentions, because the interpretation of intent is a crucial factor in assessing threats. There needs to be awareness that perception patterns and schemes function through simplifying systems of re-confirmation that serve the purpose of reconfirming the subject's own attitudes, perception biases, stereotypes and enemy images¹²⁰ and that are reproduced and reinforced by behavior and discourse that should not be used in manipulative ways. The special influence of cultural traumata must be dealt with, as well as their effect on collective memory, perception and behavior. Efforts should be made to deconstruct, work through, assume responsibility for and newly re-construct associated perceptions that should then lead to more constructive attitudes.
- *Develop trust building measures as pre-conditions* for constructive contact: The mutual lack of trust is the central factor responsible for the worsening of the relationship. Mutual lack of respect and principles of respective belief systems make improvement of understanding difficult. Therefore, it is necessary to develop trust building measures and mechanisms that increase cultural sensitivity and respect.
- *Understand the Iranian side*: Analyze in which way is Iran capable of engaging. Understand the actors' variety, positions, and dynamics.
- Recognize Iran as an *equal counterpart* in Iraq: Rapprochement efforts only work if there is a recognition of Iran as an equal counterpart; instructive behavior and discourse on what is right and wrong would be counterproductive.
- *Start with a periphery approach*: While preparing the opportunity for high level engagement, contact should be started through a periphery approach. First steps are the diplomatic talks about Iraq, which should be continued; the idea of the environmental backdoor should be implemented and other opportunities looked for.
- Establish *high level contact*¹²¹: Since it is important for Bush to have a personal relationship with people, it would be helpful to establish high-level contacts that involve him, as the key decision maker, and a moderate Iranian leader. This needs to be prepared in a longer process and framed in a context that allows both sides to save face and avoid counterproductive domestic reactions.
- *Common interests as the key to a more constructive relationship*: Without wanting to deny the potential of threats, the concentration on common interests can foster shared identities as a counterweight to elevated mutual threats in order to find a balance between conflict and cooperation. Although often forgotten, there was a time when political leaders emphasized the things that the two states had in common. At the beginning, the relationship was perceived as a

118 The idea of an international nuclear fuel bank was initially suggested by Russia and is favored by Democratic Congress members. There are also suggestions to locate such a fuel bank outside Iran.

119 Cp. Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4.

120 These strategies help human beings to reduce complex „reality“ into manageable schemes. Consequently, received information is adjusted to confirm schemes and categories to achieve consistency between information and category. This works as a stabilizing factor in identity formation, group, and system cohesion (Floh, 1991).

121 Direct interaction and cooperation can alter biased information processing through the opportunity to receive information that does not confirm existing stereotypes. Establishing contact situations always requires equal status participants as a pre-condition and a common issue, which helps to (contact hypothesis). Starting with moderate representatives from the “other side” helps to blur the lines of diverging identities and supports re-construction.

friendship. Clocks cannot be turned back, but awareness of this can put current differences into perspective. To improve the situation in Iraq, the U.S. needs to cooperate with Iran.

- *Minimize "points of attack"*: To reconcile the relationship it would be a tremendous step to apologize for the staging of the Mossadeq coup and to assuage fears that there is a risk of its repetition. Although this might be an unrealistic project at this point, it has to be kept in mind that admitting responsibility would strengthen the Iranian resistance.

4. Public Diplomacy and Support for Democratization

- *Invest in public diplomacy*: In order to facilitate the already existing pro-American sentiment in Iran, public diplomacy is an effective tool as long as it is not targeted towards external regime change.
- *Improve public image of Iran in America*: Involve the fragmented Iranian diaspora and make them more visible.
- *Support Good Governance and Democratization in the region*: It is recommended to support good governance and rule of law instead of only focusing on classical democracy promotion. A very good understanding of the context, of cultural, social, political, economic, and religious factors and a clear formulation of realistic goals is necessary in order to develop context-specific measures that should facilitate democratization without demanding external change.¹²²
- *Facilitate without controlling*: Develop an appropriate strategy and find partners that help to move beyond the liberalization phase: Based on a differentiated actors analysis and a complementing plan of possible scenarios, a strategy must be developed that supports the elites in their will for liberalization and cooperates covertly with non-state actors aiming at a process where the elites lose control over liberalization and the transition process continues into democratization.¹²³
- *Support civil society*: Civil society is crucial for democratization processes. This process requires moderating rhetoric that plays into the hands of the political elite.
- *Establish student and cultural exchange*.
- *Increase and establish diplomatic representation*: Starting with representations in neighboring countries, it is advisable to have diplomats in the Swiss Embassy in Tehran as well.

5. Restrict unilateral trade sanctions, open trade relations and regional economic development

- *Limit unilateral trade sanctions to targeted sanctions*: Significant effects of broad applications of sanctions could not be proven; therefore a tailored, targeted sanctions concept should be developed.
- *Open targeted trade relations*: Based on a differentiated assessment of the economical structures of Iran, trade relations should be re-opened that especially benefit society but not the powerful Iranian foundations.
- *Economic development with a different focus*: Foster economic development in the region that is less dependent on the energy market and adjust the domestic energy policy to alternative energy markets.
- *Support economic integration in the region*: There are first efforts by the GCC to integrate their economies; this should be supported in a broader, non-exclusive fashion in the region.

122 On the one hand, external assistance is needed for the liberalization phase, support for democratic and civil movements and also patience and a good calculation of the associated risks. In case of negative concomitants, stabilizing measures need to be applied (Sandschneider, 2003, 29).

123 "Double bottom strategy" suggested by Beck (2005, 211).

6. Decrease power projection, restore and develop capacities, maintain stick

- Keep military presence in the region to continue pressuring Iran, avoid provocation, and respect Iran's development into a more powerful actor in the region.
- Restore American military capacities; rethink efficacy of strategies, impact of organizational culture barriers and applied means. Improve intelligence on Iran, integrate more measures of human intelligence, improve language and context-specific knowledge of the executive.

7. Middle East Peace Process

- Reassure Israel but also work as an honest broker with the other Quartet members on the *solution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict* (including a solution for Hamas and PLO)
- *Deal directly with Syria*

8. Support development of a regional security strategy

- Initiate and support a new inclusive initiative of *Gulf Security* (including Iran & GCC¹²⁴): Support regional security partnerships but accept national sovereignty; the central aim should be security of the region, not arming the region.

9. Initiate legal charges against Ahmadinejad's denial of the Holocaust

10. Develop more outside-the-box approaches (especially using media, internet etc.).

124 Iran has suggested a regional security program for years. It has always failed because it requires the withdrawal of all external military from the region. However, the presence of the U.S. is essential to Israel and the GCC. It should be considered whether there is an opportunity for a bargain with limiting U.S. presence and including Iran in such a plan at the same time. Security guarantees from the U.S. to Iran are essential to give this a chance.

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Appendix 1

Interview questions U.S. Foreign and Security Policy and U.S.-Iranian Relation:

1. What is the first association that comes to your mind when you think of Iran?

Threat assessment and perception

2. What are the threats that America associates with Iran?
3. How much do you think is this threat perception fact based?

Historical relation and perception

4. Looking back to the historical development of the relation between Iran and America, what are the key events that shaped perception from each other on both sides?
5. Do these experiences still play a role in current policy decisions and how?
6. Would you say they are purposely reused?
7. Did the perception of Iran change since 9/11 and how?

Strategy, policy elements, and objectives

10. How would you describe the current strategy of America towards Iran and do you think it is a clear strategy?
12. Would you agree that there is no coherent approach to the conflict between Iran and America? What are the main reasons for the incoherence?
13. Is the policy more goal oriented vs. process oriented – what are the implications?
14. Do you see a longterm plan? (if not – why?)
15. What are the objectives and the main interests America has in that region?
16. Which elements should a strategy towards Iran contain in your view?
17. Should such a strategy be more cooperation oriented (appeasement) or conflict oriented (power projection)?
18. What do you think about the efficacy of sanctions?
19. Powell's concept of smart sanctions, would that be an option for Iran?
20. What do you think about the efficacy of the threat of military action?
21. How much and which kind of diplomacy is needed?
22. What were the biggest mistakes, which were made in the past in dealing with that situation?
23. What roles do the UNSC, China, Russia, Israel, and India play?

Drive - values vs. interests?

27. Regarding the debate between interests and values as major drives of America's foreign policy towards Iran – What do you think is more decisive?

Structure and influences of political decision making

28. If you look at the decisive institutions in the political decision making process which one is dominating the decision making process?
29. How do you perceive the split between State and Defense Department and who has more leverage in the NSC and particularly on Bush?
30. Who are the decisive key actors in these institutions?
31. What are the different perspectives of different actors?
32. What is the reason why this is their favorite option?
33. How much influence does Congress have? Could they use their power more effectively?

34. What do you think about actions taken by Congress?
35. How do you perceive the role of the American people?
36. What about the influence of lobby groups/think tanks/ideology/religion?
(AIPAC, Christian Right, AEI, Military Industry, Iranian Lobby)
37. How would you describe the role of the media?
38. How much is the Iranian perspective reflected in the American policy?
39. Would a better understanding move the relation forward?
40. Rational vs. irrational actors
41. What is your prognosis for the future, what will be the next steps?
42. How likely is a military attack (1-10)?

Appendix 2

Description of Sample Groups

1. Politicians and Administration officials in leadership positions

These are experts who are involved in the decision making process, strategy development, implementation, and control of the implementation of the foreign policy towards Iran. This includes current and former decision makers from the White House, Departments of State and Defense, Congress and the intelligence community.

2. Staff members in key institutions

This group consists of staff members employed with the same key institutions that are mentioned above, which are involved in the process of foreign policy making and implementing towards Iran. Through this affiliation, they have privileged access to information, key actors, and the decision making process. Possibly, they also provide information in the role of experts by themselves to key actors within the institutional context.

3. Experts inside the field of action but outside the key institutions

Members of this group are experts who are part of the field of study especially through their knowledge of the field, but also because they have access to privileged information and key actors through different associations with key institutions or expert circles.¹²⁵ Members are decision makers or staff members of European, German, and Iranian representations to the United States or the United Nations. This group also includes experts working for American think tanks, academic institutions, businessmen, and lobbyists.

125 It could be argued that the third group only provides context knowledge but no information that would validate theoretical considerations. This has been taken into account but the argument would be answered here in reverse because for certain dimensions of the study (e.g. evaluation of the current strategy and structural details) this group provides more valid data than the other groups.

Appendix 3

Interview Partners

Name of Expert Affiliated Institution	Date and Time of Interview
1. Burton Wides Congress, House, Washington Judiciary Committee Advisor	February 12th, 1pm
2. Geoffrey Kemp Nixon Center, Washington Director of Regional Strategic Programs Former NSC-staff	March, 1st, 5:30pm
3. Robert S. Bassman Bassman and Mitchell Law Firm, Washington Lawyer and Businessman	April 18th, 2:00pm
4. Nicholas Burns U.S. Department of State, Washington Undersecretary of State	April 30th, 10:00 am
5. Vali Nasr Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), New York Professor at Fletcher School, Tufts University, Medford	May 9th, 6:00pm
6. Jonathan Kessler AIPAC, Washington Leadership Development Director, Director of Schusterman Advocacy Institute	May 10th, 1:00pm
7. Steve Clemons New America Foundation, Washington Director of American Strategy Program	May 14th, 11:00am
8. Mark Palmer Freedom House, Washington Vice Chairman Council for a Community of Democracies Former U.S. Ambassador, Department of State	May 17th, 12:30pm
9. Patrick Clawson Washington Institute for Near East Policy Deputy Director for Research	May 17th, 3pm
10. Sameer Lalwani New America Foundation, Washington Researcher	May 17th, 4:30pm
11. James Woolsey Former C.I.A. director 1993-1995, Washington Former Advisor on SALT1 Talks	May 18th, 10:00am

Former Under Secretary of the Navy
Trustee of Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)
Member of Project for the New American Century (PNAC)

12. Bill Miller
U.S. Department of State, Washington
Former U.S. Ambassador in Iran
(phone interview) May 22nd, 10:00am

13. Trita Parsi
National Iranian American Council (NIAC), Washington
President May 22nd , 4:00pm

14. Admiral Cotton
U.S. Department of Defense, Washington
Navy Admiral May 23rd, 9:00am

15. Jesper Pedersen
Congress, House, Washington
Professional Staff, Subcommittee on Europe May 23rd, 1:00pm

16. N.N., Mid level State Department official
State Department, Office of Iranian Affairs, Washington
(phone interview) May 23rd, 3:00pm

17. Klaus Scharioth
Federal Foreign Office of Germany
German Ambassador to the U.S. , Washington May 24th, 11:45am

18. Monica Y. Thurmond
Congress, Senate, Washington
Legislative Correspondent and Security Policy Expert;
Office of Senator Nelson May 25th, 12:00pm

19. Ilan Berman
American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC)
Vice President for Policy, Washington May 25th, 8:00am

20. N.N., Congressional Expert
Congress, House, Washington
Foreign Affairs Committee, Middle East Expert May 25th, 4:30pm

21. Herro Mustafa
U.S. Department of State, Washington
Middle East expert of Undersecretary of State Burns May 25th, 5:30pm

22. Sheri Rickert
Congress, House, Washington
Office of Congressman Chris Smith,
House Foreign Affairs committee ranking member May 29th, 09:30

23. N.N., Congressional Expert
Congress, Senate, Washington
Foreign Relations Committee,
Non-Proliferation Expert May 29th, 10:30am

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 24. Soenke Simon
Federal Foreign Office of Germany
German Embassy in Washington
Middle East Expert | May 29th, 3:00pm |
| 25. N.N., German diplomat
Federal Foreign Office of Germany
German Embassy in Washington
Non-Proliferation Expert | May 29th, 3:45pm |
| 26. Prof. Jo-Ann Hart
Brown University, Providence
Professor and Iran Expert
(phone interview) | May 30th, 2:00pm |
| 27. Donald M. Payne
Congress, House, Washington
Congressman, Member of Foreign Affairs Committee | May 31st, 12:00 pm |
| 28. Gary Sick
Professor at Columbia University, New York
Director of Gulf 2000 Project
Former NSC-staff
Board of Directors of Human Rights Watch | May 31st, 3:30pm |
| 29. Iranian diplomat
Foreign Ministry of Iran
Iranian Mission to UN, New York | June 1st, 10:00am |
| 30. Katharina Ahrendts
Federal Foreign Office of Germany
German Mission to the UN, New York
Press Officer | June 1st, 4:00pm |
| 31. N.N., Employee of EU mission to UN
EU mission to the UN, New York | June 4th, 9:00am |
| 32. Isobel Coleman, CFR
Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), New York
Middle East and Iran Expert | June 4th, 10:30am |

Appendix 4

Composition and distribution and groups of Experts

Legend:

- number of interviews per institution
- duration of interviews per institution
- number of interviewees according to the interviews list
 - clarifying double counts due to dual roles

1 (1 hour)

1 (**1 hour**)

numbers: 1, 2

numbers in *italic*: numbers: 1, 2, 3

(1 double count with “x” institution)

GROUP 1							
	National Security Council (NSC)	Office of the Vice President (OVP)	Department of State	Department of Defense	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)	Congress	
						Democrats	Republican
decision maker			1 (30min) number: 4	1 (2 ½ hours) number: 14		1 (30min) (House) number: 27	
former decision maker	3 (4 hours) numbers: 2, 21, 28		2 (1 ½ hours) numbers: 8, 12		1 (2 hours) number: 11		

GROUP 2							
staff member			2 (2 hours) numbers: 16, 21 (1 double count with NSC)			5 (4 hours) (3 House, numbers: 1, 15, 20 2 Senate numbers: 18, 23)	1 (40min) (House, number: 22)
former staff member				1 (30 min) number: 2			

GROUP 3			
	European representation to the UN	German representation to the U.S. and the UN	Iranian representation to the UN
decision maker		1 (20 min) number: 17	
staff member	1 (1 hour) number: 31	3 (5 hours) numbers: 24, 25, 30	1 (1 ½ hours) number: 29

Thinks tanks	Academics	Businessmen	Lobbies	
			Israel Lobby	Iran Lobby
8 numbers: 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 19, 32 (2 double counts with DoD and State)	2 numbers: 26, 28 (1 double count with NSC)	2 (2 hours) numbers: 3, 11 (1 double count with CIA)	1 (1 hour) number: 6	1 (1 hour) number: 13

Group 1: Politicians, Administration officials in leadership positions 9 experts interviewed

Group 2: Staff members in key institutions 9 experts interviewed
(- 1 double count because of dual role with group 1)

Group 3: Experts inside the field of action but outside the key institutions 19 experts interviewed
(- 4 double counts because of dual roles with group 1)

32 experts interviewed

Appendix 5

2003 Iran Offer

“In May 2003 the Swiss ambassador to Tehran faxed a two-page proposal [see the two following pages] to the U.S. Department of State indicating that Iran wanted to begin a broad dialogue with the U.S. and was ready to reach agreement on its nuclear program, acceptance of Israel, and ending its support to for militant Islamic groups in return for U.S. security guarantees and an end to economic sanctions. The Bush administration did not accept the offer.” (FCNL, 2007)¹²⁶

Source:

Friends Committee on National Legislation / FCNL (2007). 2003 Iran Memo Calling for Dialogue @ http://www.fcnl.org/issues/item.php?item_id=2398&issue_id=123. (updated on March 16th, 2007, accessed on July 26th, 2007)

¹²⁶ There is not much information about the 2003 offer, FCNL is the one of the rare sources that made a copy of the offer available as a pdf-file online.

Appendix 6

Key text elements of P5+1 nuclear package of incentives offered to Iran

The following are the elements of a proposal to Iran as approved on 1 June 2006 at the meeting in Vienna of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and the European Union:



Our goal is to develop relations and cooperation with Iran based on mutual respect and the establishment of international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. We propose a fresh start in negotiations of a comprehensive agreement with Iran. Such an agreement would be deposited with the IAEA and endorsed in a Security Council resolution.

To create the right conditions for negotiations:

We will:

- reaffirm Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with its NPT obligations, and in this context reaffirm their support for the development by Iran of a civil nuclear energy programme;
- commit to actively support the building of new light water reactors in Iran through international joint projects, in accordance with the IAEA Statute and the NPT;
- agree to suspend discussion of Iran's nuclear programme at the Security Council on resumption of negotiations.

Iran will:

- commit to addressing all the outstanding concerns of the IAEA through full cooperation with the IAEA;
- suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities to be verified by the IAEA, as requested by the IAEA Board of Governors and the UN Security Council, and commit to continue this during these negotiations; and
- resume implementation of the Additional Protocol.

AREAS OF FUTURE COOPERATION TO BE COVERED IN NEGOTIATIONS ON A LONG TERM AGREEMENT

NUCLEAR

We will take the following steps:

Iran's Rights to Nuclear Energy

- reaffirm Iran's inalienable right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of the NPT, and co-operate with Iran in the development by Iran of a civil nuclear power programme.
- negotiate and implement a Euratom/Iran nuclear cooperation agreement.

Light Water Reactors:

- actively support the building of new light water power reactors in Iran through international joint projects, in accordance with the IAEA Statute and the NPT, using state-of-the art technology, including by authorising the transfer of necessary goods and the provision of advanced technology to make its power reactors safe against earthquakes.
- provide co-operation with the management of spent nuclear fuel and radioactive waste through appropriate arrangements.

Research & Development in Nuclear Energy

- provide a substantive package of research and development co-operation, including possible provision of light water research reactors, notably in the fields of radioisotope production, basic research and nuclear applications in medicine and agriculture.

Fuel Guarantees

- give legally binding, multi-layered fuel assurances to Iran, based on:
 - participation as a partner in an international facility in Russia to provide enrichment services for a reliable supply of fuel to Iran's nuclear reactors. Subject to negotiations, such a facility could enrich all the UF₆ produced in Iran.
 - establishment on commercial terms of a buffer stock to hold a reserve of up to 5 years' supply of nuclear fuel dedicated to Iran, with participation and under supervision of the IAEA.
 - development of a standing multilateral mechanism for reliable access to nuclear fuel with the IAEA based on ideas to be considered at the next Board of Governors.

Review of Moratorium

The long-term agreement would, with regard to common efforts to build international confidence, include a clause for review of the agreement in all its aspects, to follow:

- confirmation by the IAEA that all outstanding issues and concerns reported by the IAEA, including those activities which could have a military nuclear dimension, have been resolved; and
- confirmation that there are no undeclared nuclear activities or materials in Iran and that international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's civil nuclear programme has been restored.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

Regional Security Co-operation

Support for a new conference to promote dialogue and cooperation on regional security issues.

International Trade & Investment

Improving Iran's access to the international economy, markets and capital, through practical support for full integration into international structures, including the WTO, and to create the framework for increased direct investment in Iran and trade with Iran (including a Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement with EU). Steps would be taken to improve access to key goods and technology.

Civil Aviation

Civil aviation cooperation, including the possible removal of restrictions on US and European manufacturers, from exporting civil aircraft to Iran, thereby widening the prospect of Iran renewing its fleet of civil airlines.

Energy Partnership

Establishment of a long-term energy partnership between Iran and the EU and other willing partners, with concrete and practical applications.

Telecommunications Infrastructure

Support for the modernisation of Iran's telecommunication infrastructure and advanced internet provision, including by possible removal of relevant US and other export restrictions.

High Technology Co-operation

Co-operation in fields of high technology and other areas to be agreed.

Agriculture

Support for agricultural development in Iran, including possible access to US and European agricultural products, technology and farm equipment.

Source: Iran Focus, 2006.

@ <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=7946> (accessed on June 24th, 2007)

Appendix 7

United States Central Command (USCENTCOM): Area of Responsibility



Source: http://www.centcom.mil/sites/uscentcom2/Misc/centcom_aor.aspx (accessed on July 22nd, 2007)

Appendix 8

American Foreign Policy Value Orientations and Respective Psychological Motives

Table 1.1. Essential Elements of the Three Foreign Policy Approaches

Approaches	Principal Actors	Views States as	Operates according to logic of	Motive	Value Orientation
Realism/Neorealism	States	Combative; states are enemies	Satisficing, emphasizing the logic of effectiveness	Power	Security
Liberalism/Neoliberalism	States and corporations	Competitive; states are rivals	Optimizing, emphasizing the logic of efficiency	Profit or achievement	Economic/ prosperity
Idealism/Constructivism Sociological Institutionalism	Individuals in government and society	Cooperative; states are potential friends	Acceptability, emphasizing the logic of correspondence between objectives and behaviors	Social affiliation	Community political

Source: Chittick, 2006, 15

Appendix 9

Need for further Research

This study gives a first insight into the complex relation between America and Iran and patterns that have shaped the relation and American foreign and security policy towards Iran. The results are mainly based on expert interviews, which does not mean that they reflect the conditions in their full complexity.

The sample was divided into three groups according to their institutional affiliation. Based on the derived data, the sample should be extended and categories of values, norms, and ideology included to validate the preliminary results of the ideological divide.

The Iranian perspective could not be considered in depth, but since it is a relation of two actors the results of the study should be complemented by an assessment of the Iranian perception of the relation. There are also indicators that both countries are actually using very similar patterns of perception and action in dealing with each other. On a deeper level underlying interests and values should be deconstructed and compared. A hypothesis could be that both nations harbor the same intentions but have to construct opponents because they have created a certain fixation on a binary relation and act at the same time on the assumptions of zero sum games. An investigation into potentials for re-framing as a basis for cooperation would be of great interest.

This can be extended by the frame of the democratic peace theorem, which claims that the core variables of norms and institutions explain cooperation between democracies (Farnham, 2003, 396). Instead of emphasizing the differences between democracies and non-democracies on the second dimension, it could be investigated how far norms and institutions (e.g. UN, NPT) are shared and even if they are shared, what are the implications of their inherent discrimination (vertical proliferation, P5 as nuclear powers)? Is this based on a projection of Western values onto the international stage intermingled with different distribution of resources? Does it lead to asymmetric forms of power? Would a transformation of the institutions (reform of UNSC) or an expansion of membership (WTO membership for Iran) provide less projection space for Iranian leaders to blame the U.S. and the West? Moderate and reformist voices could in turn gain more ground and influence again.

Symbolized by the Iranian case there is potential for the emergence of a new role of the UNSC in the nuclear non-proliferation regime as well as for a strengthening of the IAEA. Additionally, new forms of informal components of global security governance evolve to circumvent formal outdated shortcomings that could be dimensions for further investigations into a comprehensive understanding of the handling of the case as well. Within the P5 (+1) frame, the role of the key players and institutional power to integrate those would be of interest.

The derived see-saw model is preliminary and could be tested in its dimensions, their interplay, and possible weights. Here, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches can contribute to illuminate the validity of the developed model.

It would be interesting to repeat the examination over time, e.g. regarding value preferences, strategies, the choice of policy methods and their reflection in threat perceptions comparatively with a Democratic Administration. This could be complemented by other cross-case studies analyzed according to the same dimensions. Explanations could be derived as to why the cases are treated differently although they might potentially pose similar threats.