
Beyond the enemy image and spiral model: cognitive–strategic research after the cold war

Richard K. Herrmann and
Michael P. Fischerkeller

Hans Morgenthau made a powerful argument against studying motivation in international relations theory.¹ He then spent the better part of his most famous book discussing the difference between imperialist and status quo powers and the importance of distinguishing one from the other. Likewise, students of neorealism have argued against conceptual differentiations aside from power at the unit level only to return to the foreign policy level of analysis in debates over actor interest in relative or absolute gains, threat perceptions, and perceptions of the situation and the likelihood that force will be used.² It appears that structural theory—or “situationism,” as psychologists would call it—remains sufficiently indeterminate and dependent on claims about actors and strategic situations that theorists are forced to make claims about the empirical setting at the foreign-policy level. This brings them into the realm of explaining action, not just outcomes, and requires us to confront the implications of the cognitive revolution. That is, we cannot predict with confidence how actors will perceive and define strategic situations, and therefore we must explore these mental constructions empirically. We argue in this article that the study of images, like the study of ideas, is a valuable avenue down which to pursue international relations theory.

Second, we argue that current efforts to study images depend too heavily on a single analytical construct. We define strategic images as a subject’s cognitive construction or mental representation of another actor in the political world. In international relations and foreign policy research, the enemy image and the associated spiral model of interaction have dominated the psychological

1. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1973).

2. See Joseph Grieco, *Cooperation Among Nations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 40–50; Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 263–65; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 102–128; and Robert Powell, “Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 85 (December 1991), pp. 1303–37.

tradition. This image was useful in analyzing the Soviet–U.S. relationship during the cold war. It has been abstracted, however, from cases of conflict in which the adversaries were roughly comparable in capability, had somewhat comparable cultural sophistication, and in which leaders perceived great threat from the other state. This of course is not the only type of capability/cultural relationship that pertains in international relations, and perceived threat is not the only motive that drives states. Morgenthau among many others stressed the critical importance of recognizing both threat- and opportunity-based motivational compounds. Theories of images in international relations that rest only on the enemy concept lack the analytical tools with which to make those differentiations. If the enemy image explains everything, then it explains very little. We propose a broader theory of ideal images, capturing five different kinds of strategic perception. These are not the only perceptions possible, but they are important schemata that have both analytical and explanatory leverage.

Finally, we argue that the Persian Gulf from 1977 to 1992 provides a useful microcosm in which to consider the utility of an image-based theory of international relations. Although the scope of our test is limited to relationships among Iran, Iraq, the Soviet Union, and the United States, it nevertheless includes substantial variation in relative power, cultural differences, and perceived threats and opportunities. Our microcosm includes north–north, north–south, and south–south relationships as well as changes in the degree of conflict and cooperation in the relationships. Within our time period, the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States ended; the alliance between the United States and Iran ended and turned into a relationship of bitter hostility; the Iran–Iraq relationship escalated from a cold to a hot war; and the Soviet relationship with Iraq moved from one of important alliance to rather distant patronage and then to opposition as the Soviet Union joined the coalition aligned against Iraq. Also during this period, the U.S.–Iraqi relationship moved from one of hostility to tacit alliance and then to full-scale war.

The variation within our Persian Gulf microcosm and the geostrategic importance of the region allows us to explore the limits of structural interpretations and the additional leverage provided by an analysis of images. We begin in the first section with the structural and situationist perspectives and develop the argument in favor of studying images. In the second section, we outline and operationalize five images. We then develop the reasoning that relates each image to a strategy, with strategy defined as an integrated set of policy choices. The second section concludes by developing a theory of interaction that uses the logic of game theory to deduce the likely outcome resulting from the interaction of two actors' strategies should each actor hold an ideal image of the other. The third section presents an empirical test of the utility of image analysis and the theory of strategic interaction by examining international relations in the Persian Gulf. The fourth and final section returns

to the role cognitive-strategic research can play in the development of international relations theory.

Why study images?

Traditionally, scholars have turned to the study of images as a matter of intellectual taste.³ Unsatisfied with global generalizations, many scholars accepted the empirical challenges of causal regression and examined the foreign policy level. Kenneth Waltz for instance, when he chose to explain British foreign policy, left behind the simplifications of neorealism and moved into the domain of decision making and actor-specific constructions of the situation.⁴ This prominent neorealist theorist, after all, never claimed to have a theory of action but only a theory of outcomes at the system level.⁵ Realists placed great importance on the effects of structure on outcomes and argued that even though they could not predict the behavior of specific actors in the short run, in the long run, rational power calculations would prevail. Actors that made irrational choices would not survive for long, and over time the general behavior of the units that did survive could be described with rather simple rules. Realists, however, rarely went as far in their claims for radical situationism as B. F. Skinner did in psychology.⁶ More recently the distinction between system-level theory and foreign-policy-level theory has become blurred, and a debate over the causal importance of internal as opposed to external variables has ensued.

Some contemporary neorealists have moved closer to the situationist argument, asserting that ideas and internal processes are products or justifications of the structural setting.⁷ Meanwhile, others claim that ideas and domestic processes do have independent causal significance.⁸ In many ways the emerging struggle is reminiscent of the debate forty years ago in psychology

3. See, for example, Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976); Richard Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); Kenneth Boulding, *The Image* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956); and Ole Holsti, "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," in Robert Axelrod, ed., *The Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

4. Kenneth Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics: The American and British Experience* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967).

5. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 71–73.

6. B. F. Skinner, *Behavior, Theory, and Conditioning* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960).

7. See Stephen Krasner, "Westphalia and All That," in Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 235–64 and p. 238 in particular; and Robert Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist–Neoliberal Debate," *International Organization* 48 (Spring 1994), pp. 313–44.

8. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," in Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 3–30.

between those who favored personality and internal explanatory theories and those who put their faith in the environment and situationism.⁹ That debate of course was never entirely settled, as neither side could overcome the methodological obstacles inherent in trying to establish the unique causal effect. Interactionism, which called for a focus on the person in the situation, won the day in the 1970s as the cognitive revolution swept the discipline.¹⁰ The cognitive revolution also had an impact in political science but has not been fully absorbed into international relations theory. There are at least three central reasons why we should continue to work at this task today.

Indeterminacy

First, as traditional realists were aware, power alone does not determine action. Power and situation set limits on options but almost never reduce the number of options to one. Actors facing overwhelming structural obstacles can still choose to appease and “climb on the bandwagon” of the more powerful state or fight and engage in an effort to construct a countervailing coalition of states that can balance the powerful opponent. They can also make decisions about the best way to pursue either of these objectives. Currently in the Persian Gulf, for example, Iran faces stiff U.S.-imposed constraints and may choose to balance rather than concede. Without a nuclear great power ally, structural imperatives suggest that Iran should be expected to pursue nuclear and missile proliferation. It could also seek to balance power through alliance construction. The alliance options are complicated. Iran could move to China as it did in the mid-1980s or pursue new ties to Russia. Russia, after all, in the early 1990s went from providing no weapons to Iran to providing more than four times the weaponry to Iran as China did.¹¹ Iran might also pursue ties to Pakistan. Pakistan has nuclear capability and shares an Islamic identity. Just the same, Iranian diplomacy seems to be equally focused on India, and Iranian leaders speak often of an Asian alliance among India, Iran, and China as a balance to the Western world. Which way Iran will go, or for that matter whether China,

9. See Lee J. Cronbach, “The Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 12 (1957), pp. 671–84; and L. J. Cronbach, “Beyond the Two Disciplines of Scientific Psychology,” *American Psychologist* 30 (January 1975), pp. 116–27.

10. See Lee Ross and Richard E. Nisbett, *The Person and the Situation: Perspectives of Social Psychology* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991). Also see Walter Mischel and Jack C. Wright, “A Conditional Approach to Dispositional Constructs: The Local Predictability of Social Behavior,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 53, no. 6, 1987, pp. 1159–77; Yuichi Shoda, Walter Mischel, and Jack C. Wright, “Intuitive Interactionism in Person Perception: Effects of Situation-Behavior Relations on Dispositional Judgments,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1989, pp. 41–53; and Yuichi Shoda, Walter Mischel, and Jack C. Wright, “Links Between Personality Judgments and Contextualized Behavior Patterns: Situation-Behavior Profiles of Personality Prototypes,” *Social Cognition*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1993, pp. 399–429.

11. Richard Grimmett, “Conventional Arms Transfers to the Third World, 1985–1992,” *CRS Report for Congress*, 19 July 1993, p. 70.

India, or Pakistan will compel Iran to make exclusionist strategic choices among them, will be determined by more than the configuration of power.

While there is no need to rehearse the many difficulties involved in any operational treatment of power, it is important to stress that power and survival as objectives do not lead in obvious ways to policy choices.¹² One of the more puzzling patterns in the Persian Gulf in this regard is the failure of leaders both in Iran and Iraq to secure victory when it was possible and to instead pursue the contest until they lost. In 1985, Iran had repelled the Iraqi advance, Iranian troops occupied Iraqi soil and had captured large numbers of prisoners of war, and Saddam Hussein was suing for peace. Rather than accept political victory, Ayatollah Khomeini chose to prosecute the war further even though there was little prospect of a greater victory. Eventually of course, members of the Arab world along with France and the United States balanced with Iraq, destroyed the potential Iranian power base, and compelled Khomeini to accept defeat in 1988. This is hardly the sort of rational power maximization we would expect from a reading of situational imperatives.

Saddam likewise grasped defeat from the jaws of victory. Having established Iraq's power base in the late 1980s and sent an intimidating signal to other Arabs with the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saddam ignored the many occasions for a negotiated withdrawal from Kuwait that would have preserved Iraq's potential power.¹³ Many analysts in the United States expected Saddam to begin a withdrawal-and-haggle strategy. U.S. officials complained that Russia might be helping in this endeavor and admitted that such a process would represent a "nightmare scenario" they would be hard-pressed to defeat.¹⁴ Luckily for them, Saddam chose not to protect Iraq's interests but to risk his own rule and Iraq's future in a war against an overwhelming United Nations coalition, resulting in the destruction of much of Iraq's military and industrial base.

Morgenthau, of course, never expected what he called a "rational theory" to describe the actual course of foreign policy. He expected the "contingent elements of personality, prejudice, and subjective preference, and all of the weaknesses of intellect and will which flesh is heir to . . . to deflect foreign policies from their rational course."¹⁵ The Vietnam war, for instance, according to Morgenthau required a "counter theory of irrational politics, a kind of pathology of international politics," while the cold war was best understood as

12. Robyn Dawes, "Prediction of the Future Versus an Understanding of the Past: A Basic Asymmetry," *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 106, no. 1, 1993, pp. 1–224.

13. Richard Herrmann, "Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait, 1990–91," in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, 2d ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 229–66. Also see Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990–1991* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

14. See Thomas L. Friedman, "Standoff in the Gulf: A Partial Pullout by Iraq is Feared as Deadline Ploy," *New York Times*, 18 December 1990, p. 1; and R. W. Apple, Jr., "U.S. 'Nightmare Scenario': Being Finessed by Iraq," *New York Times*, 19 December 1990, p. 16.

15. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, pp. 7–8.

an ideological crusade driven by competing nationalist universalisms, not situational imperatives. The contest, he explained, defied the realist principles and made the notion of a balance of power unreal, indeterminate, and almost an ideology that for Morgenthau was little more than propaganda.¹⁶ The critical point for our purposes is not the evaluation of policy as rational or irrational, but the indeterminacy over action of the structural constraints.

Situational definition

Robert Powell recently has argued that realism is a theory of preference of action, not a theory regarding preferences over outcome.¹⁷ That is, as Morgenthau argued, realism does not confront the question of state motives. Instead it assumes that whatever ends actors desire, they need power to achieve them. Thus the pursuit of power or means is assumed to be the operational motive.¹⁸ The problems related to the interpretation of motivation and primary interests are set aside in favor of focusing on utilitarian strategic calculations. The assumption is that scholars can define what sorts of behavior will advance the actor toward the achievement of assumed ends or preferred outcomes in the most utilitarian fashion.

What appears to structural realists as a set of nonproblematic deductions strikes foreign policy analysts and area specialists as a complicated and controversial task of defining the situation and cause–effect relationships.¹⁹ Moving from the abstract deductive method to the specific case, for instance, we might ask what is the most utilitarian way to advance Islamic interests, assuming for the moment that this is the core motive of Iran. Can Tehran resist U.S. containment or not? Will Iran's efforts to acquire countervailing power deter Washington or provoke a second Operation Desert Storm? Can Iran use new outlets for its oil and gas in India and in the Association of South East Asian Nations states to acquire effective leverage? Or should it lay low and accommodate Washington on the Gaza–Jericho settlement while pursuing internal subversion in conservative Arab states?

The point here, of course, is not to answer these questions but to highlight the sort of judgments structural analysts must make in a theory of preferences over action. We agree with Powell that a great deal of work on defining situations still needs to be done to make structural theory more useful.²⁰ To do

16. Ibid., pp. 7, 241–56, and 327–54.

17. Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory," pp. 318–19.

18. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 5–10.

19. See Alexander George, *Bridging The Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), pp. 125–31; Donald Sylvan and Stuart Thorson, "Ontologies, Problem Representation, and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36 (December 1992) pp. 709–32; and Dean Pruitt, "Definition of the Situation as a Determinant of International Action," in Herbert Kelman, ed., *International Behavior: A Social-Psychological Analysis* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), pp. 391–432.

20. Powell, "Anarchy in International Relations Theory," p. 337.

this, international relations scholars will need to reincorporate the complexities of political context and area expertise into contingent theoretical claims and, in the process, face the central implications of the cognitive revolution.

The cognitive revolution

The central argument of the cognitive revolution that has dominated psychology in the United States over the past twenty years is not that ideas or images are not affected by material and environmental circumstances; nor is it that rational information processing relating stimuli and responses does not exist. The most important point of the cognitive revolution is that the cognitive and affective processes that affect the construction of images and ideas are complicated, can act in a variety of ways, and thereby make any simple prediction about the ideational world from the material world problematic.²¹ Many factors affect ideas. Disentangling their influences is difficult to do empirically, given the inability to control the degrees of freedom.²² Psychologists cannot take for granted that the stimuli they intend to manipulate are the stimuli that subjects perceive, understand, and respond to. Instead of assuming that subjects see the situation as the scholar anticipates, cognitive scientists find it necessary to determine empirically how subjects mentally represent the situation, understand stimuli, and process choices.²³ They do not deny that images and ideas have antecedent causes, but they are doubtful that our understanding of the causal processes is sufficient to warrant bold claims about how subjects see reality without directly investigating these empirical claims.

The central point of the cognitive revolution has been deflected in foreign policy studies and international relations theory. The importance of nuclear deterrence and the assumptions about rational information processing and decision making that were related to it led psychologically inclined scholars to introduce political scientists to the complexities of cognitive processing that psychologists were finding.²⁴ The discussion of the deviations from rationality

21. Howard Gardener, *The Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

22. See Philip Tetlock and Ariel Levi, "Attribution Bias: On the Inconclusiveness of the Cognition-Motivation Debate," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 18, pp. 1565-85; Marilyn Brewer, "A Dual Process Model of Impression Formation," in Thomas Srull and Robert Wyer, eds., *Advances in Social Cognition*, vol. 4 (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), pp. 1-36; and Steven J. Sherman, Charles M. Judd, and Bernadette Park, "Social Cognition," *Annual Review of Psychology* 48 (1989), pp. 2281-326.

23. Herbert Simon, "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 79, no. 2, 1985, pp. 293-304.

24. John Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974); Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; and Alexander George, *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1981).

and perfect communication became linked to critical policy debates during the cold war.²⁵ The academic issue was connected to intensely political judgments about Soviet–American and other deterrent or compellent relationships, and the essential empirical implication of the cognitive revolution was somewhat lost in the ensuing struggle between rational and cognitive interpretations. Research on cognitive and affective processes has not produced a model that can take into account all the various contingencies and mental, social, and political inclinations that affect decision making and predict with persuasive regularity how political leaders will see the world. Political scientists can find correlation between material self-interest and images. Jack Snyder, for instance, finds this regarding imperial images, but the research methodologies that can isolate the effect of this unique cause as distinct from the potential effect of several other causes are still beyond our reach in the natural setting and hard to design even in the laboratory.²⁶

While we are interested in the origins of perceptions and images, in this article we will not descend yet another level of causal regression and try to overturn the central finding of the cognitive revolution. Instead we start with five ideal-typical images as our basic independent variables and explain how to use them as analytical referents. In the next section, we discuss these images and explain how they may help us to build a theory of strategy and international interaction.

An image theory of strategy and interaction

Although a great deal of work has focused on images and perceptions in foreign policy analysis, the integration with international relations theory has been incomplete. Structural theorists have continued to focus on power distribution and variables outside the unit actors, while foreign policy analysts have looked for variation within the unit actors and quite often failed to consider the effects of structural constraints and the behavior of other states on internal decision making. Recently, a conceptual move toward an interactionist perspective is clear in both theoretical communities. Neorealists, for instance, have engaged in a prominent debate over states' preferences for relative and absolute gains. Allowing this preference to vary across actors and across time of course introduces motivational variation at the unit level that realists since Morgenthau have tried to avoid. We intend to explore briefly the integration of foreign policy concepts into international relations theory and then to develop our conceptions of images and a theory of strategy and interaction.

25. See Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow, and Janice Gross Stein, eds., *Psychology and Deterrence* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); and Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984).

26. Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Motivation and images in international relations theory

As some neorealists have endeavored to identify the conditions under which a state will prefer relative or absolute gains, they have moved directly into the realm of perceptions and images. Joseph Grieco, for instance, has introduced a concept that he calls *k* to represent this sensitivity to the gap between absolute and relative gains.²⁷ He argues that *k* has six main sources, including such things as whether the partner has been an ally or adversary in the past, whether partners perceive a common enemy, how they perceive the trajectory of future power relations, and the convertibility of various types of influence. Duncan Snidal uses an index, *r*, to capture what Grieco calls *k*.²⁸ While approaching the issue from the perspective of institutionalism, Robert Keohane also insists on treating the predisposition toward relative gains as a variable that is conditional upon judgments about the “plausible way” other actors can threaten you and how actors evaluate the intentions of other players.²⁹

Waltz had earlier argued that actors in a self-help world have trouble cooperating because of their concern with relative gains, but that this concern depended upon how much actors feared that other countries could use their gains against them.³⁰ Meantime, Stephen Walt has developed a balance-of-threat theory to explain alliance formation.³¹ Whether states balance or bandwagon—to use Walt’s concepts for the operational implications of relative-, absolute-, or joint-gains preferences—Walt argued, is a function of the aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and perceived intentions of the adversary.³² This last concept brings us directly to the issue of images, a conclusion that the reflectivist and constructivist critics of neorealism also have reached. Alexander Wendt has gone the furthest in this direction, proposing a theory of alter-casting that is remarkably similar to the psychological ideas of graduated reciprocation in tension reduction proposed by Charles Osgood from a more traditional cognitive perspective in the 1960s.³³

We need more than the enemy image

Perceptions of threat have received the lion’s share of attention in neorealist, constructivist, and cognitive traditions. No doubt, neorealist assumptions about

27. Grieco, *Cooperation Among Nations*, pp. 40–50.

28. Duncan Snidal, “Relative Gains and the Pattern of International Cooperation,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 83, no. 3, 1991, pp. 701–26.

29. Robert Keohane, “Institutionalist Theory and the Realist Challenge After the Cold War,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Ill., 3–6 September 1992, pp. 10–17.

30. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 102–28 and 105, respectively.

31. See Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, op. cit., pp. 263–285, and Stephen Walt, “Revolution and War,” *World Politics*, vol. 44, no. 3 (April 1992), pp. 321–368.

32. Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, pp. 22–26 and 263–66.

33. Alexander Wendt, “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,” *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992), pp. 391–425; and Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

the importance of security and survival have influenced conceptual development in this direction as has the experience of the cold war. For Waltz, the cold war was a security dilemma between two defensive great powers, a conception easily compatible with most cognitive perspectives of “fearful warriors” locked in a spiral conflict.³⁴ In this context, the enemy image has been well-articulated and well-studied.³⁵ The conditions under which this image is relevant, however, have not been well-defined, and alternative images that capture Morgenthau’s notion of imperialist motives have not been studied nearly so thoroughly. Relying exclusively on the enemy image greatly limits the analytical and explanatory utility of cognitive perspectives. It forces us to describe all relationships as essentially threat-based security dilemmas among actors roughly comparable in capability. This reduces our ability to capture conceptually the variation neorealists and other theorists are introducing on both motivational and capability dimensions and leaves us unprepared to wrestle with the most important distinctions made by area specialists.

In the recent Persian Gulf crisis, for instance, it is necessary to differentiate between the proposition that Saddam saw great opportunity to intimidate Arab gulf states and operate as an Arab Bismarck and the competing proposition that prevailed in Washington before the invasion of Kuwait: that Saddam acted defensively: he perceived a threat from Israel and the United States and suspected that the Kuwaiti oil production policy was part of an anti-Iraq conspiracy.³⁶ In the latter proposition an enemy image might describe Saddam’s view of the United States. In the first, however, it would be very misleading. Likewise, using the enemy image to describe President Bush’s view of Iraq, even though Bush demonized Saddam, is problematic. Bush, after all, did not behave toward Iraq the way Washington had toward the Soviet Union. Launching a direct attack on the Soviet Union, a target of comparable capability, had been unthinkable in Washington for decades. Enemy images in other relationships had also led to cautious tit-for-tat reciprocity, not the initiation of full-scale war.³⁷ The utility of the cognitive analysis is weakened, of course, if enemy images are associated with such radically different kinds of strategic behavior. What is necessary is a set of images that captures the most important aspects of differently perceived strategic situations and that suggests different strategic alternatives.

34. See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 170–76; and Ralph K. White, *Fearful Warriors: A Psychological Profile of U.S.–Soviet Relations* (New York: Free Press, 1984).

35. Brett Silverstein, “Enemy Images: The Psychology of U.S. Attitudes and Cognitions Regarding the Soviet Union,” *American Psychologist*, vol. 44, no. 6, 1989, pp. 903–13.

36. For these competing perspectives see Richard Herrmann, “Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait,” in George and Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, pp. 229–64; and Janice Gross Stein, “Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990–91: A Failed or Impossible Task?” *International Security* 17 (Fall 1992), pp. 147–79.

37. See Russell Leng, *Interstate Crisis Behavior, 1816–1980: Realism Versus Reciprocity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Joshua Goldstein and John Freeman, *Three-Way Street: Strategic Reciprocity in World Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Five ideal-typical images

A subject's construction of reality can have many components. It can include central philosophical beliefs about the nature of world politics and can include tactical and instrumental ideas. Traditional operational codes of leaders divided these two basic categories of ideas into ten specific points.³⁸ Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane recently have proposed a three-part categorization reminiscent of the operational code, including worldviews, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs.³⁹ Cognitive maps went further, dividing beliefs into values, policy objectives, cognitive concepts, and policy alternatives.⁴⁰ We intend to focus on strategic judgments about specific other actors, limiting to three the number of dimensions each image includes. We assume that to an important degree these images determine the ideas, principles, and norms that subjects see as relevant to their relationship with the other actor.

Central to any image of another actor is a judgment about the threat or opportunity that actor represents. To incorporate the motivational possibilities essential in neorealist and neoliberalist theory, we propose that images of other actors can include a judgment that the other actor is threatening, presents an opportunity to exploit, or represents a chance for mutual gain. In the first condition the strategic concern will be with relative gains, in the second with the absolute losses of the target, and in the third with absolute and joint gains. The second essential dimension of an image of another actor is relative power. Perceived relative power determines the options that are seen as available. If the subject sees the target as much weaker, then a strategy of direct attack may appear viable. If the target is seen as roughly comparable in capability, more-cautious strategies like containment will be considered. And if the target is seen as much stronger, then some form of fortress protection or appeasement may be all that can be pursued.

Finally, images of other actors include a cultural dimension. This is a concept that is not as common in international relations theory as it is in sociology and psychology, where it plays an absolutely essential role in the study of interracial and interethnic relations.⁴¹ Strategic choices will not be a function of perceived threats, opportunities, and relative power alone. These factors are affected by

38. See Nathan Leites, *A Study of Bolshevism* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1953); Alexander George, "The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (June 1969), pp. 190–222.

39. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," in Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 3–30 and 8–11.

40. Robert Axelrod, ed., *The Structure of Decision: The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976).

41. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Harry Triandis, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980); and Harry Triandis, *The Analysis of Subjective Culture* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1972). Also see Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

judgments about the culture of other actors and what norms of behavior the other actor is likely to respect. In their work on ideas in foreign policy, Goldstein and Keohane, for instance, limit the scope of their work to “modern western world views.” They assume that in “traditionalist and religious fundamentalist societies, the individualistic and secular scientific premises of this world view remain alien.”⁴² Robert Jackson’s study of decolonization points out at length the importance of judgments about racial and cultural differences and their affect on the norms that subjects assume will be relevant, the types of reciprocity that can be expected, and thus the sensibility of different policy options.⁴³ If subjects believe, for instance, that they are dealing with a target that respects a cultural norm against violence, then they may choose different policies than if they believe the target community glorifies martial and fascistic norms.

Although many images are possible, just as many ideas might be important, in this study we use the enemy image and four new images that are designed to add greater analytical diversity to cognitive perspectives. We conceive of each image as an ideal type. It is a referent around which to measure empirically based images of important subjects and not a straitjacket into which we intend to force any real subject’s perceptions. Obviously, a subject’s perceptions often will be complicated, reflecting parts of several different ideal types. We construct each ideal-type image, however, around pure judgments on our three dimensions. The enemy image, for instance, is limited to a perception of another target that is seen as threatening, roughly comparable in capability, and not too different in terms of cultural sophistication. The degenerate image, in contrast, refers to an image of another state that is seen as representing a great opportunity to exploit and that is similar in capability but suffering from cultural decay. The colony image represents the ideal case in which a subject believes there is a great opportunity to exploit a target actor who is both weaker and inferior in terms of culture. The imperialist image is the converse of this, representing the ideal case of a subject seeing intense threat from a state that is much more powerful but not culturally superior. Our ally image refers to a perceived relationship in which the subject’s belief in the prospects for mutual gain outweighs the importance of perceived capability or cultural judgments.

Using five images we can represent a diverse set of possible perceived relationships. Although psychological reasons contribute to our focus on these five images as popular schemata, for the purposes of this article, these particular images are important because they represent the interpretive disputes that divide area specialists with regard to Iranian, Iraqi, Soviet, and U.S. behavior in the Persian Gulf. We can capture the debate about Saddam’s motives, for example, by asking if his imagery resembled enemy, imperialist, or

42. Goldstein and Keohane, “Ideas and Foreign Policy,” p. 8.

43. Robert Jackson, “The Weight of Ideas in Decolonization: Normative Change in International Relations,” in Goldstein and Keohane, *Ideas and Foreign Policy*, pp. 111–38.

degenerate stereotypes of the United States, Iran, or the Arab gulf states. The first two would be consistent with a defensive and perceived-threat-based interpretation, the last with a more offensive and opportunity-based interpretation.

To determine empirically a leader's images, we rely on verbal behavior. We do not, however, take rhetoric at face value. In their pioneering work on propaganda analysis, Alexander George and Ralph White identified differences in rhetoric and suggested ways to infer meaning from these differences.⁴⁴ Different justificatory and mobilizing missions require different rationalizations. The defensive task, for instance, requires a different form than the revisionist task. Enemy images construct a picture of the target that justifies killing the target and removing or controlling the threat and that gives the general public some reason to believe they will be successful if they demonstrate will and resolve. Typically this is done by portraying the target as an evil paper tiger. The revisionist mission, in contrast, must justify occupation and direct control. Hitler did this in the case of France by describing the French as decadent and in need of German salvation. The British and the French, when they turned toward Africa and Asia, used the more straightforward racial argument that it was the so-called white man's burden to defend the civilizing mission and the empire's control.

In Table 1 we outline the justificatory pictures associated with our five images. By considering leaders' statements, we can infer which of the five ideal-type images serve as partial descriptions of their view of a target actor. For instance, if leaders describe the target in enemy terms, we infer that they see a threat from an actor comparable in capability and culture. If they describe the target actor in terms similar to our colony stereotype, then we infer that they see an opportunity to exploit an actor that is seen as weaker and culturally inferior.

Prevailing view and images at the state level of analysis

States by definition may be unitary actors at the system level, but they are not anthropomorphic entities. Their actions represent the residual combination of complex domestic processes. These processes can be affected by factors like the structure of decision-making authority, patterns of information processing and advisory networks, political coalitional strategies, and the personality characteristics of key leaders.⁴⁵ With so many potential causal variables, it is difficult to

44. Ralph K. White, "Hitler, Roosevelt, and the Nature of War Propaganda," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 44 (1949), pp. 157–74; Alexander George, *Propaganda Analysis: A Study of Inferences Made from Nazi Propaganda in World War II* (Evanston Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1959); and Brett Silverstein, "Toward a Science of Propaganda," *Political Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1987, pp. 49–59.

45. See George, *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy*; Steinbruner, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*; Snyder, *Myths of Empire*; Bruce Jentleson, "Discrepant Responses to Falling Dictators: Presidential Belief Systems and the Mediating Effects of the Senior Advisory Process,"

TABLE 1. *Stereotypical images of target actors, by description of target's motivation, capability, and decision-making process*

<i>Image</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's motivation</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's capability</i>	<i>Subject's description of target's decision-making process</i>
Enemy	Motives are judged to be evil and unlimited; they can include a variety of imperial interests in economic, ideological, and communal domination	If aggressor is met with strong opposition, it will be exposed as a paper tiger; this domestic weakness overrides empirical evidence of substantial capability	Leaders are bound by a common cause and are able to plot and execute complex sinister plans
Ally	Ready to pursue mutually beneficial economic relations and to cooperate in peaceful joint efforts to protect and improve the global environment; motivated by altruism as much as by self-interest	Military is defensive in orientation and pursues governmental policies willingly; a large patriotic public is willing to make sacrifices to protect the nation's freedom and the government's institutions; popularity of the government enhances its capability	System is well-managed and organized but tremendously complicated and sometimes slow-moving because of the many services it delivers to an advanced and complex economy and society
Degenerate	Leaders are more concerned with preserving what they have than with a vision for the future and have accepted their fall from greatness, only wanting to make it less painful	Country is less strong than it might be, its available power instruments are discounted due to its unwillingness to actively defend itself or enter into confrontations	Decision making is confused and perhaps anarchic; country lacks focused leadership, organization, and discipline
Imperialist	Great cynicism about the altruistic ideology of the great power, including a strong perception of hypocrisy; imperial power is seen as interested in maintaining the colony as a source of raw materials, a locus for investments, and a market for its manufactured products and culture; exploitation of one's country is the imperial power's goal	Any event that can be viewed as detrimental to the country's well-being is considered another component of the conspiracy controlled by the imperial power; the presence of "hidden-hand" potential is granted through the willingness of a section of the native elite to enter into a collaborative relationship with the imperial power in return for internal support	Imperial power's embassy staff and imperial agents under other cover are perceived to seek to exercise ultimate decision-making control; since contacts between imperial and native bureaucracies are less formalized and routinized, awareness of imperial power decisional diversity is slight
Colony	<p>Good forces: paternal leader; progressive modernizer; nationalist; leader driven by interest of the people</p> <p>Bad forces: radical fanatic demagogue; xenophobic racist extremist; evil dictator; puppet of great-power enemy</p>	<p>Good forces: well-meaning children who need tutelage; can use equipment with supervision, but lack discipline and skill needed to operate and maintain infrastructure, technology, and weapons; hopelessly disorganized and ascriptive in organization; children in need of leadership</p> <p>Bad forces: untalented children who have the advantage of external support and advice; terrorists whose actions reveal their moral weakness; immature agitators who are arrogant and closed minded and who confuse slogans and dogmas for intelligence; conspirators who are cunning and clever at deception and terror; agents whose real reasons for success come from ties to foreign masters</p>	<p>Good forces: try hard but simply cannot manage national affairs in an efficient way</p> <p>Bad forces: well-organized into highly disciplined units that follow a strict top-down process of decision making</p>

make specific predictions about whose perceptions will prevail. Rather than descending another level of causal regression, we intend to begin with the identification of the most powerful leader in each country and assume that the leader empowers advisory networks and drives prevailing imagery. We do not expect the leader's view always to determine policy. To deal with the effects of domestic process we propose three rules:

(1) If the leader's worldview strongly resembles a stereotypical image and domestic opposition is minimal, then we assume that the state will exercise most of its available options in implementing the strategy associated with the leader's view.

(2) If an influential domestic opposition does not share the leader's stereotypical imagery, we expect the state to invest substantially fewer resources into the strategy associated with the leader's view than we would expect from the leader's imagery alone. Alternatively, if a strong domestic opposition holds a stereotypical image that the leader does not share, more policies and programs associated with the opposition's view may be implemented than otherwise expected.

(3) If an influential opposition advances imagery that inclines in the direction of a stereotype different from the leader's, we expect state behavior to resemble some elements of both strategies, even if they are contradictory.

Images and policy choice: a theory of strategy

If prevailing images reflect the residual product of domestic processes, then they ought to be related to the state's foreign policy behavior. The empirical examination of this relationship plays an important role in determining the utility of studying images. We intend to pursue this matter by defining foreign policy behavior in terms of strategic scripts that conceptually connect goals, objectives, and more-specific policy tracks as shown in Figures 1–3. (Scripts are hypothetical structures that offer a means to organize the totality of foreign policy behaviors. We have developed scripts for all five images. Space limitations require that we present only three here as illustrations. The other scripts are available from the authors upon request.) The goals and objectives are deduced from the logic of the dimensions and attributes of the stereotypical image and are shown in Table 2. We elaborate on this logic below. The more-specific policy tracks operationalize these objectives in the context of the cases we are examining. We hypothesize that the perceptions in the left-hand column of Table 2 are related to strategies in the third column from the left. The goals in the far right column of Table 2 are the behavioral preferences we expect to follow from the different ideal-typical strategic perceptions.

Political Psychology 11 (June 1990), pp. 353–84; Peter Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," *International Organization* 46 (Winter 1992), pp. 1–35; and Margaret Hermann, *A Psychological Examination of Political Leaders* (New York: Free Press, 1977).

TABLE 2. *Hypothesized relationships between ideal-typical perceptions and strategic choices*

<i>Image</i>	<i>Strategic judgments the image reveals</i>	<i>Foreign policy strategy that follows from strategic judgments</i>	<i>Main goals of the strategy</i>
Enemy	Threat Comparable capability Comparable culture	Containment	Deter Protect and shield Build major alliance system Protect geopolitical assets in Third World from target Protect credibility as a major power/attractive ally for Third World
Ally	Opportunity through mutual interest Comparable capability Comparable culture	Institutional cooperation	Enhance combined capability and mutual confidence in common action Enhance third-party contribu- tion to common cause already institutionalized between subject and target countries Reduce third-party threats that preoccupy target's capability Reduce number of power instruments tied down in auxiliary theaters and enhance positive resource contribution made by tar- get's peripheral relations
Degenerate	Opportunity through domination Comparable/declining capability Comparable/declining culture	Revisionism	Rollback and deter Build major alliance system Protect geopolitical assets in Third World from target and attract new allies
Imperialist	Threat Superior capability Comparable culture	Independent fortress	Reduce target control Deter target intervention or compel its exit Gain support against target Reduce target's role in region Reduce target's access to resources
Colony	Opportunity through exploitation Inferior capability Inferior culture	Intervention	Ensure existence of coopera- tive client regime in target

The logic behind the association of particular strategies with particular images is grounded in the dimensions and attributes of each image. For example, if an actor perceives a target as an enemy, it perceives the target as a powerful, aggressive, threatening actor that constantly probes for weakness in its effort to expand its influence in the international system. Since the perceiver's primary interests are threatened by the perceived revisionist motivation of the target, the perceiver will seek to bridle the target's expansionist designs. It will not cooperate with the target in any substantial way since it perceives that the target would take advantage of cooperative initiatives. Furthermore, it will not directly attack the target because it perceives it as having a capability base similar to its own. This suggests a cautious, resisting strategy to counter the probes of the target. This attributional logic leads to our association in Table 2 among the enemy image, a containment strategy, and the goals associated with such a strategy. A script that accounts for this containment strategy is illustrated in Figure 1.

Alternatively, if an actor perceives a target in degenerate imagery, it will likely initiate a direct attack on that target. A review of the dimensions and attributes of the degenerate image indicates that while the target is attributed similar capability, it is also viewed as disorganized, chaotic, anarchic, and lacking the will to defend itself. This motivational attribution encourages a discounting of the target's capability such that the actor perceives the opportunity to dominate the target. Thus, we have postulated the association among the degenerate image, a revisionist strategy, and the goals associated with that strategy. The script for that strategy is illustrated in Fig. 2.

If an actor perceives a target as an ally, it perceives the target as somewhat altruistic, defensive in orientation, and willing to cooperate for mutual gain. Toward this end, the actor will put forth policies designed to enhance the well-being of both actors, expecting the other to reciprocate. Over time the actor will seek to institutionalize this cooperation.

Where an actor perceives a target in colonial terms, we expect intervention. The attributes of the colony image grant to the target inferior capability and describe a divided polity where the progressive elements are threatened by the subversive elements. The observer associates its own strategic goals and objectives with the progressive forces and feels compelled and able to intervene to protect them.

Finally, where an actor perceives a target in imperialist imagery, we expect the actor to try to resist the influence of the target. We refer to this strategy as a fortress strategy and illustrate it in Figure 3. In an imperialist image, the target is attributed superior capability and considered to be motivated by a desire to dominate the actor through a local client regime. Because the imperialist target is seen as having vastly superior capability, direct attack on the target is not considered likely to be successful. Instead the observer is inclined to attack the client regime and raise the costs of the imperialist's involvement through terrorism and other forms of resistance.

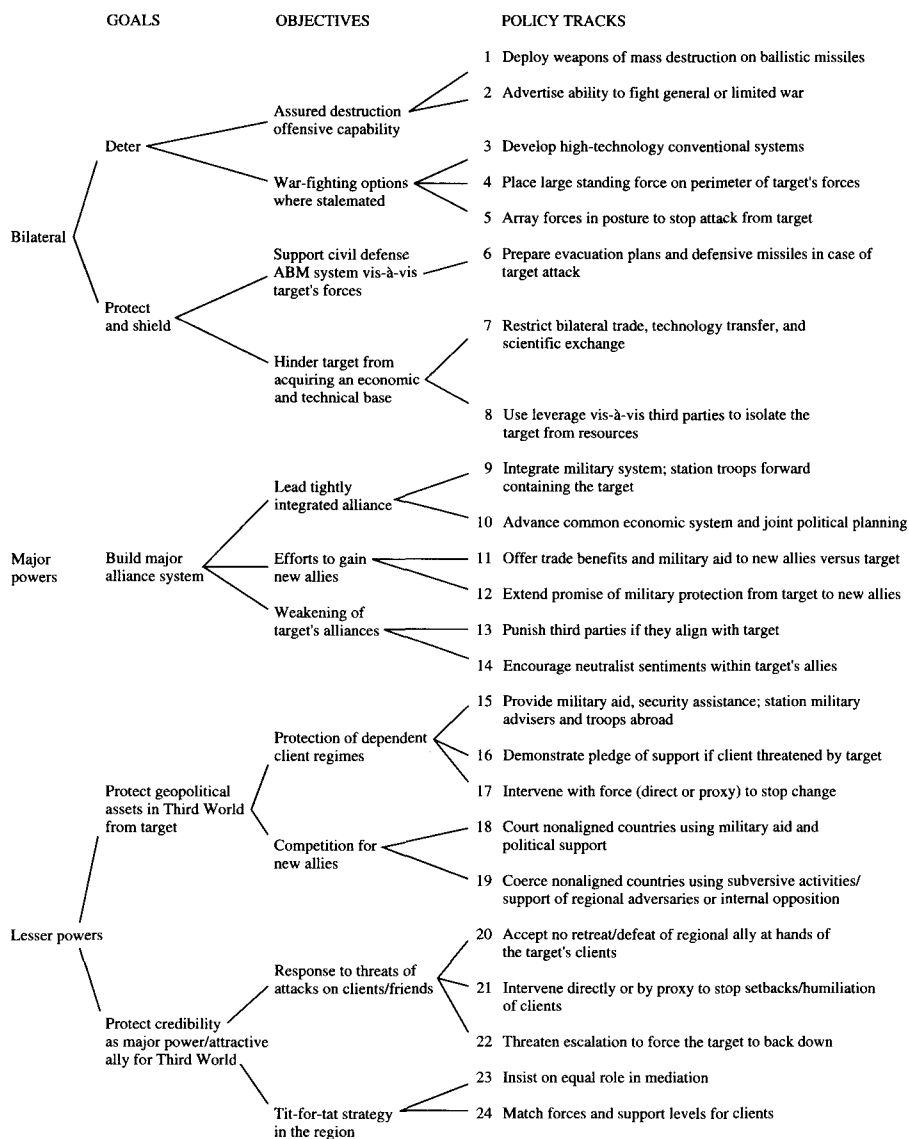


FIGURE 1. *Containment strategic script*

If prevailing imagery is more complex than the ideal types, then we expect more-complex strategies that mix policies from several ideal-typical scripts. For example, if the imagery resembles only slightly the degenerate ideal type, we still expect aggressive policies but we expect them to be pursued with fewer resources. Thus, full-scale intervention is much less likely than is subversion or other covert activities in such cases.

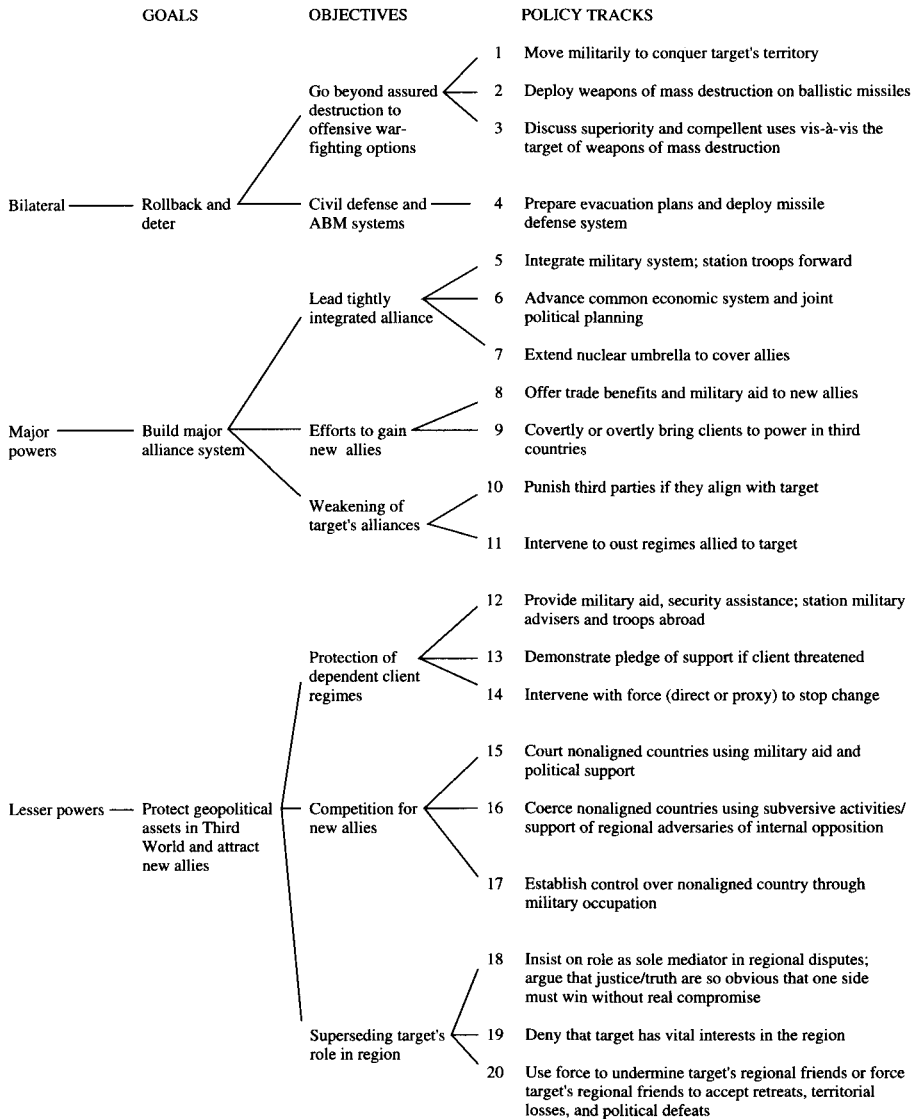


FIGURE 2. Revisionism strategic script

A theory of strategic interaction

Figure 4 summarizes the international interaction we expect in dyadic relationships if various ideal-type images prevail in each actor. The hypotheses described in Figure 4 follow from an examination of each pair of images and their strategic scripts and policy tracks. We identify where these policy tracks will intersect with each other leading to (1) competition, (2) conflict, (3) cooperation, or (4) the creation of integrative institutions. Space constraints



FIGURE 3. *Independent fortress strategic script*

limit the explication of every pair; however, a presentation of the logic behind several derivations will help the reader to follow our argument.

As stated previously, actor A's image of actor B suggests what its strategic behavior should be with respect to actor B (see Table 2). This behavioral choice

		Actor A				
		<i>Enemy/ containment</i>	<i>Ally/ institutional cooperation</i>	<i>Degenerate/ revisionism</i>	<i>Imperialist/ independent fortress</i>	<i>Colony/ intervention</i>
Actor B	<i>Enemy/ containment</i>	1 Tit-for-tat reciprocity Occasional crises				
	<i>Ally/ institutional cooperation</i>	2 Inverse cooperation Appeasement Unstable, weak alliance	3 Institutionalized alliance and functional integration			
	<i>Degenerate/ revisionism</i>	4 Inverse reciprocity War	5 Actor A bandwagons with and appeases actor B Alliance under B's hegemony	6 War		
	<i>Imperialist/ independent fortress</i>	7 Subversion/ guerrilla war Intervention	8 Actor B appeases A Weak cooperation without institutionalism	9 Intervention Subversion/ guerrilla war	10 Declining or minimal interaction Mutual repulsion	
	<i>Colony/ intervention</i>	11 War	12 Bandwagon Actor A accepts an alliance under B's hegemony	13 War	14 War of liberation	15 War

FIGURE 4. *Hypothesized international interaction in different perceptual (stated first) and strategic (stated second) relationships*

is informed by the attributes associated with the image of actor B (see Table 1). For example, if actor A perceives actor B as an enemy, actor A will implement a containment strategy. This is so because actor A perceives actor B to be a highly rational, aggressive, and powerful actor whose power may be significantly enhanced by a lack of resolve on A's part (see Table 1). The enemy image also suggests that the strategic behavior of actor B threatens actor A's interests.⁴⁶

46. See Douglas Stuart and Harvey Starr, "Inherent Bad Faith Reconsidered: Dulles, Kennedy, and Kissinger," *Political Psychology* 3 (1982), pp. 1–33.

Thus, actor A would expect actor B to attempt to gain relative advantage from most interactions between the two. In game-theoretic terminology, actor A would expect actor B to defect on most interactions. In anticipation of actor B's likely defections, actor A will also likely defect to avoid relative loss. (Some might suggest that actor A will choose its strategic behavior based on the "actual" behavior of actor B. To speak of actor B's "actual" behavior misses the emphasis that this study places on perception. If actor A has an enemy image of actor B, it is likely to perceive most behavior by that actor as aggressive behavior which threatens its political, economic, or security interests.)

This same reasoning, of course, holds true for actor B if it has an enemy image of actor A (resulting in the hypotheses in the enemy-enemy interaction cell of Figure 4). This type of behavior by both actors, that is, mutual defection, represents the equilibrium of this interaction and would lead to occasional crises between the two, as we have stated in cell 1 of Figure 4. We do not expect these crises to escalate to war because each actor perceives the other as having similar capability. This capability attribution suggests cautious, probing behavior rather than a significant effort to achieve substantial relative advantage in one interaction. It is important to reiterate here that in the enemy image, threat—and not the opportunity to exploit—is the primary concern.

We expect that if either actor initiated a positive policy toward the other where both actors perceived the potential for mutual gain (e.g., agreeing to ban chemical weapons systems), such efforts would likely be reciprocated so that both actors receive a greater payoff. However, if this positive behavior is followed by perceived aggressive behavior, it would also be reciprocated to show resolve. We describe this sort of dyadic behavior as tit-for-tat reciprocity.

Conversely, if actor A or actor B perceives the other as a degenerate, we expect the enemy-degenerate interaction to result in war (see cell 4 of Figure 4). Assume, for example, that actor A has a degenerate image of actor B. Since actor B perceives actor A as an enemy, it will implement a containment strategy as discussed above. Thus, in anticipation of defection by actor A, actor B will likely defect in most situations, although it may also agree to cooperate in certain strategic areas—such as arms control as outlined earlier. Actor A on the other hand will implement a revisionist strategy toward actor B. The degenerate imagery discounts actor B's capability by emphasizing B's lack of organization and willpower. This leads actor A to perceive an opportunity it can exploit. In game-theoretic terminology, a defection strategy is the dominant strategy of actor A. Given this analysis, in the interaction between the strategies of actors A and B, mutual defection is the equilibrium. While this is the same equilibrium in the enemy-enemy interaction, in this interaction actor A has no incentive to cooperate (i.e., the greatest payoff for actor A is achieved through a defection strategy). If actor B implements a positive gesture toward actor A, it will simply reinforce actor A's perception of actor B as a weak target and actor A will use this gesture to its own advantage (i.e., it will defect). Consequently, actor B will realize that actor A will not reciprocate positive

behavior and will prefer the defection strategy. This reasoning leads to the hypotheses in cell 4 of Figure 4. That is, the enemy–degenerate interaction results in war and inverse reciprocal behavior on the part of the aggressor.

A third possibility is actor A perceiving actor B as a degenerate while actor B perceives actor A as an ally (see cell 5 of Figure 4). In the previous paragraph we discussed the likely behavior of an actor perceiving another as a degenerate; that is, it will defect on all interactions because it perceives that actor as weak and lacking resolve. Actor B on the other hand perceives an opportunity for mutual gain through cooperation with actor A. Therefore, actor B will initiate positive cooperative policies in its effort to realize this gain. The interaction of the two actors' strategies results in a defect–cooperate outcome where actor A is the beneficiary of the greatest payoff. Actor B in essence appeases actor A by accommodating its revisionist strategy. Substantively, we believe the result of this interaction will be the construction of an alliance based on the hegemony of actor A. We do not expect war in this interaction because actor B does not perceive a threat from actor A and appeases rather than opposes A's revisionist policies.

A fourth possibility is an ally–ally interaction (see cell 3 of Figure 4). In the ally image the actor perceives that the target has an interest in realizing mutual gains from cooperative efforts. If both actors perceive the other in ally terms, both will initiate and reciprocate positive cooperative policies, resulting in a cooperate–cooperate equilibrium that maximizes joint gain. Substantively, we expect this to result in an institutionalized alliance between the two actors with functional integration in areas of mutual interest.

We conclude this section with a scenario where actor A perceives actor B in colony imagery and actor B perceives actor A in imperialist imagery (see cell 14 of Figure 4). The motivational and capability attributes of the colony image suggest that actor A in this scenario perceives a weak inferior target in actor B and seeks to exploit this weakness for its own advantage. Actor A, therefore, is inclined to intervene in the internal politics of actor B to ensure that the regime in B supports the strategic goals and objectives of actor A. Actor A does not consider this active intervention risky because it sees actor B as inferior in capability. From the perspective of the client regime's opponents, actor A is pursuing a noncooperative defection strategy in its efforts to support the puppet client regime. In this same interaction dyad, actor B perceives a threat from actor A. The attributes of the imperialist image suggest that actor B perceives that any policies actor A initiates are for the purpose of dominating and controlling actor B. Actor B will, therefore, defect on all policies proposed by actor A. The resulting equilibrium is mutual defection by both actors. Substantively we believe that this interaction results in a war of liberation on behalf of actor B. Actor B perceives actor A as superior in capability, so its defection strategy will not consist of a direct attack on actor A. It is more likely to involve attacks on the domestic elite that cooperate with A and include efforts to raise the cost of A's involvement, perhaps through terrorism.

As in the previous section, we believe that if the prevailing imagery is more complex than the ideal types, then we expect more-complex strategic interactions than those that appear in Figure 4. For instance, if the expected interaction in the ideal-typical case is tit-for-tat reciprocity, as defined in the containment versus containment cell, then we expect in a moderate enemy-image case a somewhat forgiving tit-for-tat reciprocity with lower levels of resources and perhaps some arms control management. In the same vein, if the ideal-typical expectation is for war, in the moderate case we would still expect conflict and aggression but with limited resources. If the ideal-typical case of interaction anticipates bandwagoning and appeasement, then we would expect in a moderate case that there still would be concessions made but on a smaller scale and with fewer resource implications. Similarly, if the ideal-typical expectation is functional integration, in the moderate case we would expect cooperation but without expensive resource commitments and with a substantial dependence on and commitment to autonomous unilateral endeavors.

Figure 4 summarizes the propositions of our theory of strategy and interaction. We relate each image to a strategy and then put the strategies in an interactive setting much like would be done in a neorealist or game-theoretic analysis. Our approach includes the threat and power judgments important in enemy versus enemy security dilemmas but also incorporates a set of other possible relationships. These additional images and relationships are necessary if cognitive approaches are to capture the motivational variation that was always part of classic realism and has reemerged in the neorealist debates over absolute and relative gains. The scheme also aims to cover relationships of asymmetric power that were important in classic realist discussions of imperialism and may be increasingly salient in a post-cold war world. The case study that follows is designed as a preliminary test of this cognitive-strategic perspective. While certainly not definitive, we hope it will point empirical research in the necessary direction if international relations theory is to incorporate the central lessons of the cognitive revolution.

Images and international relations in the Persian Gulf

In the following case study, we treat the relationships among Iran, Iraq, the Soviet Union, and the United States as a microcosm of international relations and begin with a summary of each country's prevailing view of the other three countries in 1977, 1980, 1985, and 1990. We then turn to the strategic behavior that we expect each country to exhibit toward the other three, given its prevailing view, and compare this to the observed policy tracks each country implemented in the two years following each of the years in which the prevailing view was measured. Finally, we compare the interaction expected in each bilateral relationship with the observed interaction in terms of conflict, alliance making, and cooperation.

Prevailing view

Our study begins with the analysis of elite imagery. In the U.S. case, the imagery of the other countries evident in statements made by the President, secretaries of state and defense, and the national security adviser were compared with the operational indicators in Table 1. In the Soviet case, we examined statements made by the General Secretary, the ministers of foreign affairs and defense, and lead editorials in party organs. While this method generated initial estimates of elite perceptions, we believed that it sacrificed too much validity for the sake of reliability. In both cases, there is a good deal of memoir, secondary, and documentary evidence related to the images with which key elites were operating.⁴⁷ We decided to use that information to enhance the validity of our assessment of the resemblance between imagery and stereotypical patterns.⁴⁸

In the Iranian and Iraqi cases we collected every major statement (defined as two pages or more) made by any one of three top leaders in each country that was translated by the United States Foreign Broadcast Information Service during the four time periods of this study.⁴⁹ We then compared the descriptions

47. We examined the images of the President, the secretary of state, and the national security adviser in each time period. We identified these images from released official documents, secondary studies, and memoirs when available. See, for example, Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982); Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983); Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran* (New York: Random House, 1985); James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American–Iranian Relations* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988); Richard Cottam, *Iran and the United States: A Cold War Case Study* (Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988); Laurence Chang and Glenn Baker, eds., *The Chronology: The Documented Day-by-Day Account of the Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Contras* (New York: Warner Books, 1987); and John Tower, Edmund Muskie, and Brent Scowcroft, *The Tower Commission Report* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987). For the Bush administration, public speeches were used as well as testimony in Congress. See Richard Herrmann, “Coercive Diplomacy and the Crisis over Kuwait: 1990–1991,” in George and Simons, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*; and Efraim Karsh and Lawrence Freedman, *The Gulf Conflict: 1990–1991*.

48. See Richard Herrmann, *Perceptions and Behavior in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985); Richard Herrmann, “The Soviet Decision to Withdraw from Afghanistan: Changing Strategic and Regional Images,” in Robert Jervis and Jack Snyder, eds., *Dominoes and Bandwagons: Strategic Beliefs and Great Power Competition in the Eurasian Rimland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 220–49; Richard Herrmann, “The Role of Iran in Soviet Perceptions and Policy,” in Nikki Keddie and Mark Gasiorowski, eds., *Neither East Nor West* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 63–99; and Richard Herrmann, “Soviet Behavior in Regional Conflicts: Old Questions, New Strategies, and Important Lessons,” *World Politics* 44 (April 1992), pp. 432–65.

49. In certain instances, fewer than three leaders had to suffice. Iraqi leaders selected for the 1977 period were President al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. In the 1979–80 period they were Saddam, Tariq ‘Aziz, and Deputy Prime Minister Haddad. For 1985–86 they were Saddam and ‘Aziz. And for 1989–90, they were Saddam and Taha Ramadan. The Iranian leader selected for the 1977 period was the Shah of Iran. For the 1979–80 period the leaders were Ayatollah Khomeini, President Bani Sadr, and Interior Minister Rafsanjani. In 1985–86 they were Khomeini, President Khamene‘i, and Prime Minister Musavi. And for 1989–90 they were spiritual leader Khamene‘i, former Interior Minister Mohtashemi, and President Rafsanjani.

TABLE 3. *Prevailing views, 1977–90^a*

	1977	1980	1985	1990
<i>U.S. view of</i>				
Soviet Union	Enemy	Enemy	Enemy	Mod. enemy
Iran	Mod. ally/colony	Colony	Mod. enemy–col.	Mod. enemy–col.
Iraq	Enemy–colony	Mod. enemy–col.	Mod. col.–complex	Mod. enemy–col.
<i>Soviet view of</i>				
United States	Mod. enemy	Enemy	Mod. enemy	Complex–mod. enemy
Iran	Complex	Mod. colony	Mod. col.–complex	Complex
Iraq	Mod. ally–mod. col.	Complex	Complex	Complex
<i>Iranian view of</i>				
United States	Mod. ally–mod. imp.	Imperialist	Imperialist	Mod. imperialist
Soviet Union	Complex	Mod. imp.	Imperialist	Mod. imp.–complex
Iraq	Enemy	Enemy–imp.	Deg.–enemy–imp.	Mod. enemy–mod. deg.
<i>Iraqi view of</i>				
United States	Mod. imperialist	Imperialist	Mod. ally	Mod. imperialist
Soviet Union	Complex	Mod. ally	Mod. ally	Complex
Iran	Enemy	Deg.–enemy	Enemy–deg.	Mod. enemy–deg.

^aWhen an image for a particular time period was a mix of two or more image types, the multiple images are listed in the form: image 1–image 2–image *n*, where a majority of statements corresponded to the first image and decreased in number for each subsequent image in the image combination. Col. = colony, Deg. = degenerate, Imp. = imperialist, and Mod. = moderate.

of the other three countries in these statements to the stereotypical images and examined secondary literature on Iran and Iraq as a reliability check on our own judgments.⁵⁰

Table 3 summarizes our findings on the prevailing views in each country for each time period. In the United States, the 1977 image of the Soviet Union reflects mostly the views of President Carter and Zbigniew Brzezinski and hides

50. For examples of this literature, see R. K. Ramazani, *Revolutionary Iran: Challenge and Response in the Middle East* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); R. K. Ramazani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Contending Orientations," *The Middle East Journal* 43 (Spring 1989), pp. 202–17; Fred Halliday, "Iranian Foreign Policy Since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic Revolution," in Juan Cole and Nikki Keddie, *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986); and Fred Halliday, "The Iranian Revolution and Great Power Politics: Components of the First Decade," in Keddie and Gasiorowski, *Neither East Nor West*, pp. 247–64.

TABLE 4. *Strategic policy behavior 1978–92^a*

Actor to target	1978–79					1981–82					1986–87					1991–92				
	C	IC	R	IF	I	C	IC	R	IF	I	C	IC	R	IF	I	C	IC	R	IF	I
U.S.–																				
Soviet Union	90	0	4	26	0	85	0	4	31	0	85	0	29	29	0	83	9	25	17	0
U.S.–Iran	8	66	0	0	61	31	0	0	10	28	52	0	0	5	0	67	0	0	5	0
U.S.–Iraq	35	0	4	5	0	17	9	0	5	0	10	25	0	0	7	88	5	39	24	72
Soviet Union–																				
U.S.	79	0	4	60	11	90	0	32	60	11	85	0	29	60	11	46	30	0	26	0
Soviet Union–																				
Iran	19	11	0	0	11	31	11	0	0	17	33	9	0	0	0	35	14	0	0	0
Soviet Union–																				
Iraq	8	45	0	0	28	21	45	0	0	5	8	52	0	0	28	8	41	0	0	5
Iran–U.S.																				
Iran–Soviet	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0	0	0	76	0	0	0	0	67	0
Union	15	7	0	19	0	19	5	0	33	0	4	14	7	36	0	10	25	7	29	6
Iran–Iraq	27	0	0	0	0	27	0	10	33	6	31	0	31	45	6	21	0	0	33	6
Iraq–U.S.																				
Iraq–	17	0	0	60	0	19	5	0	33	0	15	34	0	40	0	35	5	54	69	0
Soviet Union	4	36	0	31	0	4	20	0	31	0	0	30	0	38	0	0	5	0	21	0
Iraq–Iran	40	2	0	21	6	54	2	39	52	44	69	2	29	52	33	21	5	25	14	11

^aNumbers are percentages of the total possible scores for each strategic category. C = containment; IC = institutional cooperation; R = revisionism; IF = independent fortress; and I = intervention.

some of the ambiguity among the top elite. Despite the intense intraelite differences in Iran in 1980, our summation treats Khomeini's views as prevailing. Saddam's view is also treated as the prevailing view in each time period. In the Soviet Union, we found substantial elite differences regarding the United States in the 1990 period. The opposition pushed the prevailing view in the direction of an enemy image, despite President Gorbachev's more-complex descriptions.

Strategy

Table 4 summarizes the policy tracks each country implemented toward the other three countries in 1978–79, 1981–82, 1986–87, and 1991–92. We assumed it would take several years to see the effects of prevailing views on policy and that only a reasonably large set of behaviors would serve as a basis for identifying strategic patterns. To establish a record of the policy behavior of the four countries, we examined *The New York Times Index* and the index for the U.S. Foreign Broadcasts, Soviet Union, Middle East, and South Asia daily

reports.⁵¹ We also examined the information on arms transfers and aid provided by the Congressional Research Services and used a series of secondary studies to improve our evidentiary base.⁵²

The policy tracks of each strategic script provided the guide for the empirical research. We asked in each time period if the country had exhibited toward each of the other three countries the behavior described in each track of each of the five scripts. Each script included: (1) bilateral activity vis-à-vis the target, (2) indirect activity vis-à-vis the target designed to establish alliances with major powers against the target, and (3) alliances with lesser powers. We treated Britain, China, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States as major powers in the Persian Gulf. We also assumed that Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey could be major powers in the regional context. Countries such as Jordan, Kuwait, and Yemen were treated as lesser powers on the periphery. If the country exhibited the behavior described in a script's policy track, we scored it as either 1 or 2. We scored a 1 if it demonstrated mostly verbal commitment and 2 if it spent large sums of money or moved troops. If the country did not exhibit the policy behavior, we scored 0. We summed the scores for each strategic script in each year and divided by the total number possible. Without a more elaborate weighting scheme, this procedure remains an imperfect way to gauge relative commitment to each strategy, but it does provide some indication of which scripts are applicable.

For example, in considering American policy toward Iran in 1986–87, we compared the record of U.S. behavior to the twenty-four policy tracks in the containment script (Figure 1). We then summed our scores and divided by forty-eight. We did the same for the twenty-two policy tracks in the international cooperation script, the twenty-one tracks in the independent fortress script (Figure 3), and the nine tracks in the intervention script. We treated revisionist policies in basically the same way, but with one modification.

51. See New York Times, *The New York Times Index, 1978: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1979: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1981: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1982: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1986: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1987: A Book of Record, The New York Times Index, 1991: A Book of Record, and The New York Times Index, 1992: A Book of Record* (New York: The New York Times company, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987, 1988, 1992, and 1993, respectively); and the following indexes for the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS): *FBIS Daily Report: Middle East and North Africa, FBIS Daily Report: Middle East and Africa, FBIS Daily Report: Soviet Union, and FBIS Daily Report: Central Asia* (Stamford, Conn.: Newsbank, Inc., 1978, 1981, 1987, 1978, and 1992, respectively).

52. See the secondary sources cited in footnotes 48–49 and 51 above. Also see Oles Smolansky and Bettie Smolansky, *The U.S.S.R. and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991); Fred Axelgard, *Iraq in Transition: A Political, Economic, and Strategic Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986); Fred Axelgard, *A New Iraq? The Gulf War and Implications for U.S. Policy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1988); Richard Grimmett, *Trends in Conventional Arms Transfers to the Third World, by Major Supplier, 1976–1983* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1984); and Richard Grimmett, *Trends in Conventional Arms Transfers to the Third World, by Major Supplier, 1982–1989* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 19 June 1990).

We assume that a revisionist strategy has a containment strategy nested inside of it. In other words, a strategy that pursues opportunities for gain includes and supersedes the strategy designed to avoid loss. Eleven of the twenty policy tracks in revisionism overlap with containment. We put special emphasis on the nine policy tracks that do not. Four of these tracks in Figure 2 (numbers 1, 11, 17, and 20) involve using force to seize territory from the target or to replace governments allied with the target. We treated these behaviors as the clearest evidence of revisionism and counted their implementation as being worth seven points instead of two.⁵³ We wanted to be sure that patterns of behavior that included these four tracks were scored as revisionist and not confused with containment simply because of our counting rules that gave two points for the implementation of a series of less-discriminating policy tracks.

The relationship between the prevailing views displayed in Table 3 and the observed policy behavior summarized in Table 4 can be thought of in statistical terms. For instance, if we consider the strategy that had the largest percentage of possible policy tracks implemented, then of the forty-eight total strategies possible across the dyads, twenty-five strategies had a strong relationship with image, sixteen had a moderate relationship with image, and seven had no relationship. Rather than make too much of these numbers, however, we think the best way to consider the results is to look at three relationships in some detail. First, the clearest successes of prevailing views predicting strategy is the Soviet Union's view/strategy toward the United States and the U.S. view/strategy toward the Soviet Union. Soviet leadership imagery of the United States, for instance, moves from moderate enemy to enemy, enemy to moderate enemy, and then to complex. Across these same time periods, Soviet containment-type behavior increased as the image of the United States became more extreme and decreased as the image became more complex.

Similarly, the strategies of the United States toward the Soviet Union correspond with the United States' prevailing images. Enemy images were associated with containment initiatives in all these time periods, while Reagan-era descriptions of a somewhat degenerate Soviet Union ruled by a communist ideology headed for the "ash bin" of history were associated with strategies comprising the "Reagan doctrine" and U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. As the United States' prevailing image of the Soviet Union became more complex (enemy to moderate enemy), the containment-type behavior decreased slightly, and the overall range of policy behavior increased to include cooperative actions.

Second, the relationship between the United States and Iraq across time fits reasonably well with our expectations but admittedly is not perfect. Rather

53. Our weighting scheme uses roughly comparable ratios as those used in the COPDAB/ASHLEY scale. For a discussion of that scale see Goldstein and Freeman, *Three-Way Street*, pp. 38–39.

than let our predictions become too elastic, it is better to identify where the fit is close and where it is not and to speculate as to why. The image dyad in the first period (enemy–colony) suggests a mix of containment and intervention strategies. We found little evidence of intervention-type strategic behavior on behalf of the United States. We suspect that Iraq's alliance with Moscow reinforced American enemy, as distinct from colony, images. On the other hand, Washington had joined Iran in supporting intervention by helping to arm the Kurds and promote their resistance to Iraqi rule in 1972–75 despite the Soviet–Iraqi Peace and Friendship Agreement. The Kurdish program however had run its course by 1977 when our study began. In 1980 and 1985, prevailing U.S. images of Iraq became more complex, and containment-type behavior decreased as cooperative policy tracks became more evident. Even though the American images in both these periods included a modest colony component, the interventions by the United States were of a more commercial nature and thus were classified as institutional cooperation-type behavior. In the fourth period, we expected both containment and intervention-type strategic behavior and the actual policy commitments fit these expectations.

In the case of U.S. policies toward Iran our scheme did not do as well. The colony images of the 1980 period were associated with some interventionist behavior but no more than the containment behavior in 1981–82. In 1986–87 and 1991–92 little intervention occurred, even though our image analysis would have anticipated some. In the early 1980s, the deterrent effect of Soviet power may have had some bearing on the unexpected U.S. constraint, just as a preoccupation with Iraq may play a role in explaining the 1991–92 period.

The relationship over time between Iran and Iraq did demonstrate the association between the degenerate image and aggressive behavior. Our theory did better for this pair than for the U.S.–Iranian relationship. The prevailing Iraqi image of Iran in 1980 was a mix of enemy and degenerate attributes, which as expected led to a mix of containment and revisionist policies. Similarly, in 1985, prevailing Iranian images of Iraq included elements from the enemy, imperialist, and degenerate stereotypes. Iran's policy toward Iraq in 1986–87 followed suit and included policy tracks from containment, fortress, and revisionist scripts.

Finally, the scores of 0 in Table 4 require explanation. Such a score does not indicate no activity between the pairs of countries. It means only that no strategic activity as defined by the scripts occurred. As expected, the periods in which zeros dominate correspond with moderate or complex images.

The comparison of prevailing imagery and policy choices can provide interesting explanations for behavior that otherwise is puzzling. For example, Moscow's relatively complex images of Iran throughout the three periods suggest that Soviet leaders rarely saw great threats or opportunities in Iran, although both in the later days of the Shah's regime (1977) and in 1990 they saw some prospects for mutual cooperation. This lack of perceived threat or opportunity can go a good distance toward explaining Moscow's failure to move

more forcefully in the region despite its geopolitical options that considerations of power alone would suggest.

Khomeini's imperialist imagery can likewise shed light on Iran's decision to persevere in the war with Iraq. As mentioned in this article's first section, the puzzle here is Iran's insistence that the war go on after 1985. In many Western interpretations the Iraqi threat to Iran had been handled, and Iran's demand for total victory only ensured that the major powers would balance against Tehran by supporting Baghdad. In 1988, of course, Iran was forced to accept less-favorable terms and paid dearly for its intransigence. It is possible to explain Iran's belligerence by attributing Tehran's choices to Khomeini's messianic ambition and to his religious extremism. In this case, rational realist and neorealist expectations could be set aside in a post hoc way. After all, they do not apply to irrational behavior. Our results would suggest a different interpretation.

Operating with an imperialist image, Khomeini saw Iraq simply as an extension of the United States. In this view, the United States had encouraged Baghdad to launch the war as part of a conspiracy to reverse the Islamic revolution in Iran. In this construction of reality, as long as Saddam ruled in Baghdad and Washington was committed to an anti-Islamic course, Iran could not safely accept peace. If it did, the United States would use the breathing space to resuscitate its spearhead and attack again. If Iraq was in retreat in 1985, then Iran had to finish the job and deliver a knockout blow. At the time, Khomeini had a sufficiently degenerate picture of Iraq to conclude that such a victory was possible. Evidently the direct deployment of U.S. forces in the gulf and their use against Iranian targets, both civilian and military, convinced him by 1988 that he would have to take the risks of accepting a ceasefire even if they were the equivalent of drinking poison.⁵⁴

If Khomeini's unexpected belligerence can be attributed to his imperialist image of the United States, then can Saddam's aggressive attack on Kuwait and his puzzling refusal to back down in the face of overwhelming U.S. firepower be explained in the same way? Our study suggests not. In Saddam's case the imagery in 1985 and early 1990 was more complex. It did not suggest the strong threat perceptions of the stereotypical imperialist image. To the contrary, the complexity of prevailing Iraqi views of the United States and the Soviet Union indicated marginal perceived threat, while the degenerate images of Iran and the Arab gulf states reflected substantial perceived opportunity. While we cannot prove why Saddam saw opportunity, it is interesting to trace the evolution in the prevailing Iraqi view.

In 1977, prevailing Iraqi images of the United States were mixed. They included a substantial element of stereotypical imperialist imagery indicating

54. For more on the Iranian decision, see R. K. Ramazani, "Iran's Resistance to the U.S. Intervention in the Persian Gulf," in Keddie and Gasiorowski, *Neither East Nor West*, pp. 36–60 and 49–52.

perceived strategic self-weakness, probably related to Egyptian President Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and Egypt's defection from the Arab consensus. At the same time, Saddam described the ostensible victory Iraq had achieved over Iran, the United States, and Israel when it defeated the Kurdish uprising.⁵⁵ While in 1978 Iraq chose to ally with Syria as expected in a fortress or containment script, in 1980 it changed course dramatically. The 1979 revolution in Iran, and U.S. acceptance of it, seemed to lead to Iraqi degenerate images of Iran and major perceived opportunities. Saddam abandoned the alliance with Syria and declared war to the east. While the war did not go as planned, Iraq, with international support, nevertheless emerged in the late 1980s as the strongest regional actor in the Persian Gulf. The degenerate images of the early 1980s, which we associate with perceived opportunity, quickly reappeared. This time the targets were the Arab gulf states rather than Iran. Iraqi images of Israel had resembled the enemy image throughout the decade but became stereotypical in 1990, just as the prevailing image of the United States shifted from a moderate ally toward the prototypical imperialist pattern. It is possible that Iraq's perceived opportunity in the gulf derived from the perceived American-Israeli threat, but given the sequence of change in imagery, we suspect prevailing Iraqi views began with perceived opportunity in the gulf and saw the United States as a threat to these potential gains more so than a threat to Iraq's pre-1990 status quo.

Interaction

Table 5 combines the logic for international interaction that we presented in Figure 4 with the prevailing views that we summarized in Table 3. International relationships are represented as a function of both the proclivities of the actors (i.e., their perceptions and strategies) and the external situation they face (indicated by the strategic actions of the other countries in the system). At least three aspects of Table 5 merit comment.

First, our expectations for cases in which both parties have prevailing enemy images of each other are not incompatible with the pattern in Soviet-American and Iranian-Iraqi behavior. While a tit-for-tat spiral pattern emerged, it rarely escalated to war, although there were several crises. On the other hand, situations that pitted one country, with a prevailing degenerate image of the other, against a country exhibiting a prevailing enemy image typically led to military offensives and war. The appearance of substantial degenerate imagery in Iraq in 1980 and in Iran in 1985, for example, corresponded with high points in the military confrontation in 1981–82 and 1986–87, respectively.

55. Iran, Israel, and the United States helped to arm the Kurds and support their resistance from 1972–75. The policy ended after the Algiers accords between Iran and Iraq were signed in 1975. Saddam claimed that Soviet support had been slow in coming and insufficient, attributing the defeat of the Iranian-Israeli-U.S. "conspiracy in Kurdistan" to the strength of Iraq alone. See The Pike Papers, *The Village Voice*, 16 February 1976, pp. 85 and 87–88.

TABLE 5. *Images and hypothesized interaction patterns in the Persian Gulf, 1977–92^a*

<i>Relationship pairs</i>	<i>1978–79</i>	<i>1981–82</i>	<i>1986–87</i>	<i>1991–92</i>
U.S.–Soviet Union	Enemy–moderate enemy (soft tit-for-tat, occasional crises)	Enemy–enemy (tit-for-tat, occasional crises)	Enemy–moderate enemy (soft tit-for-tat, occasional crises)	Moderate enemy–moderate enemy (stabilize relations, reduce alliance commitments)
U.S.–Iran	Moderate ally/moderate colony–moderate ally/moderate imperial (cooperation with moderate institutionalism)	Colony–imperialist (war of liberation)	Moderate enemy/moderate colony–imperialist (nonmilitary intervention/subversion)	Moderate enemy/moderate colony–moderate imperialist (conflict as containment clashes with self-assertion)
U.S.–Iraq	Enemy/colony–imperial/complex (intervention/subversion)	Moderate enemy/colony–imperialist (some subversion/intervention)	Moderate colony/complex–moderate ally (weak alliance)	Moderate enemy/colony–moderate imperialist (some subversion/intervention)
Soviet Union–Iran	Complex–complex (commercial interaction)	Moderate colony–moderate imperialist (strained commercial interaction)	Moderate colony/complex–imperialist (strained diplomatic interaction)	Complex–moderate imperial/complex (commercial interaction)
Soviet Union–Iraq	Moderate ally/moderate colony–complex (cooperation with institutionalization)	Complex–moderate ally (weak alliance)	Complex–moderate ally (weak alliance)	Complex–complex (commercial interaction)
Iran–Iraq	Enemy–enemy (tit-for-tat reciprocity, occasional crises)	Enemy/imperialist–degenerate/enemy (inverse reciprocity, war)	Degenerate enemy/imperial–enemy/degenerate (inverse reciprocity, war)	Moderate enemy/moderate degenerate–moderate enemy/degenerate (stabilize relations on your terms)

^aThe prevailing view of the first actor listed in the first column is presented before the dash and the second actor's prevailing view is listed after the dash for each time period and each pair. Our expectations initially presented in Figure 4 are summarized in parentheses.

Our results for north–south relations are complicated and not always as we expected. For instance, the prevailing imagery in the U.S.–Iranian relationship in 1980 shared a good bit in common with the colony stereotype and theoretically should have led to more violence, maybe even war. By contrast, the more-moderate images in the U.S.–Iraqi relationship in 1990 theoretically should have led to a more-controlled confrontation, when instead full-scale war ensued. Perhaps the difference here is that the U.S. colony image in 1980 was constrained by the strong American enemy image of the Soviet Union, while in 1990 this constraint weakened very substantially as prevailing images became more complex. Obviously, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, compared with the indigenous revolution in Iran in 1978, also created political circumstances in which the U.S. pursuit of perceived opportunities through intervention could be effected with less international resistance.

Perceptions in international relations theory

Our effort to develop a cognitive–strategic approach to international relations is motivated both by the trends in neorealist theorizing and the unsolved puzzles in recent Persian Gulf affairs. From the outset, realist and neorealist scholars implicitly incorporated variation in actor motivation and perceived threat into their analyses, but only recently has the debate over absolute- and relative-gains-seeking behavior and balance-of-threat theories connected the structural-level theorizing to foreign-policy-level analysis. Although situationists have tried to preserve the structural focus in international relations theory, they have not overcome the traditional indeterminacy that structural theory faces when trying to predict or explain actor behavior. The decision to focus on types of situations only begs the question of who defines the situation and leads directly to the perceptual and actor level of analysis. Combining the foreign policy and international relations levels of theory is necessary to answer such puzzles as why Iran pursued war in 1985 when most objective factors predicted its defeat and why Saddam chose to risk destruction rather than seek political victory by haggling in the crisis over Kuwait. It also is necessary to explain why the United States, the superpower halfway around the world with very limited conventional forces in the region and great logistic challenges, exercised prevailing influence in the Persian Gulf, a location of clear strategic importance, while the superpower right next door, the Soviet Union, with large conventional and logistic advantages played a minor role at best.

Interactionist perspectives that combine structural–situational and actor-level theory have proved useful in psychology and are promising in studies of international relations as well. The incorporation of actor-level concepts, like motivation and perception, however, cannot be accomplished simply by extending the same simplifying assumptions about these actor characteristics that realists or neorealists use when operating at the system level. An empirical task remains and has not been adequately dealt with by either neorealist or foreign policy theorists. Defining the situation requires us to examine how

actors see the power relationships and the motivation and cultural norms of other actors. These images of other actors affect expectations about behavior—such as whether force will be used, the presumed relevance of norms, and calculations about how best to achieve objectives.

It may appear to structuralists and situationists that the focus on what Alexander George calls actor-specific diagnosis is unnecessary because prevailing images have antecedent causes and can be predicted from material conditions.⁵⁶ A similar claim used to be popular in psychology, but the actual task of predicting and building such a theory of cognition proved to be much more complicated than anticipated. In this article we have not challenged the central lesson of the cognitive revolution but have instead worked to incorporate it into an interactionist conception of international relations. Therefore, we start with the empirical task of identifying the cognitive images of other actors that prevail in a leadership group and from this deduce strategic choices. Our prevailing images may be the product of many factors, some psychological, others bureaucratic, and still others related to domestic aspirations, personal career interests, and not least the perceived stimuli in the external environment. We doubt, however, that we are close to a psychological–social–economic–political theory that can with rigor and reliability predict or convincingly explain which among competing images will prevail or why. Providing such a theory is beyond the scope of this article, although empirically identifying what the prevailing images are is a necessary first step in any further causal regression in that direction. Our task in this article has been to move in the other direction of explanation, seeing how far we could push the empirical study of cognitive images as a way to explain foreign policy and international relations.

To handle the empirical task required by the search for interactionist theory, cognitive approaches must move beyond the enemy image alone. In our approach we have restricted the applicability of the enemy image to relationships of perceived threat and comparable capability and cultural judgments. We have introduced four new ideal-typical images corresponding to other perceived relationships. From these perceptions of the structural situation, we deduced strategic scripts operationalized in three theaters. Our case study tested the hypothesized relationships between prevailing images and strategic behavior and found reasonably good albeit not perfect results. Our case study also tested the interactive relationships we hypothesized in Figure 4. This involved moving from the level of foreign policy to international relations, putting two actors with given images of each other in a game-theoretic dyad. Our empirical results in this regard were encouraging and highlighted the need to move beyond the reliance on enemy images and threat-based relationships.

With regard to the mental constructions of reality that are likely to define international relationships in the post-cold war era, both Figure 4 and Table 5

56. Alexander George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993), pp. 125–131.

are instructive. They demonstrate that the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union was only one type of conflict relationship. It was fueled by mutual perceived threat and was characterized by enemy images of the other on both sides. It produced competitive containment strategies and tit-for-tat reciprocity but very few direct bilateral military engagements. Other conflict relationships are different. For instance, the Iran–Iraq relationship has also at times been an enemy-image-versus-enemy-image affair but has periodically slipped into an enemy-image-versus-degenerate-image relationship. In these latter circumstances, the conflict has escalated into full-scale war that was driven more by asymmetric perceptions of power and perceived opportunities than by mutual perceptions of threat. Conflict resolution strategies derived from the cold war experience that emphasize mutual threat reduction, like graduated reciprocation in tension reduction, are not likely to be effective in these situations.⁵⁷ Additional attention will have to be directed at changing the perceptions of opportunity and relative power.

Moreover, relationships defined by colony images interacting with imperialist images have produced serious violence and few strategies for conflict resolution. Fortunately, they may become a less common pattern in the post-cold war world if the great powers' interests in Third World arenas decline with the passing of the cold war and the symbolic competition for influence.⁵⁸ However, where great power interests persist and give rise to colony images, intense conflict with actors operating with imperialist images is likely. Unfortunately, this is still the situation in the Persian Gulf.

A conflict spiral, somewhat like but in important ways different from the one we saw in the cold war, is evident in the Persian Gulf. Neither prevailing American nor prevailing Iranian views recognize the threat the other sees while they both are convinced the other has revisionist intentions. At the same time, they disagree in important ways with regard to their estimates of relative power. In this case rather than stalemate, the perceived power asymmetries and the mix of perceived opportunities and threats can give rise to active and violent conflict, led by either American preemptions or Iranian acts designed to assert regional independence. Conflict resolution strategies designed to undermine enemy images and defuse perceived threats are unlikely to be sufficient. Here the task is to change colony and imperialist images. Dealing with the range of new relationships that are likely to demand our attention in the post-cold war world will require greater analytical complexity in our theory and compel the long overdue integration of structural- and foreign-policy-level analysis. The study of images and the cognitive-strategic approach outlined and tested in a preliminary way here is presented as one approach to this task.

57. Charles Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962).

58. On the symbolic nature of interest during the cold war, see Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 174–225.