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Deterring A Rogue

And Attempting To Stop Iran From Acquiring Nuclear
Weapons

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Abstract

Can deterrence work against a rogue state? The following analysis is done in order to test the validity of deterrence theory upon a rogue actor, and if necessary, to try and develop it further. Whereas the security strategy proved successful against the Soviet Union because of mutual assumptions of rationality, it is questionable if it works towards new challenges today. The behavior of rogue states has been branded irrational, which makes many of the traditional claims of deterrence useless. Other factors have to be found if it is to succeed. Focusing on the psychological aspects of the theory, new insights may be discovered.

However, as the rogue concept is disputable, it becomes necessary to discuss the term in itself before any answers can be given. Exemplifying the theoretical discussion will be an empirical one on the prospects of stopping Iran, branded a rogue, from acquiring nuclear weapons. The U.S. is chosen as the deterring actor in this regard. But seeing states as the ones to deter is not the best solution. Rather, international institutions should be given this task. The conclusion will therefore be that deterrence works best from a liberal institutionalist view rather than from a state-centric one.

Key words: deterrence, rogue, Iran, the U.S., perceptions

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1 Introduction

The world changed after September 11. New challenges were brought to the world order, involving unfocused fears and feelings of insecurity and unease (Hyde-Price 2001:27). Not only terrorists, but states as well, were placed within these types of challenges. A fear lay in that states, which did not follow the norms of the international community, would sponsor terrorists with nuclear weapons. Thus, one of the most challenging security concerns among the Western states since 9/11 has been to prevent rogue states, as they have been called, from ever acquiring such weapons (Gärtner 2001:5). The strategy of deterrence resulted successful during the Cold War, when the U.S. used it as a way to contain any unwanted action from the Soviet Union. A shared rational calculus caused a situation of mutual assured destruction, or a “balance of terror”, that made the threats of nuclear war inhibit any aggressive action (Huntley 2006:50, Freedman 2004:11). But in the post Cold War era, with only one superpower, and where there is no balance of terror among nations any longer, there can be no guarantee that threats work to deter as they did during the Cold War. As rogue states have been characterized as being irrational actors, deterrence resting on the assumption of mutual rational calculations becomes an impossible equation. Hence this security strategy has been cast aside by some analysts as being irrelevant nowadays. But as Freedman asserts: “In the nuclear area in particular it is almost impossible to have a strategy that does not involve deterrence” (2005:795).

My interest for deterring a rogue state arose as I followed the conflict over Iran’s nuclear facilities. This conflict has been reported in the media daily, and is still in process. There is a general fear among the international community that Iran’s nuclear power plants are intended for producing nuclear weapons, and since Iran has been branded as a rogue state, this causes concern, especially among the Western nations (Moore 2006). The question remains for what strategy to use in order to contain Iran. Speculations have been made that the U.S. are considering preemptive attacks should Iran fail to listen to the demands brought forth by the international community (Hersh 2006). But what about deterrence? Should this strategy be cast aside so easily? Is it correct to assume that it cannot work to contain rogue states?

1.1 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this paper is, in more general terms, to go deeper into the analysis of deterrence theory and assess its effectiveness up against what has been characterized as rogue states. Are the two compatible? On a more specific level, I wish to direct the discussion towards the possibility of deterring Iran. My research and analysis will thus be guided by the question:

Can a security strategy based on the theory of deterrence work against a rogue state, and if so, how?

Problematizing my analysis is that of whether or not "rogue" is a concept of its own, with common denominators that may be applied to states through these. This conceptual dispute is important to reflect upon before advancing the study further on the prospect of deterring such states.

1.1.1 Limitations

Limitations to both the general discussion on deterrence theory, and on the specific example of Iran, will be done in the following analysis. The conflict over Iran's right to develop atomic energy is a complex one, involving several actors and touching upon different issues. As deterrence is the focal point, I will focus on the possibility of this strategic alternative, and leave other strategies and intentions (i.e. regime change) out of the main discussion. The number of actors involved in the conflict will be limited as well. The U.S. and its involvement in the conflict will be the state behavior I choose to focus on, as this state is one of the central players in the game. As for the limitations regarding the general discussion on deterrence, only the psychological aspects of the theory will be analyzed. Discussions on its many forms, and the complications it brings as a deductive theory will as such be left out. However, I wish to remind the reader that international relations are highly influenced by the political context in which they take place, where several factors will have an impact on the actions and decisions being made. Even if this is not explicitly brought up in the discussion, it cannot be forgotten.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This paper adds itself to a broader contribution of analysis on security studies and prospects for conflict management in international relations. Theories from authors such as Robert Jervis and Janice Gross Stein, among others, will be used

when discussing the psychological factors of deterrence. The reason I choose to look at these factors is because calculations of the opponent's risks and resolve play an important part for the eventual success of deterrence (Jervis 1985:1). If rational calculations are not shared, a large part of its outcome is dependent on how perceptions are influenced, shaped and constructed (see Klein 1994:76). Thus, assessing how perceptions and misperceptions are formed will be helpful when evaluating the usefulness of deterrence towards new adversaries. The psychological aspects give, in other words, a "richer and more accurate understanding of deterrence" (Jervis 1985:11).

There has been a tendency to center around rationalist assumptions of the deterrence strategy in general, and especially when discussing the way psychological factors play a role (ibid). But these assumptions have been questioned by others, who see the abstract rationality that traditional deterrence theory bases itself upon, to be inadequate for describing how states actually behave (Lebow 1985:204). The term rogue can arguably be said to stem from a rationalist approach as well. This is because classifying some states as rogue, while others are not, seems to indicate that ordinary states are rational actors, while those that do not act in a rational way are seen as deviations and thus threats to the international order.

Along with a realist view, strategic studies have been highly state-centric, based on states fending for their own security in an anarchic world order (Klein 1994:21). In my discussion I will initially be placing myself in a realist camp, focusing on the relationship between two states. I do so because deterrence has long been seen as a state to state relationship. But the realist perspective is inadequate in many ways, both for moral and practical reasons, in dealing with the new security challenges that arise. This gives me reason to modify my stance as I near the conclusion, letting go of a realist view, and moving towards a liberal institutionalist approach. According to this view, institutions are given a greater role and influence upon international relations, and a belief is held in the possibility of cooperation through such regimes.

1.3 Material

The material for this study derives for the most part from literature that deals with deterrence theory. While the books are older volumes, the articles from political journals are of a recent character. In this way, older, traditional views can be balanced up against newer, more contemporary ones. As for an assessment of the rogue concept, an account has been made based on opinions from articles in political journals, as well as from recent books that discuss the subject. Information, facts and opinions on the issue over Iran's nuclear quest derive from political journals and newspaper articles as well. These articles have to be read with some critical distance, as they will very likely be influenced by the political culture they represent. And as most of them I refer to are American, they will be giving a picture of the situation correspondingly. This leads me on to an alert on

the bias of my material. The texts are mainly written by Western writers, or for Western publications. This unbalanced use of material is due, first of all, to the fact that I have not had the access to (or ability to understand) articles and opinions from the Iranian side, and second, because deterrence theory is very much a political culture that derives from the U.S. (Jervis 1985:220). In fact, the whole realm of strategic studies derives from a Western debate (Klein 1994:41). Thus, the writers and analysis of this strategy have mainly been American. This goes for the rogue debate as well. As the term was first applied by Westerners, it has also been used by them.

As a note however- although the analysis stems from Western ideas, one should not exclude the possibility of applying deterrence and the rogue concept to Western countries. So far, these states are not usually regarded as being rogue, nor subject for deterrence, but this all lies in the implication of a rogue, and from whose perspective one bases the judgment, and so does not per se eliminate such reversed roles.

1.4 Method

My method will be twofold, in accordance with my aim. The general, theoretical part will try the deterrence theory up against a new setting, discussing the possibilities of applying it onto a rogue state. In so doing, I will be directing attention at certain aspects of it, questioning its traditional claims and trying to develop it further in order to fit the new world order. Before this can be done however, an investigation of the rogue concept is essential.

The other part will be an empirical study of the Iranian conflict, continually brought into the more general theoretical discussion. Deterrence theory has to a large extent been concerned with abstract analysis and deductive logic, and not so much with empirical cases (see Lebow 1985:203). Basing a theory on deductive logic makes it uncertain. Therefore, relating the analysis to empirical events will strengthen its claims (see 1985:16). However, the example is only meant to be an illustration “of how actors try to project desired images in a complex interaction rather than as a definite test of the utility of the approach” (Jervis 1970:255).

I do not have any ambitions of coming to any sound conclusions for my research question or of any predictions on the crisis, as this is far beyond my reach. Why then, do I set out on a road that has no end (at least at present)? Well, first of all, had there been a correct answer ready, the question would not have been an interesting one to study. And second, I hope to raise awareness on the subject and as such try to come closer to what answers may be possible solutions.

1.5 Disposition

The analysis starts with a short description of the Iranian conflict. Thereafter it moves along to look at the rogue concept in chapter three, problematizing the term, and looking into what sort of behavior rogue states are said to have. In chapter four, deterrence strategy is discussed. Here, both a traditional concept of it and critical counterclaims are presented. An assessment of the impact of differing perceptions, and of signaling, bargaining and commitments to agreements will be done. Before rounding up, chapter five evaluates how deterrence has worked in some instances before, to see if the situation today requires new ways to implement the strategy. Finally then, a conclusion is made from the previous discussions. All along, the theoretical analysis will be exemplified with the ongoing Iranian conflict, at times in separate paragraphs and other times integrated in the theoretical parts.

2 The Conflict In Short

In mid-2002, two nuclear facilities were discovered in Iran. These facilities had previously been unknown, and caused concern among the international community when they were discovered. Iran is a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and by not reporting to the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Association) about any new nuclear productivity, they were violating the rules of the regime. In June 2003, the IAEA came with a formal report that Iran had failed to comply with the NPT for over 18 years, holding important nuclear activities clandestine, and suspicion on Iran's intentional concealment only grew among other nations within the NPT.

In October 2003, the EU-3¹ started negotiations with Iran to try to solve the problem and rescue the integrity of the NPT regime. These negotiations seemed to be successful at first, as Iran agreed to suspend its enrichment activities (required for making a nuclear bomb) for the time being. But in 2004, new reports by the IAEA complained of Iran's inadequate cooperation. This only spurred counter-action by Iran, who subsequently stated that they would resume enrichment activities and testing of centrifuges. In February 2005 President Mohammed Khatami proclaimed publicly that no Iranian government would give up the nuclear technology programs. This statement made it clear that Iran had no intentions of giving in to international pressure. By September 2005, the chief of IAEA, Mohammed ElBaradei, confirmed that Iran had resumed its enrichment activities, and in January 2006, U.N. seals were removed from a nuclear plant in Natanz. This escalated the conflict, as warnings by the Western community had been given Iran that they would be jeopardizing any compromise if they went ahead with continuing their nuclear programs. Talks of referring Iran to the U.N. security council were met with threats by Iran that they would end all voluntary cooperation with the IAEA. Still, the EU and the U.S. decided to refer the case to the Security Council which, on March 29th, gave Iran a deadline of 30 days to suspend its uranium enrichment program. No detailed consequences were however given. Two weeks later, Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, announced that Iran finally had succeeded in enriching uranium. And a month later, the IAEA reported that Iran had intensified its nuclear enrichment efforts, while at the same time concealing crucial information about its program. Rumors that the U.S. is contemplating a military pre-emptive attack have spurred debate over what strategy should be used for managing this conflict further (Washington Post and Lynch 2006).

¹ Germany, France and Great Britain

3 A Rogue State

Alex George has argued that for policymakers to make the best choice when deciding on a foreign policy, it is important to have a better understanding of what requirements are needed for the different options at hand (1993:xviii). Three points are highlighted. First, knowing the conceptual frameworks of the theories, (that is, the basic outlines of them) and how they have been used in the past, will be important when deciding on what strategy to use for present and future situations. An abstract conceptual model for a strategy will pinpoint its critical aspects and what assumptions are made in order for it to succeed (1993:17,118). Second, generic knowledge through earlier empirical cases will give an idea of when the strategy has succeeded and when it has not. However, seeing as the world we live in is a complex one, there will rarely, if ever, be universal generalizations that can be taken from earlier events and applied to new ones (1993:120-122). Thus one needs to look at the specific cases, and evaluate how the actors in each case behave.

As correct an image of the opponent as possible, is vital for the prospect of influencing it. A wrong image of an adversary can result in miscalculations, which will most likely lead to a failure of the strategy implemented. The third point, a behavior-model, can be helpful when trying to get this image correct (1993:126). But determining what sort of behavior an actor has is problematic, and when there exists no consensus on the defining term of the actor, even more so. In the following, a short discussion on the rogue concept will therefore be given, before a behavior model for it is outlined.

3.1 The Rogue Concept

The rogue expression has been used for states that do not follow the norms and practices of the international system, instead behaving “afoul of the standards of the international community” by trying to pursue weapons of mass destruction or by sponsoring terrorism (Caprioli et al. 2005:773). The term was given a thorough definition in the American National Security Strategy (NSS), where these states were not only “determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction along with other advanced military technology ” and ”sponsor terrorism around the globe”, but also known to ” brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers; display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party; and reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands” (NSS 2002:14).

3.1.1 Iran

One of the most discussed rogues in the past year is Iran. Iran has been classified as the number one threat and challenge to U.S. security (NSS 2006:20). The main reason for this is because the Iranian regime is believed to be developing nuclear weapons. As the U.S. also believes Iranian leadership is sponsoring terrorism through radical Islamic groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas (Ekovich 2004:80 and NSS 2006:9), a fear rests on the idea that such weapons will be handed over to these radical groups, who would then use them as terror- devices. Apart from this, Iran is led by clerics in a totalitarian regime, following strict Islamic rules that give little freedom to the people (Lönnaeus 2006). Furthermore, Iran has been seen as threatening its neighbors², and finally, they have violated an international treaty by failing to report to the IAEA for over 18 years about their nuclear program and are showing few signs of further cooperation. Summed up, these factors fit neatly in with the definition of a rogue.

3.2 Are Rogue States Irrational?

Determining how a rogue state behaves through a specific behavior model is problematic, as there is no clear agreement on the term itself and its usefulness as an analytical tool. Those that do use it, tend to see rogues as behaving against the standards and norms of the international society, or “illicit” as Bush describes Iran’s behavior (NSS 2006:20). Subsequently, they have often been characterized as irrational actors and believed to be more resolute than ordinary states, not sharing the same rational calculations as the rest. This makes them less likely to back down, and instead more willing to take risks (Powell 2002:105). Because of their irrationality, negotiations with rogue leaders are believed to be fruitless, as they will not understand the significance of the use or threat of force (Segell 2004:349). A comment from Bush's chief political adviser, Karl Rove, underlines this assumption. He describes the Iranian President Ahmadinejad as not being “a rational human being”, making it hard to come up with a diplomatic resolution that will work to deter him (Baker 2006). A fear also rests on the assumption that some rogue leaders, especially Islamic religious ones, do not share the same calculations of rationality because of their belief in martyrdom. This will heighten their risk limit substantively. Iran’s history adds sparks to the fire in this regard. During the Iran-Iraqi war, the mullahs led many young boys to fight for their country by idolizing the image of martyrdom. Boys were encouraged to give up their lives for the sake of the Islamic Republic and celebrated as martyrs (Nafisi 2002).

² the Iranian president has said Israel must be “wiped off the face of the earth” (Copans 2006)

3.2.1 Rogue States are Not Irrational

On the other line of thought are the skeptics to the notion of irrationality used for describing rogue states. Claiming that a process of thought is irrational, whether belonging to a rogue state or not, is regarded as being a rather strong statement to make (Jervis 1976:119). Through a systematic analysis on the behavior of rogue states,³ the results showed that as a group, rogue states were no more likely to get involved in interstate conflicts, neither were they more inclined to start a militarized dispute, and nor were they more likely than other states to use force when a conflict became violent (Caprioli et al 2005:788). Criticism has also directed attention at the non-discriminatory use of two definitions: terrorists and rogue states, assuming that they both share the same irrational characteristics⁴. The counter-argument goes that while terrorists may be irrational in that they do not have a prerequisite for survival, rogue governments do. As such, they are forced to think in rational ways (Huntley 2006:55).

3.2.2 Rationality is Relative

Whether rogue leaders are believed to be rational or not will have implications for the strategy to be used against them. But, as the discussion above shows, there is no consensus on their rationality, and consequently, neither on their likely response to a strategy. George highlights this, warning that strategic alternatives are only useful to a certain limit: "Policymakers may have to operate without reliable knowledge of the opponent's receptivity and likely response" (1993:53). What is important to note, but perhaps easily forgotten, is that even if an opponent does not share the same calculations of costs and benefits as the defender, this does not imply that it is irrational. If the opponent differs on the value of an objective, it will also disagree on the prospect of, and costs required for, this objective being fulfilled (Jervis 1976:130). Decisions will most likely be based on a subjective image of the world (Snyder 1977:85) and thus it is the subjective calculations that become important when weighing the costs and benefits from military action (Stein 1985:35).

In fact, feigning irrationality may be a strategic tactic to heighten the fear of the challenger so he will back down (see Snyder 1977:222). Furthermore, a leader may act because of information it gets from internal forces, that cannot be seen from the outside (Jervis 1985:27) A useful example in this regard is the revelation on how Saddam Hussein based his strategic moves⁵. Seen from the external world, Saddam's thinking seemed irrational. However, he based his calculations

³both testing the behaviour of the five countries most dominantly and consistently regarded as rogue by policymakers since the 1980's: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea, and testing the behaviour of all states who met the criteria for rogue behavior: sponsoring terrorism and/or pursuing illicit possession of weapons of mass destruction (Caprioli et al 2005:771).

⁴ Bush stated in the NSS that "we make no distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them" (2002:5)

⁵ Published in the political journal "Foreign Affairs".

and strategies on information he got from internal channels, which was distorted. His staff lied to him and made him believe Iraq was stronger than it was, making his calculations rational on those grounds (Woods 2006). As such, rationality should be seen as relative, and not an objective calculus. Understanding the motivations behind actions, and from what context they stem from, might lessen the notion of irrationality and help explain what perception the other has, and why certain actions are taken (Jervis 1976:146, 204).

3.3 Critics to the Concept

The term itself has been up for debate, rejected by some as being only what and who the United States says it is (Caprioli et al 2005:778). In fact, whereas the U.S. used the term “rogue state” in its NSS, the EU has avoided this term in its security document, instead addressing certain states as “failing” ones (Berenskoetter 2005:74). The critics to the term believe that, even if certain states may be more militarily aggressive than others, it is wrong to claim that they belong to one category. They do not pose the same threat and as such cannot be dealt with in the same way (Caprioli et al 2005:787).

Another critique is closely related to the “one size fits all” use of the concept, which inhibits any effective policy towards such a category of states (O’Sullivan 2001). It points a finger at the term as constructed to justify the pre-emptive strategic doctrine of the NSS:

To make sovereign states- themselves self-evidently inappropriate candidates for preventive war- appear more appropriate targets, fuzzy terms like rogue state are introduced that putatively link states that can be militarily defeated to terrorists who are far more elusive (Barber 2003:105).

As such, in the absence of a fixed target, states are accused for what terrorists have done (ibid). Yet another critique claims it has been used selectively and inconsistently. Cuba, for example, is part of the list, even though it has not met any of the criteria of a rogue, while Syria, which meets all, is not part of the group (Litwak 2001). In sum, critics to the term rogue see it as being “too politicized to be analytically meaningful”, and as a result, there exist very little systematic analysis of it (Caprioli et al 2005:777, 778).

In 2000 the State Department recognized the weaknesses of this term, and decided to abandon it in favor of a vaguer title of “states of concern” (Litwak 2001). But this change of rhetoric did not last long, for already in 2002 President Bush used it again in the NSS. In the 2006 version, the term was still there. So when used further in the analysis, it is to the extent that it is a political term that most certainly remains part of the language of (Western) policymakers these days, and not because it necessarily has high validity as an analytical tool.

3.3.1 A Cognitive Gap

Iran is more complex than what is presented in the media these days. There is, in the words of one analyst, “a cognitive gap between the Iran that is illustrated in the security literature of the West and the Iran that is trying to secure itself in a world of uncertainties” (Sajjadpour 2005:26). The image of Iran as a rouge state is mostly due to the U.S., where the picture drawn is art of the Bush Administration. It is rather a matter of perception, suspicion and rhetoric. And the threat they see Iran being, may not be as realistic as they wish to portray it. No evidence has so far been made that the nuclear facilities they have are intended for making the atomic bomb (Farideh 2005). And when the president comes with public provocations and threats towards Israel’s existence, in reality he has no direct power over what is done in Iran. He may shout as loud as he can, but what political decisions are followed through is not up to him to decide. It is the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on national decisions (Balouji 2005:81). Iran’s motivations may also be different from what the Western world fears, and may in fact be quite rational ones. They claim that they need nuclear energy so they won’t be dependent on other nations for this. Nevertheless, seeing how the U.S. went in with preemptive force in Iraq to remove the regime, the Iranians may also want the nuclear weapon, not as a means of providing it to terrorists, but as a deterrent on the U.S. to safeguard them from any attacks. After the Iraq-Iranian war, which was a devastating one for Iran, they may have become wary of their vulnerability and seen the need for stronger and more “aggressive” weapons to defend themselves against potential enemies (Roshandel 2005:48, 51). Given that they are surrounded by nuclear powers, they have reason to feel vulnerable (Safdari 2005).

4 Deterrence

Deterrence is a complex theory that can be used in several ways and with different objectives. To understand how it works, it is important to see what factors play a role when implementing it as a security device. A short conceptual framework of the strategy is therefore in place at this point. Furthermore, problematizing some of its basic ideas and looking at psychological factors that have an impact on its use are discussed, as these aspects are relevant for how deterrence succeeds or not.

4.1 A Brief Conceptual Account

Deterrence is a coercive strategy that is used for the purpose of containing any attempts at aggressive action. The definition of coercion may be “the potential or actual application of force to influence the action of a voluntary agent” (Freedman 2004:26). As for deterrence in particular then, it is concerned with the role threats (especially the threats of force) have in international affairs when used deliberately to stop others from acting in damaging ways. Its objective is as such “inaction” (2005:789). The deterrer, A, sees the enemy, B, as dangerous, and will threaten to use force to stop it from any dangerous acts. The logic of the theory implies that the threat of retaliation should be so credible that the adversary calculates that the costs of continuing his action will be higher than what is gained from abstaining. As such, it assumes that the opponent is rational and will calculate his costs and benefits according to a rational model (George 1993:118). The theory, by deducing rational behavior, presumes that policymakers can make predictions on how the opponent will respond to threats (Jervis 1985:7).

However, whether B is deterred or not is not only due to the threats given by A, but also (perhaps even more significantly) due to the nature of B. This is the problem of all coercive strategies- that it is dependent on the response of the opponent (Freedman 2005:790). Threat based strategies are, in other words, “risky business” (Lebow 2005:767). B may misinterpret the threats given by A, not understanding their limits before they are turned into action, or he may not be restrained, as he will not share the same rational calculation of costs and benefits. If the calculations are not based on choosing the option that is thought to give the highest value, which would be the rational choice, deterrence strategy cannot work as expected (Stein 1985:51). This will result in that the strategy fails to achieve its objective, and one arrives at the difficult situation of deciding whether or not to fulfill the threat.

Schelling draws attention to such limitations of theoretical strategic thinking. It works best with rational behavior assumptions, as “it gives a grip on the subject that is peculiarly conducive to the development of theory” (1977:4). It is much easier to analyze a theoretical strategic option if the opponent is believed to respond in rational and thus “predictable” ways. But not always are the options chosen the ones that seem to make most sense. Is it the rationality of the policymakers, or the theoretical assumption that is the problem for deterrence?

4.1.1 Questioning the Importance of Rationality

Deterrence has been discarded as an effective strategy these days because of its rational presumptions. For instance, President Bush stated:

In the Cold War, (...) we faced a generally status quo, risk-averse adversary. Deterrence was an effective defense. But deterrence based only upon the threat of retaliation is less likely to work against leaders of rogue states more willing to take risks, gambling with the lives of their people, and the wealth of their nations (NSS 2002:15).

It may be that deterrence resting solely on the threat of nuclear retaliation is not effective any longer (Payne 2005: 775). But the premise of rationality for making deterrence effective has been challenged. According to a U.S. Strategic Command statement from 1995, deterrence during the Cold War was never dependent on rational leaders:

The very framework of a concept that depends on instilling fear and uncertainty in the minds of opponents was never, nor can it be, strictly rational. Nor has it ever strictly required rational adversaries in order to function (see Huntley 2006:54-55).

Others have agreed that the success of the deterrence strategy is not based strictly on the concept of rationality. Stein, for instance, is skeptical of building a deterrence theory around the concept of rationality. She proposes that “If there is to be a better fit between theory and practice, we must relax some of the norms of rationality” (1985:59). It is not the rationality of an actor that is problematic for deterrence to succeed or fail, but rather how tolerant one is to risk in a given situation and how this situation is perceived by the actors involved in the conflict (see Stein 1985:58). Again, the conclusion is that rationality is seen as highly relative. A threat may be ineffective if it does not consider how the opponent perceives the threat, which in turn relates to how it perceives the conflict (Freedman 2004:59). People tend to interpret what they see and hear depending on what is important to them at the specific time. Instead of looking at the rationality of statesmen, it is more useful to have an understanding of the values, ideology, culture and mind-set of the opponent (George 1993:126) and to look at from what perspective they make decisions. The absence of mutual understanding and trust while communicating with one another will thus have a greater impact on whether deterrence fails or not (Payne 2005:781).

4.2 Shaping Perceptions

Deterrence strategy tries to describe an interactive process (Lebow 1985:229), where signals are sent back and forth to influence and shape perceptions. This is done because perceptions of the other state's intentions are vital components of the deterrence theory (Jervis 1970:58), laying a ground for how the calculations of the costs and benefits from further action are made. By manipulating the threats and force in the right way, deterrence can work to contain aggressive and unwanted action (see Klein 1994:76). Through signals, a deterrer tries to convince the opponent that the costs of further aggression are higher than the benefits from continuing. But if signals are misperceived, this may cause misunderstandings that can rather worsen the state of affairs (Jervis 1976:84). Through analytical studies, it has been shown that this is often the case, as signals have frequently been misperceived because they are interpreted in the wrong way, due to predetermined views of the actor, or because of a lack of a common language. By miscalculating the other's intentions and resolve, the strategy has then failed to reach its desired outcome (Stein 1985:36, 45).

4.2.1 Biased Perceptions

An adversary's intentions are always difficult to judge (Jervis 1985:14), and so Iran's real intentions for their nuclear facilities will be uncertain. The belief that someone has broken a rule of the game of international politics is very often regarded as the reason given for determining a threat (ibid). States tend to assume the worst, interpreting military capability as a means of offense instead of defense. Ironically, they do not realize that their own military capabilities will be recognized likewise by the adversary (1976:68). When the U.S. fears nuclear weapons in the hands of the Iranians as analogous with offensive intentions, this becomes hypocritical, considering their own military position (Holsti 2006).

Statesmen are inclined to simplifying their perceptions of the threat, affecting what strategy is to be implemented: "...the images states have of each other are frequently inaccurate. Even when general outlines are correct, crucial details are usually inexact in ways that can defeat policies" (Jervis 1985:18,28). One factor that biases the perception is that earlier actions are used to determine how future ones will be carried through. But what is not all too often pointed out is that even if a state is unreasonable once does not mean that it will act unreasonably the next time. A tendency rests in that a state is regarded as aggressive in nature, but this tends to be an exaggeration (1976:24). So even if Iran has acted aggressively in the past should not determine the view that it will act aggressively in the future nor that it is aggressive by nature. However, as it is branded a rogue, this assumption is made nonetheless.

Closely related to the tendency for simplification are pre-constructed images of the opponent. "People perceive what they expect to be present" (1976:68), or what they want to be present. One becomes judgmental from the beginning,

biasing the perception of a threat (Sajjadpour 2005:23). Information that meets expectations will be assessed as more credible than what goes counter to these expectations (Jönsson 1990:85). As such, one becomes quick to draw conclusions from the evidence that goes with what is expected to be found (Jervis 1976:193). This assumption fits well with the situation today. When nuclear facilities were found in Iran, conclusions were quickly drawn that they were intended for nuclear weapons, and few saw reason to believe in other explanations. The IAEA has reported that they cannot guarantee that Iran no longer has undeclared facilities, even after intense inspections. But how can Iran prove that they have no hidden facilities? With the pre-determined image of a rogue the Western powers have of Iran, it is almost impossible for them to prove themselves innocent (Safdari 2005).

4.2.2 Signals

What is signaled by a state is up for interpretation, as it can as readily lie or deceive about its intentions, as state the truth. Signals are thus not in themselves credible evidence (Jervis 1970:18). Knowing which signals are true and which ones are not, is no easy task to solve. Lying can work to deceive the opponent of ones intentions, in order to enforce the credibility of commitments to stated intentions and threats. But lying is a risky card to play if it is seen through, becoming a “cry wolf” phenomena that can lead to a loss of credibility (Stein 1985:83). Even if the signals are true, they may not be taken at face value anyhow, and misinterpretations or disregard of correct signals can generate aggressive action by the receiver (Jervis 1970:126). This will happen if the opponent feels so threatened that he sees aggressive action as the only means of defending his mere existence. Attempts to deter can therefore lead to the opposite effect- that it enrages the opponent rather than makes him back down (1985:1).

Threats have constituted a significant part of the signals being sent between Iran and the U.S., escalating in intensity with the issue brought to the U.N. Security Council (Moore 2006). But not all signals have been threats, nor direct statements, resulting in a blend of ambiguous and confusing communication that makes the intentions of each side hard to determine. The U.S. on the one hand, has been sending mixed signals toward Iran (Litwak 2003-04:8). In its NSS it is explicitly stated that the White House will act preemptively against a rogue state if diplomacy were to fail and should the situation call for it (see NSS 2006:18). Newspaper articles have published speculations and claims that the U.S. is planning for preemptive attacks. The Bush Administration met these speculations by publicly stating that they were only “wild speculations”, refusing to acknowledge suspicion that military preemptive considerations were being made (Arkin (1)). Whether or not these speculations have truth in them, they do raise the question of preemption to the daily order. And when Bush nevertheless proclaimed that “All options are on the table” some days later, this gives room for Iranian leaders to interpret military action as possible none the less (Branigin 2006). As Arkin wrote in an article in the Washington Post “We never rule

anything out or in, we never say never, the threat of nuclear annihilation is always in the air. What's Tehran to think?" (Arkin(2)).

For deterrent threats to work then, it is important that the signals and the communication going on between the parties to the conflict are not misinterpreted (Jervis 1985:29). In order to avoid miscalculations, the signals would have to be clear and direct, and address the opponent in terms it could understand. But sometimes it is not in the deterrer's interest that signals should be clear and concise. This is the dilemma of all verbal communication that involves coercion: choosing between clarity and ambiguity (Snyder 1977:212). Ambiguous signals gives the sender an opportunity to change course of action midway should the responses not be as they were hoped for, and leaves the sender with more flexibility and greater control (Jervis 1970:125). A state may for instance signal that it wants to start negotiations, but will at the same time send another signal that contradicts the first one, so that it does not appear to be losing its resistance against the opponent (1970:123-124). But the danger in sending too ambiguous signals is similar to that of lying, that the receiver will discard them altogether, by not believing in them. Or he will misunderstand and not recognize them in the way the sender wishes. Jervis concludes that:

(...) the actor will usually be best off if he makes his signals ambiguous enough so he can deny having issued them if he has to, but clear enough so they attract sufficient attention to be studied by the receiver and interpreted as the sending actor intended. Needless to say, this balance often cannot be struck (1970:132).

4.2.3 A Guessing Game

Why is the U.S. not stating any explicit threats in order to back up a deterrent posture? One reason may be that they are afraid of the consequences if the threats are not met by concessions from the Iranian side. It may also be that the U.S. does not have the military capability to launch an attack in Iran, with all its resources outstretched in Iraq and Afghanistan. In any case, the threat of preemption has so far not been directly proposed towards Iran, and instead signals have been consistently ambiguous and diffuse. But whereas clear signals may restrict the possibilities of the sender, ambiguity is not always the best way to go, as it forces the receiver to guess. In this case, it may even lead to proliferation (see Arkin (2)), because it only reinforces concern by the weaker state. Just having the possibility open for a military attack could convince the Iranians that they rapidly need to develop a nuclear deterrent (Dr. Borda 2005:3).

The Iranian side, in turn, has also been giving out confusing and ambiguous messages. Here as well, ambiguity is not always so good if deterrence is to stand a chance, as it raises the level of suspicion and concern from the international community (Roshandel 2005:50) and may make them become tougher than they have to. The Iranians agreed to cooperate with the EU-3 initially, and even though skeptics doubted that this would eventually lead to a final abandonment of Iran's nuclear program, hope was nevertheless raised that a solution could be in sight (Einhorn 2004:22). But the cooperation and negotiation did not reach the results

desired for, and ended when Iran failed to comply with their part of the agreement and instead resumed their enrichment program. This move only added skepticism over Iran's intentions. Furthermore, they threatened to stop all cooperation with the IAEA if they became subject to sanctions from the Security Council (Washington Post 2006) and have even stated that they "don't give a damn" about any U.N. resolution (Ross 2006). As Einhorn states: "Iran's deceptions, evasions, and outright lies about its nuclear program (...) have made all the key players deeply skeptical about Tehran's claims" (2004:23). Nevertheless, they have said they have no ambitions of developing nuclear weapons (Moore 2006). But their denial cannot be taken at face value, as someone being confronted with lying will most likely deny any accusation of them lying whether it is true or false (see Jervis 1970:69).

4.2.4 Reputation

Deterrence bases itself on the credibility of retaliatory threats, and the capability to carry them through should the threats not suffice. While the capability rests on the deterrer's shoulder, the credibility rests heavily on the opponent (Huntley 2006:61). How does a threat become credible in the eyes of the opponent? One factor is the military capabilities, which of course plays a role. Another is the manipulation being done. But yet a third premise is the reputation for retaliation that a state has (Morgan in Jervis 1985:134). As Jönsson asserts:

With the right sort of reputation, a state might be successful in practicing deterrence regardless of its actual resolve; with the wrong sort of reputation, it could have difficulties deterring an opponent even when its threats of retaliation are sincere (1990: 80).

For a threat to be active as a deterrent factor, it implies that it has to be carried through should it not hold, if the state wants to maintain its reputation. So if the threats are explicit, this in turn means that the stakes are greater in terms of the threatener's reputation (Jervis 1970:82). The immense failure of the preemptive strategy against Iraq most surely rests in the back of the minds of the Bush Administration, and so they choose not to state any explicit threats.

However, the U.S. has been regarded as a state concerned, almost to the extreme, with upholding a strong reputation for retaliation (Morgan in Jervis 1985:763). But this may have consequences for the success of deterrence. Overestimating the impact of reputation for commitments may result in an underestimation of the importance of finding out what makes an adversary challenge these commitments (Lebow 1985:226). If deterrence is to be the goal, it will not help to have a strong reputation for commitment, nor manipulations of threats, if the cause of the conflict is still perceived as worth fighting for by the opponent.

4.3 Bargaining

Studies show that deterrence and bargaining are closely connected, as the strategy has held ground when leaders recognized room for bargaining (Stein 1985:58). In fact, deterrence may be a form of “redistributive bargaining”. This implies that a challenge that sets off the crisis is met by the defender with demands to give up possession or control of what has caused the challenge (Snyder 1977:23). If the demands given are posed as threats, it becomes deterrence. For bargaining to be an option though, there has to be a bargaining range in sight. The EU-3 recognized a bargaining range when they initiated negotiations with Iran. They saw prospects of mutual benefits, making bargaining a possibility. But both sides tried to maintain their bargaining position, sending ambiguous signals and developing a form of “chicken-game” (Dr. Borda 2005:19), hoping that the other party would back down first in order to start bargaining. Now one can argue that the U.S. and Iran are playing the same game, but so far no side has been willing to recede, or become “chicken”.

4.3.1 Manipulating Bargaining Positions

Manipulation of rationality can come in use in bargaining situations. In the face of a threat, it may not be an advantage to be rational (Schelling 1977:18). As such, there is a “rationality of irrationality“, that may enforce credibility (Jönsson 1990:79). This in turn can have a deterrent effect on the deterrer and strengthen the opponent’s bargaining position. Giving the impression of being irrational will in this regard cause the initiator of deterrence to back down first and go easy on the threats. Iran could play on the belief that they are irrational, as this could have a deterrent effect on the U.S. If they see little to gain by giving up their nuclear option, they could be willing to hold on to their right of keeping it as long as they see no imminent danger of being attacked (Einhorn 2004:27).

An adversary that is believed to be irrational can cause the defender to see little hope of a bargaining possibility, and consequently of deterrence to stand a chance. And whether irrational or not, there may be instances where an adversary will rather fight than bargain over any solution if it feels inferior in its bargaining position. Still, there can be situations where a bargaining range is present even if the opponent is risk-acceptant. This will be the case when there is a common interest in not fulfilling the threat and thus avoiding the harm it would inflict on both sides (see Snyder 1977:196). A problem lies in how to commit to an agreement that ensures both sides from not breaking out of it, and as such making the commitment credible for them both (Powell 2006:171). First of all, a lack of trust and recognition can inhibit any commitment. There is a profound lack of trust between Iran and the U.S., and the U.S. has long been wary of negotiating with a “rogue” state (Hirsh 2006). Agreeing to a shared commitment thus becomes problematic. Second of all, a belief that the other is going to back down first can also inhibit commitment to a shared agreement. This belief will stem

from the perception one has of the other's threat, and whether or not it seems credible. In this case, one does not agree to any offer, even if such an agreement is preferred to a breakdown of the negotiations (Jervis 1976:59). If Iran believes the U.S. will eventually back down first, they will subsequently not agree to any agreement. Manipulating the threat so it appears stronger than it is can in this instance be effective. But if the U.S. poses too strong a threat, this could back-fire. So once again, a dilemma arises.

A third scenario could also inhibit any agreement. If a weak bargainer has potential of becoming stronger in the future, it might want to back out of the bargain once it has achieved a stronger position. The stronger bargainer, safeguarding from such an eventual scenario, will thus use its power to make sure this never happens (Powell 2006:181). The U.S. could be inclined to use preemptive force if it believe it has no chance of deterring Iran, as once Iran gets hold of nuclear weapons it would be increasing its bargaining position over the U.S. sufficiently.

4.3.2 Creating Bargaining Positions

Domestic factors, like personalities of decision-makers, bureaucratic roles and government structures, will have an impact on what policies are followed and subsequently, the commitments and bargaining positions taken by a state (Snyder 1077:31). This in turn affects the possibilities for deterrence. Comparing Iran and the U.S., they are almost total contrasts. The Iranian government structure is complex, comprising both a political and a religious part, where the latter weighs heavily on the former. As mentioned, the Iranian president has little direct power over what is decided on national issues. But indirectly, the president has some sort of power and influence. When he gives public statements he is creating a limited bargaining position for those who do have the power over decisions:

When national representatives go to international negotiations knowing that there is a wide range of potential agreement within which the outcome will depend on bargaining, they seem often to create a bargaining position by public statements, statements calculated to arouse a public opinion that permits no concessions to be made (Schelling 1977:28).

In this way, whatever President Ahmadinejad states publicly, even if he has no political power per se, he can make it much harder for those who do have such power, to negotiate. His rhetoric can result in a "binding public opinion", "cultivated and made evident to the other side", so that it becomes the final position (ibid).

In a democratic state on the other hand, the President has direct power over the implementation of national decisions. President Bush has declared that the U.S. will not "tolerate" Iran acquiring nuclear weapons (Litwak 2003-04:7). It has been speculated that perhaps this policy reflects the presidents own attitudes toward the regime in Tehran (2003-04:8). Who governs a democratic state will thus influence the policy that is followed through. In any case, what postures that are taken by the government will turn into the policy to be employed. At present, a highly

conservative government, the Bush Administration, is governing in the United States. They have often been branded “hawkish” (Moore 2006), and consequently take on a hard politics line, more readily turning to military options than what might be the case for a more liberal government. When Bush proclaimed that “all options are on the table” for a strategy towards Iran, he may be setting the U.S. in a commitment trap, committing to using nuclear weapons should their enemies, i.e. rogue states, not adhere to the threats (Huntley 2006:61). He will as such also be putting the country in another clinch, that of a “policy trap”, by having a pre-emption policy as a strategy towards rogue states. Perhaps he hopes to create a strong bargaining position against Iran, by making threats seem more credible in light of the national security strategy (see Slantchev 2005:535). If this is so, he may be hoping to portray a threat so credible that it exceeds the opponent’s risk limit, earning the U.S. a higher relative bargaining power than Iran (see Snyder 1977:191-192).

But a stated policy can come to overshadow the justifications for using it (Jervis 1985:25). In this regard, “the U.S. policy-making elite’s pursuit of a reputation for resolve has frequently resulted in policies devoid of perspective and judgment” (Lebow 1985:220). A policy with the wrong objectives, like regime-change, can make the opponent feel so threatened that it will hold on to its challenge at whatever the cost, for fear of its mere existence. As was the case with a misperceived deterrence strategy, a policy with the wrong focus can enrage rather than contain as well and will do little to help deter. Thus, the bargaining position created through a policy of pre-emption will become a weak one.

5 Then And Now

After looking at both the concept of deterrence and that of a rogue, the time has come to bring the discussion towards new considerations for the two terms. But before doing so, one last issue should be addressed - that of generic knowledge. A few examples from the past will be given, where deterrence has (or could have) worked against a rogue state, to see if these arguments hold for such states today. A look at the present situation, and the specific circumstances around the concrete example of Iran, will follow. What factors have an impact on the way deterrence would work upon rogue states today, in contrast to how it has worked under earlier circumstances?

5.1 Lessons From The Past

Generic knowledge, or lessons from the past, can be an instrument for illustrating how other cases of deterrence have been successful against rogue states, and what factors were essential for it succeeding. What is worth noting however, is that some of these arguments tend to rest on rationalist assumptions of the deterrence strategy, and as such fall in the trap of thinking along old lines of deterrence, and do little for the contribution of finding new ways of which it can work in today's context. Still, some arguments may be taken into account, as they can help assess the use and limitations of the strategy by illustrating under what circumstances it has worked before.

One example given of lessons learned from the past is from a case study of communist China. The author claimed China met all of the requirements for a rogue state under the definition of the NSS and concluded his study by stating that: "Not only are rogue states deterrable; they are also likely to become more cautious upon acquiring nuclear weapons "(Szewczyk 2005:131). The results showed that Mao was not a threat to international peace and security, even when China acquired nuclear weapons, and rogue states today are likewise not a threat in this manner:

Although the existence of undeterrable rogue states is conceivable, it is highly unlikely. Having consolidated their power through the use of force, leaders of rogue states understand the logic of violence and are responsive to the threat of force, i.e. deterrence is effective against them (Szewczyk 2005:132).

If the present situation with regards to rogue states is seen as similar to that during the rule of Mao Zedong, the comparison can be useful. It shows that even if some states are more willing to take risks to acquire nuclear weapons, the

immense damage upon the state that nuclear war could bring about, would make them more cautious and play along a rational line if they in fact did acquire them (ibid). They would become “self-deterred”, to borrow a phrase by Freedman, because a fear of the consequences of too risky actions would make them become so (Freedman 2004:30).

Another example given by analysts is, ironically enough, the case of Iraq. Iraq is, along with North Korea and Iran, part of the so-called “axis of evil”, all of whom are branded as rogue by President Bush (see Sifry 2003:251). Deterrence was not given a chance to succeed, as the U.S. went in with preemptive military force. But had they not, there are those who believe Saddam would have recognized U.S. military strength and superiority, and not being suicidal, he would eventually have been deterred. Even if he had gotten hold of nuclear weapons, arguments hold that he could have been contained (Mearsheimer et al in Sifry 2003:414-423). Saddam showed signs of rationality and rational calculations under earlier circumstances, backing down when the risks become too high, and as such was responsive to deterrent threats (Pollack et al 2005:20-21).

Instead of giving examples of how deterrence has or could have worked in earlier cases by focusing on the assumption of rationality, there are other ways to use the past for lessons to be learned. In those cases, focus rests on the belief that rogue states will learn for themselves from earlier incidents. In this regard, it is hoped that by creating an internalized deterrence, other rogue states will be deterred without any explicit statements of threat (Freedman 2004:30). One example that is frequently used is the case of Libya. Many regard the Libyan leader, Kaddafi, as being deterred from what he learnt of the Iraqi invasion (Hirsh 2006). As such, the invasions of Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan in 2002 by the U.S. are hoped to act as deterrents on other states as well, such as Iran and North Korea, creating a domino effect that will affect how these states think and act in the future (see for instance Newman 2005:166).

5.2 The Situation Today

Conflicts and war have shifted their focus from earlier times. The quest for an expanded territory to gain wealth is no longer the main reason for war (Jervis 1970:20). Now, conflicts arise rather from nationalist uprisings, the notion of saving face and of national pride. Deterrence has for a long time been placed in a “balance of power” context, and given legitimate status from the most powerful states, following their rules and objectives. But as no “balance of power” is present in the international realm today, new ways in which to handle situations of unwanted aggressive action has to be taken. Still, even if deterrence cannot work as it did before, there are ways in which it can work (see Dueck 2006:239, Freedman 2005:797).

Deterrence should no longer be seen as a way of babysitting “untamed” states, as it so long has been done. Nor should it rest on any assumptions of rationality. Instead, deterrence should be based on norms that are widely regarded as

legitimate by the international community, if the threats given are to have any impact on adversaries today (Morgan 2005:760). In this way, one has to reconsidering the linkage between norms and deterrence (see Payne 2005:785). Norms will shape and determine how a given situation is interpreted, and how best this situation is dealt with. If norms were shared by the deterrer and the deterred, the communication and signaling process would more easily be understood. But as they tend to differ in the case of rogue states, one has to be aware of the differences and try to understand what sort of norms the adversary is following when communicating with it (Morgan 2005:752, 753). Of course, this is not easily done. Those norms the West believe are universal, may not be seen in the same way by people in the East. There exists an ideological polarization between the two (Suhrke 2006), which has caused a great deal of mistrust and misperceptions. And the issue of nuclear weapons has become a point of dispute that has only strengthened this polarization. If deterrence is to rest on international norms in this regard, it cannot be seen as transferring Western criteria, as then it will never gain legitimacy from the East.

5.2.1 From State to Institution

Who is to deter is also a question that has to be rethought for the post Cold War setting. Seen from a realist perspective, the answer has been that the powerful states will be deterring the less powerful. But is this morally right? Should the U.S. have the right to deter another state because it has military superiority and power to do so? Should it not be the international community that decides when and what to deter, and that it is done for the purpose of maintaining the norms proscribed by the international institution?

However, facing the realities of the world today, and taking into account how the international institutions are constructed, it will nevertheless be the great powers who decide and rule the game. As Nelson states: “Balancing threats and capacities will not soon be done without states. But it is becoming increasingly difficult to do it with them” (2001:372). Deterrence, when placed in the hands of the powerful states, becomes wrong. But as it is the powerful states who run the international agenda today, the problem is not easily solved by going through international regimes. Nevertheless, seen from a moral point of view, it should be only international institutions that decide who and what to deter, as it forces a higher ground of legitimacy for the objective of deterrence. Instead of a realist approach, a theory that takes into account the norms of the international agenda may be a better theoretical base for deterrence theory to build upon. Liberal institutionalism, which believes international institutions can have an effect on the implementation of security strategies and of norm building, is thus a better choice. (see Gärtner 2001:3).

5.2.2 Deterring Iran?

The controversy over Iran's nuclear facilities rests on a note of integrity, and has come to be a symbol of their national pride and identity (Kile 2005:126). Iran is not willing to bargain over the issue of them acquiring nuclear weapons because they see it as their legitimate right to do so. The indivisibility of an issue may stem from claims such as "inherent right", used as a strategic card when bargaining (Powell 2004:177) The nationalist claim has gained wide support from the population, even those that do not support the regime, and has as such become an important argument used by the government against the international community (Jahanbegloo 2006), calling for independence and self-support as reasons to keep the production within the country (see Dr. Borda 2005:4). While the arguments from past successes of deterring a rogue state have shown that they will be responsive to the threat of force, in the case with Iran, such threats may only be counterproductive because of the different perception they have of the conflict. Whereas the U.S. sees Iran as a dangerous, rogue state that needs to be contained from getting nuclear weapons, Iran feels unjustly treated and subject to a Western conspiracy that aims at making them dependent on the West (Jahanbegloo 2006).

As long as they feel so vulnerable that only nuclear power will protect them, their calculations of costs and benefits from further challenge will vary from that of the U.S.. For deterrence to work then, Iran's calculations of benefits and risks have to be changed significantly (Einhorn 2004:28). But in order for them to see higher benefits from abiding to the international pressure than continuing to act against it, they cannot feel that the integrity of their state is at risk. What is signaled by the U.S. (or the international community for that sake) should consequently be given greater thought. Signals have to be so strong, clear and credible that they do not cause misperceptions and miscalculations (see Dueck 2006:238). Norms also have to be taken into account. If Iran is to accept the deterrent threats, it has to see them as legitimate. In this regard, the focus has to change from that of it proliferating to one of maintaining the rules of such a proliferation conduct (Kile 2004:127). Israel, for instance, is not part of the NPT, but has nuclear weapons (Dr. Borda 2005:3) Yet the U.S. and the rest of the international community have not tried to deter them. If deterrence is to be the solution, and work as well, the aim and purpose of deterrence has to be revised. And instead of having the U.S. take the lead and control of such an agenda, this task should be placed with the international institutions.

Apart from this, it is important to find the right balance when threatening, so that the threats will frighten Iran enough to back down, but not so much that it feels the need to defend its mere existence. Contrary to what happened during the Cold War, where an arms race led to strengthening of ones threats, it may be that such enforcement is counterproductive, and lessening the threats, by toning down the rhetoric and reducing an arms-buildup, will be a better way of achieving deterrence (see Takeyh 2006, and Nelson 2001:372).

6 Conclusion

Deterring a rogue state is a question that involves a great deal of conceptual problems. Apart from the term itself, how such states behave is a matter of dispute. Traditional deterrence has rested on a common rational calculus for costs and risks, but relying on the assumption that costs and benefits are viewed in the same way for both parties is no longer a solid given. What is rational is rather a definition problem, making it highly relative. This in turn forces the strategy to be seen in other ways than through rational lenses.

As such, deterrence cannot work as it did during the Cold War. But this is not to imply that the strategy has to be cast aside. Looking at the psychological aspects of the theory, new answers may be found that can help get a better understanding of its usefulness towards new adversaries. Threats can still be used to deter, if new considerations are taken that make the strategy effective as a dissuasion and enforcement device. If these are to strengthen rather than weaken or defeat each other, the perception of the adversary has to be taken into account. Wrong perceptions and a lack of trust are problems that will affect deterrence, and have to be dealt with before the strategy can succeed. These factors are means to an end, and not ends in themselves.

In order for this to be achieved, a thorough understanding of the opponent is essential, as is clear communication. How the opponent has acted in the past can be a hint at how it will act in the future, but it can by no means be the defining status. A strategy of deterrence will thus have to take into consideration how the opponent perceives the conflict, and what values it follows, because this in turn will affect its calculations of costs and benefits. Reconsidering the linkage between norms and deterrence will in this regard be useful, as one has to try and understand the norms the adversary is following. This is especially important in the case with states regarded as rogue, as they often follow other norms and values than the rest of the international community. And even if signals may be safer if they are ambiguous, this will more easily cause miscalculations. What is signaled should thus be given greater thought, so miscommunication does not worsen the situation.

The case with Iran and the U.S. can be seen not only as a conventional strength and power relationship, where deterrence is used for the purpose of avoiding war and undermining a weaker state by a stronger one, but also about avoiding a proliferation of nuclear weapons. How this is done cannot be based on discriminatory, culture-relative objectives, where a country which by a certain group of Western states is branded as more aggressive than others, should not be allowed the same rights as the rest. If Iran is to be deterred, one has to ask oneself “deterred from what?” and “deterred by whom?” As for the first question, is it deterring Iran from at all having nuclear facility plants? This is seen as highly

unfair from the Iranian side. They are part of the NPT and do in fact have the right to develop nuclear energy should they wish. If deterrence is to be the solution, the focus has to shift from Iran proliferating, to one where the rules of the NPT is protected and followed in a consistent manner. If the regime wants to uphold its credibility, it should treat all countries the same. First then can threats be considered valid from the Iranian side. As it is now, any threats posed by the U.S. will most likely only be counterproductive if the objective for the threats is not rethought, and result in a stronger desire to keep the nuclear production going within the country.

Furthermore, seeing deterrence as a state to state relationship is perhaps a reason in its own for why the strategy will have trouble succeeding today. Instead of viewing the U.S. as the deterrer state, it should be the international regimes that are the ones to deter. By placing deterrence in the hands of international institutions and following international norms and not the security concerns of particular states, mutual respect may be easier to achieve and make bargaining a possibility. That is, if these norms are seen as legitimate for both sides. If the communication is based on a common understanding of what is to be gained, or lost, from not listening to threats, it will be easier to avoid misperceptions. As such, deterrence cannot be a state to state power relationship that is defined in military strength and retaliatory terms, but instead has to be grounded on international norms and conducts. However, as a last remark, it has to be noted that for deterrence to be in the hands of international regimes, so too should all nuclear weapons. Only when all countries dismantle their nuclear bombs can legitimacy be fulfilled as well. The main problem of rogue states will then have solved itself.

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