

**Why the Cold War Practices of Deterrence are Still
Prevalent: Physical Security, Ontological Security and
Strategic Discourse**

Amir Lupovici

**Post-Doctoral Fellow
Munk Centre for International Studies
University of Toronto
1 Devonshire Place, Toronto
Ontario, M5S 3K7 CANADA
amir.lupovici@utoronto.ca**

Paper to be presented at the *Canadian Political Science Association annual conference*, Vancouver June 4-6, 2008

DRAFT: please do not cite; comments most welcome.

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the study of the connections between identity and security. One of the theoretical frameworks of this exploration is based on ontological security, a concept related to actors' sense of security about their identities, their future, and the context in which they operate. It is argued that states with ontological security are those that routinize their relations with other states and are successful in establishing stable social identities. Jennifer Mitzen contends that states are sometimes forced to choose between physical security and security of identity, and thus are trapped in an "ontological security dilemma." Since this dilemma may lead to the prolongation of conflicts, further attention, as Mitzen argues, should be given to how states can break away from it.

I suggest that one of the few options for escaping from the dilemma of ontological security is to implement practices of mutual deterrence, because, if implemented successfully, these may increase the physical security of the actors without posing grave threat to their identities. I argue that the study of deterrence as an idea and as a norm that evolved and was institutionalized in the international system provides an understanding not only of how deterrence ideas allowed for the regulation of non-violent behavior between the superpowers during the Cold War, but of how they constituted the superpowers' mutual role identities of deterring (and deterred) actors.¹ This identity of deterrer provided a substitute for the superpowers' previous role identities of aggressive "enemy," and in this way avoided a clash between "securing identity" and "physical security." In other words, the institutionalization of the ideas of deterrence (MAD) during the 1970s in the SALT agreements demonstrated that actors could attain both physical and ontological security. However, I further argue that this is the reason—the residue of deterrence identity attached to America's perception of itself as a superpower—that the perceived inability of the U.S. to deter al Qaeda became not only a physical security problem but an ontological one. I suggest that this threat to identity explains not only the American war in the Gulf following 9/11, but the contradictory discourse regarding the need and feasibility of restoring the American deterrent posture.

This paper has four main parts. In the first, I briefly discuss the concept of the ontological security dilemma and I suggest mutual deterrence practices as a solution. In the second part, I introduce the concept of the deterrence norm and explain how it allows for a better understanding of the practices of mutual deterrence and contributes to the creation of deterrence identity, and therefore to the attainment of ontological security. In the third part, I use the norms life cycle model of Finnemore and Sikkink to show how the deterrence norm developed between the superpowers from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. I also show how this norm affected their relations and contributed to both their physical and their ontological security. I then present the case of the American war on terrorism to

¹ It should be noted that although using interpretative approaches to study deterrence is not new, few studies have provided a comprehensive analytical framework to explain the practices and success of deterrence. Previous studies mainly describe the meanings, and mainly the symbolic meanings, of the practices of deterrence. Some of these approaches suggest studying doctrines as rules (Kratochwil, 1978: 56-7) and recognizing the importance of expectations (Schelling, 1960). For more recent studies, see Klein, (1994); Chilton, (1985); and Luke (1989). Furthermore, most of these studies do not refer to deterrence itself as the norm to be created.

further illustrate the implications of the deterrence norm as well as the connections between ontological security and deterrence.

2. Ontological Security and Deterrence Strategy

Ontological security concerns the security an actor feels with regard to its identity, its future, and the context in which it operates (Giddens, 1991: 35-69; McSweeney, 1999: 154-8; Wendt, 1999: 131; Steele, 2005; Mitzen, 2006). It is argued that actors with ontological security are those who routinize their relations with others (whether they are cooperative or not) and are successful in establishing stable social identities (Wendt, 1999: 50-1; Steele, 2005: 524-30; Mitzen, 2006: 342-3), all of which provides order and certainty (Huysmans, 1998: 242; Ruby, 2004: 15, 30). As Mitzen (2006: 345) argues, “Armed with ontological security, the individual will know how to act and therefore how to be herself.”

In her breakthrough work on this issue, Mitzen (2006) aims to extend the concept of ontological security, suggesting that states (and not only individuals) engage in ontological security seeking (Mitzen, 2006: 342). Her main argument, as stated above, concerns the ontological security dilemma—situations in which states are forced to choose between physical security and securing their identities. She suggests,

Even a harmful or self-defeating relationship can provide ontological security, which means states can become attached to conflict. That is, states might actually come to prefer their ongoing, certain conflict to the unsettling condition of deep uncertainty as to the other’s and one’s own identity. The attachment dynamics of ontological security-seeking thus turn the security dilemma’s link between uncertainty and conflict on its head, suggesting that conflict can be caused not by uncertainty but by the certainty such relationships offer their participants (Mitzen, 2006: 342-3).²

Because this dilemma may lead to a prolonging of conflicts, Mitzen argues that more attention should be given to how states can break away from it. This distinction between physical security and ontological security—a distinction that is fundamental to Mitzen’s thesis (and my own) and that has been acknowledged by a number of scholars (Huysmans, 1998: 242; Steele, 2005: 527)³—is, admittedly, not clear cut (Huysmans, 1998: 243). However, distinguishing between the two can be justified given the possibility of the existence of threats that do not involve a physical dimension. The importance of Mitzen’s arguments lies in their implications, mainly with regard to explaining international conflicts, their duration, and the ability to shift them towards cooperation. In order to extend her arguments, however, one must sketch out the various possible interactions between the acts of providing physical security and securing state identity.

If we frame the possible interactions between physical threats and threats to identity, four possible situations emerge, of which Mitzen’s ontological security dilemma

² For a similar argument, see Huysmans (1998: 239).

³ Huysmans, for example, makes a similar distinction between daily security and ontological security (Huysmans, 1998: 243).

refers to only two (Figure I illustrates this point). According to Mitzen, states can be trapped in situations where they are exposed to a high level of physical threat but a low level of threat to their identity (Box 2) (such as in cases of the classical security dilemma), or in situations where they are exposed to a high level of identity threat but a low level of physical threat (Box 3) (which may become a fundamental obstacle in achieving peace).⁴ However, two further situations are possible. First, actors may be able to attain both dimensions of security simultaneously and enjoy a low level of both physical threat and threat to identity. Such situations are evident for example in security communities (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 30), which are based upon a collective identity and in which people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change. Second, actors may simultaneously experience high levels of physical threat and identity threat (Box 4). Extreme examples of such situations are victims of genocide and ethnic cleansing (Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990: 26, and see also Roe, 2005: 49).

Figure I –Physical Threats and Threats to Identity

Physical Threat	Threat to Identity	
	Low	High
Low	Security Communities (1)	Ontological Security Dilemma: peace process; practices of conflict resolution (2)
High	Classical Security Dilemma (3)	Genocide (for the victim) (4)

Mutual Deterrence

Identifying these possible interactions allows for an understanding of the special characteristics of the practices of mutual deterrence. I suggest that these practices lie between the two poles of physical threat and the two poles of ontological threat, providing an escape from the ontological security dilemma. In other words, mutual deterrence provides actors trapped in the classical security dilemma (Box 3) with a gradual way out: through a *via-media* that may increase their physical security without posing a grave threat to their identities. Thus, implementing deterrence practices neither increases their physical level of threat nor poses an immediate threat to actors' identities. In fact, successful implementation *decreases* the threat level by providing some degree of

⁴ Mitzen argues that this is exactly why a peace process between two rival states is difficult to achieve: because both actors are concerned with threats to their identities, they often prefer to remain in the classical security dilemma.

physical security, and *constitutes* the actors' identities (as deterrer and deterred actors). This makes their routines more predictable, which may lead to an increase in their ontological security.

3. Deterrence by Punishment Strategy as a Norm⁵

I suggest that studying deterrence strategy within the framework of international norms is an efficient way to consider the implications of deterrence strategy on the physical and ontological security of states. This approach also helps to sketch out how deterrence practices have developed between opponents, as well as how they have influenced the actors' identities.

In this study I use the common definition of norms as collective expectations of actors within a given identity (Katzenstein, 1996: 5). I claim that this view of norms should not necessarily be limited to the study of moral issues, as some scholars who bond the constructivist school with the study of morally "good" norms or behavior have argued (Mearsheimer, 1994/5). Following Farrell (2002: 58), my point of contention is that the constructivist approach, as sociological literature suggests,⁶ may study phenomena with a broader reference than their moral content and can focus on "bad norms" as well. Furthermore, the ascription of moral standing to approaches that study norms is not necessarily accurate.⁷

3.1 The Need for Such a Study

In exploring the evolution of deterrence strategy and its effects on the continuous avoidance of violence, I will first assess the comparative advantages of the suggested interpretative approach to deterrence study by discussing the most significant flaws of the classical rational deterrence theory.⁸

First, scholars have argued that deterrence theory takes complex phenomena and reduces them to the interaction between rational decision makers (Downs, 1989: 237; Jervis, 1989: 66). Deterrence theory therefore should be modified to include the influences of cognitive and psychological barriers along with the interests of the actors.⁹ The problem with this modification, however, is that even cognitive and psychological

⁵ Hereafter, unless noted otherwise, I use the term deterrence strategy for the strategy of deterrence by punishment. For the basic distinction between deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial, see Snyder (1961).

⁶ For the distinction between moral norms and social norms, see for example Elster (1990: 864-5).

⁷ The notion fails from a theoretical standpoint because constructivism is a paradigm for the study of socially constructed realities, "good" and "bad" (Adler, 1997: 336; Barkin, 2003: 335). From an empirical standpoint, an important constructivist contribution to the study of "bad," or morally neutral, norms such as national security is emerging.

⁸ Discussing Tannenwald's (1999) seminal work regarding nuclear taboo as an alternative explanation is challenging because it and the deterrence norm explanation share many points in common. However, in some aspects the nuclear taboo might be presented as an explanation *opposed* to that of deterrence theory and deterrence norm and explain the difficulties in establishing long-term deterrence relations (Paul, 1995: 699-700, 711; Tannenwald, 2005: 41). Also, I argue that although the security regime approach may have important insights regarding the ways deterrence ideas influence actors (see Nye, 1987), it nevertheless neglects the important intersubjective dimension.

⁹ For psychological and cognitive approaches to deterrence, see Jervis (1989: 196); and Lebow and Stein (1989: 212-23).

approaches fail to provide a clear understanding of rational action, because they also consider interests as given (Tannenwald, 1999: 438; Wendt, 1999: 36; Guzzini, 2000: 149). A second flaw suggested by scholars is that rational deterrence theory has internal contradictions: in effect, it is impossible to create credible deterrence between coherent rational actors, particularly in the case of mutual nuclear deterrence. In order for the rational deterrence theory to work, either the deterred or the deterrent actor will have to behave irrationally.¹⁰ Moreover, solutions that have been put forward to solve this problem have created further problems or contradictions.¹¹ The third flaw suggested by scholars is that the view of rational actors is too simplistic. Scholars challenge the presupposition of unilateral, rational decision makers and the dichotomy of constantly rational actors versus constantly irrational actors. Finally, deterrence literature provides only a description and not an explanation of deterrence success (Achen, 1987: 95-6; Luke, 1989: 214).

The flaws in deterrence literature then emphasize the need for exploration of the ideational and constructional dimensions of its basic postulations, mainly with regard to the causes of deterrence strategy success.¹² For example, it can be argued that deterrence strategy serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy or even as a myth (Luke, 1989: 214). Merely thinking that deterrence strategy will work can enhance the chances of its success. Furthermore, deterrence strategy and its development are dependent upon further social constructions, such as those of rationality, threats, and security.¹³ In addition, deterrence, like any other strategy, is about ideas and knowledge (Guzzini, 2000: 175).

And finally, I suggest that incorporating identity into the study of deterrence helps us to understand the mechanisms that make this strategy work. In other words, I am not suggesting that an explanation based on identity to study deterrence refutes classical explanations. Rather, I suggest that it can reveal some of the latent assumptions that classical deterrence scholars accept as given—especially with regard to mutual deterrence and the continuous implementation of these practices. Thus, I argue that in those cases in which deterrence becomes part of the actors' view of themselves, it changes their expectations and the way they act. Furthermore, acknowledging the connections between deterrence and identity helps to explain the internalization of these practices and the actors' tendency to implement them, even when it is not clear whether they are efficient in dealing with specific threats. Finally, it helps to explain why and how "deterrence" constrains political debate and is used to justify political decisions.

Therefore, I suggest that for these reasons the concept of deterrence norm might provide a theoretical framework to study the emergence of deterrence ideas, their institutionalization, and their influence on the avoidance of violence as well as on the actors' identities and ontological security.

¹⁰ The main problem is that threat of nuclear retaliation in a MAD world should not be credible because implementing this threat would mean suicide. See Achen (1987: 92, 95); Nicholson (1992: 46); and Zagare (1990: 250).

¹¹ For proposed solutions, see Nicholson (1992: 78-9) and Zagare (1990: 251-2, 255-7). For theoretical, philosophical, and empirical criticisms on some solutions, see Achen (1987, 94-5, 104ft.2); Zagare (1990: 258); and Luke (1989: 213-4).

¹² The fact that deterrence strategy could be established upon postulations other than rational ones (Morgan, 2003: 45) further demonstrates its constructional dimensions.

¹³ See for example Luke (1989: 212); Mutimer (2000: 26); and Nicholson (1992: 4).

3.2 What Is the Norm of Deterrence?

The implication of viewing deterrence strategy as a norm is twofold: decision makers may be influenced by the norm, which thus makes the study of deterrence as a norm highly relevant to a better understanding of actors' strategies. This puzzle was recently articulated by Lebow, who, although skeptical of deterrence strategy effects, claims that "The big question for historians may not be why deterrence worked, but why so many leaders and lesser officials on both sides thought it was so necessary, and how until the advent of Gorbachev, they repeatedly confirmed this belief tautologically" (Lebow, 2005: 769).

Attempts to combine deterrence and norms are rare in international relations literature. Freedman's recent book *Deterrence* and the debate it has provoked in *The Journal of Strategic Studies* is a good starting point for this discussion. Freedman implies that norms and deterrence can have three possible types of connection. In the first, norms are seen as structures that increase the chances of deterrence success (in Freedman, 2004: 67); in the second, deterrence is a way to internalize norms (in Freedman, 2005: 791; Morgan, 2005: 753-5); and in the third, deterrence itself is a norm (e.g., MAD) (in Freedman, 2004: 31-2, 42; Freedman, 2005: 793).¹⁴ Freedman however does not fully differentiate among these possible connections, nor does he explain how the norms emerge. Here, I refer only to the third type, exploring the development of deterrence as a norm and its effects on international politics.¹⁵

Although it is possible to study "deterrence norm" through a behavioral approach—according to which individuals comply to norms and are punished when they do not (Axelrod, 1997: 47)—my aim is to explore it within a constructivist framework. In contrast to the former, the constructivist approach may provide a deeper explanation and understanding of the practices of deterrence as well as their emergence.

I argue that the norm that has been developed is that the threat of violence deters engagement in war. I define "deterrence norm" as the avoidance of violence based upon (rational) collective expectations that the practice of violence will lead to a bigger loss than any achievable benefit. In this sense, deterrence strategy is a norm according to which actors expect to implement rational choice calculations in order to avoid war. At the same time, the implementation of rational choice calculations may itself strengthen the norm.

Mutual expectations have an important role in this process. For deterrence strategy to "work" in the short run, the actors must have mutual expectations of each other's credibility (Schelling, 1960). Over time, mutual expectations that deterrence strategy will work may reproduce the practices suggested in the norm. Mutual expectations then may become an outcome of the actors' attempts to influence each other through teaching and socialization. Such processes may lead to a convergence of ideas

¹⁴ Other study that explores deterrence strategy itself as a norm approaches it from an international law perspective (see Farrell and Lambert, 2001). Another connection between deterrence and norms is provided by scholars who refer to norms in deterrence study with reference to moral issues (Nye, 1986; Walzer, 2000[1977]: 260-83). Other studies acknowledge sub-norms that constitute the norm of deterrence, such as the norm of "no-strategic defenses" (over the norm of mutual non-vulnerability) (Cortell and Davis, 2000: 78-9) and the norm of equality (Krause and Latham, 1999: 30).

¹⁵ It might be helpful to emphasize that I do not argue that deterrence norm has no moral standing, but that it is also important to track how this norm has developed.

and expectations of the best strategy for handling conflict, and may lead to the creation of common knowledge. In this way, the implementation of deterrence strategy and its “successful” outcome may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This mutual understanding can also be empowered by the creation of reassurance measures between the actors. These measures in combination with mutual expectations ensure that actors, while not disregarding the capabilities of the other, will not consider them as the source of a potential first strike threat.¹⁶

The process of norm internalization has an important impact not only on the interaction of actors but also on their internal behavior. Adoption of a deterrence norm makes deterrence strategy a tool of public discourse that can affect the selection of foreign policy goals and strategies. Such selection can further reinforce deterrence practices and the deterrence norm. In addition, deterrence norm may not only regulate actors’ behavior but can constitute the actors’ identities. In the next section, I aim to elaborate on the connections between deterrence and identity and to demonstrate the importance of such exploration.

3.3 Deterrence and Role Identity

I argue that the study of deterrence can be improved if it is connected with the concept of identity. Although some insights in this regard have been suggested in the field, the connections have not been fully elaborated. Thus, for example, some scholars have referred to the nuclear states’ identity (Klein, 1994: 107, 109, 129; Sagan, 1996-7: 73-6; Varadarajan, 2004: 329-40); others have had some important related insights in their exploration of the discourse of deterrence (Jeonniemi, 1989; Dillon, 1989); and others have briefly touched upon this concept (see Bially Mattern, 2005: 22-3 and see hereafter the discussion regarding Wendt, 1999: 358-9). However, none have fully explored the connections between deterrence and identity and especially their effects on actors’ behavior.

Before I sketch out the mechanisms of the influence of the (role) identity of deterrence on behavior, and since I take a constructivist approach to this concept, it is important to acknowledge three main differences between the psychological and constructivist views of identity. The former “treats identity as nothing more than the coincidental collision of numerous individuals’ self-perceptions that they each belong in some category.” In contrast, the constructivist approach emphasizes the collective and intersubjective aspects of identity (Bially-Mattern, 2005: 47; see also Hopf, 2002: 23; Shannon, 2003: 22). Second, the emphasis of the subjective over the collective intersubjective limits the ability of the psychological approach to differentiate among distinct kinds of identities. As Bially-Mattern suggests, “The only possible understanding an ingroup can have of an outgroup is enmity” (Bially-Mattern, 2005: 47). In other words, the psychological approach highlights belonging (Ibid: 46) over other kinds of identities. Third, as Hopf suggests, “It turns out, however, that despite its name, social psychology offers no theoretical account, social or otherwise, for the origins of an individual’s identity or identities” (Hopf, 2002: 2, 5). Furthermore, identity is not a condition, but a process that focuses on the emergence of intersubjective knowledge of self and other (Bially-Mattern, 2005: 47-8, 51).

¹⁶ See also Wendt (1999: 358-9).

In all these aspects the social constructivist approach to deterrence allows for a better way of studying the connections between identity and deterrence. Thus, the constructivist approach to identity allows us to explore the intersubjective knowledge that influences and constitutes the practices of deterrence, to study different kinds of identities (and especially the role identity of deterrence), and to study the emergence and re-creation of intersubjective knowledge that shape this identity.

Despite the differences between psychological and social constructivist approaches, however, scholars emphasize that these views complement rather than rival each other, and therefore the a combination between the was acknowledged as needed (Hopf, 1998: 198; Checkel, 1998: 340, 343-4; Goldgeier and Tetlock, 2001: 83-7, Shannon, 2003). This combination is very fruitful, especially in showing how identities influence behavior. As Hopf argues, “identities operate in ways reminiscent of other cognitive devices, such as scripts, schemas, and heuristics. What an individual understands himself to be... helps determine what information he apprehends and how he uses it. In this view, an individual’s identity acts like an axis of interpretation, implying that she will find in the external world what is relevant to that identity” (Hopf, 2002: 5). Thus, a social cognitive structure establishes the discourse, the boundaries between self and others, and the intersubjective reality (Ibid: 6).¹⁷ In other words, the social cognitive view of identity provides two important mechanisms that take part in how identity “works”: it helps to interpret reality and it creates a discourse that enables thinking of the self and the other.

I suggest that deterrence norm not only regulates actors’ behavior but constitutes their (role) identities.¹⁸ According to Wendt, role identities exist only in relation to “Others.” One can have a specific role identity “only by occupying a position in a social sturcture and following behavioral norms towards Others possessing relevant *counter-identities*” (Wendt, 1999: 227, italics in orginal; see also Lipschutz, 1995: 217). In this respect, role identity cannot be chosen but is learnt and forced by interactions with significant others. Over time, such interactions construct a structure of roles, meaning, and rules that allow actors to know how to continue acting (Fierke, 2000: 339; Wendt, 1999: 226-9, 327; see also Wegner, 1998: 154-5; Milliken, 2001: 18-9). Thus, identities create the context and the discourse that the actors use, and at the same time those identities are constrained, shaped, and empowered by these social structures (see Hopf, 2002: 1, 13; Hansen, 2006: 44).

In this respect, I suggest that deterrence relations depend not only on how actors understand each other, but on how they understand each other’s roles and on the existence of counter identities (deterrent/ deterred). Such identities create a context in which actors have better tools to interpret their opponent’s aims and to provide a suitable response. In such situations, threats posed to preserve deterrence can be more easily interpreted as attempts to deter rather than to escalate. Similarly, reassurance steps will be interpreted as attempts to draw the lines of deterrence rather than to appease.¹⁹

¹⁷ However, it should be noted that the suggested approach is to some extent different from that of Hopf: he aims to base the study of identity on daily practices (Hopf, 2002: 15-6) while I aim to incorporate it into the study of identities norms.

¹⁸ Regarding interactions between norms and identities, see for example (Price and Tannenwald, 1996: 125).

¹⁹ On deterrence as a practice between appeasement and violence, see Freedman (2004: 25).

It is useful to acknowledge both the constitutive effects of deterrence ideas and the fact that deterrence is part of the actors' role identities. This provides an interesting angle from which to study how domestic politics influence the practices of deterrence, how domestic politics in one state influence another state, and how social, cultural, and political factors shape the way that deterrence is manifested in different states.²⁰

Furthermore, it should also be acknowledged that the constitutive influences of deterrence strategy may be negative. Because deterrence role identity becomes embedded in political discourse, it can become a tool in political rhetoric and can be used to justify, burden, or even prevent political moves. For example, the Israeli tendency to assume that if Israel practices deterrence, deterrence will work (e.g., see Almog, 2004-5) can be explained by the concept of deterrence identity. This concept can thus explain the prominence of deterrence rhetoric in Israel, a rhetoric that aimed, for example, to justify the Israeli presence in Lebanon during the 1990s ("withdrawal would erode the deterrent posture") (see in Kaye, 2002-3: 569) and the need to retaliate after the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in August 2006 to strengthen the Israeli deterrent posture (see Lupovici, 2008).

3.4 Deterrence Norm and Ontological Security

Since deterrence can become part of the actors' identity, it is also involved in the actors' will to achieve ontological security, securing the actors' identity and routines. As McSweeney explains, ontological security is "the acquisition of confidence in the routines of daily life—the essential predictability of interaction through which we feel confident in knowing what is going on and that we have the practical skill to go on in this context." These routines become part of the social structure that enables and constrains the actors' possibilities (McSweeney, 1999: 50-1, 154-5; Wendt, 1999: 131, 229-30). Thus, through the emergence of the deterrence norm and the construction of deterrence identities, the actors create an intersubjective context and intersubjective understandings that in turn affect their interests and routines. In this context, deterrence strategy and deterrence practices are better understood by the actors, and therefore the continuous avoidance of violence is more easily achieved. Furthermore, within such a context of deterrence relations, rationality is (re)defined, clarifying the appropriate practices for a rational actor, and this, in turn, reproduces this context and the actors' identities.

Therefore, the internalization of deterrence ideas helps to explain how actors may create more cooperative practices and break away from the spiral of hostility that is forced and maintained by the identities that are attached to the security dilemma, and which lead to mutual perception of the other as an aggressive enemy. As Wendt for example suggests, in situations where states are restrained from using violence—such as MAD (mutual assured destruction)—states not only avoid violence, but "ironically, may be willing to trust each other enough to take on collective identity". In such cases if actors believe that others have no desire to engulf them, then it will be easier to trust them and to identify with their own needs (Wendt, 1999: 358-9). In this respect, the norm of deterrence, the trust that is being built between the opponents, and the (mutual) constitution of their role identities may all lead to the creation of long term influences that

²⁰ For example, on the different ways of adopting the idea of minimal deterrence ("deterrence norm") in different states, see Clark (2004: 281, 291, 296) and Krepon (2001: 83-4) on India and Pakistan, and Cohen (1998: 195-218X) on Israel's strategy of nuclear ambiguity.

preserve the practices of deterrence as well as the avoidance of violence. Since a basic level of trust is needed to attain ontological security,²¹ the existence of it may further strengthen the practices of deterrence and the actors' identities of deterrer and deterred actors.

In this respect, I argue that for the reasons mentioned earlier, the practices of deterrence should be understood as providing both physical and ontological security, thus refuting that there is necessarily tension between them. Exactly for this reason I argue that Rasmussen's (2002: 331-2) assertion—according to which MAD was about enhancing ontological over physical security—is only partly correct. Certainly, MAD should be understood as providing ontological security; but it also allowed for physical security, since, compared to previous strategies and doctrines, it was all about *decreasing* the physical threat of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the ability to increase one dimension of security helped to enhance the other, since it strengthened the actors' identities and created more stable expectations of avoiding violence.

I suggest that the emergence of deterrence norm during the Cold War can be described in the terms of Finnemore and Sikkink's norms life cycle model.²² According to this model, in the first stage—the “norm emergence”—entrepreneurs attempt to convince policy makers of their ideas. The second stage—the “norm cascade” stage—is characterized by attempts to socialize other state/s to become norm followers. In the last stage—the “norm internalization” stage—the norm becomes institutionalized (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 887-909).²³ The study of the emergence and institutionalization of deterrence norm and identity in the next section demonstrates how these concepts help to explain avoidance of violence, and this is followed by a section demonstrating how the identity of deterrence may lead to war.

4. The Deterrence Norm during the Cold War

I argue that the deterrence strategy that had developed during the Cold War between the superpowers can be understood as a norm. This specific norm emphasized the strategy of deterrence by punishment (threat) and differed from the classical view of deterrence, which emphasized deterrence by denial and was presented in terms of defense capabilities.²⁴

During the 1950s, the U.S. did not have a consistent view of deterrence strategy. A coherent implementation of deterrence had to overcome several obstacles: these were the strategic tradition of American war-fighting strategy,²⁵ the fear of Soviet surprise attack (Trachtenberg, 1991: 19; Freedman, 2003), and the American strategic culture. These obstacles slowed down the adoption of deterrence strategy (Zagare, 1990: 248), and their existence demonstrates that deterrence strategy is not self-evident and that it is

²¹ Regarding the relations between trust and ontological security. see Mitzen (2006: 346-7, 361).

²² Although the fact that Finnemore and Sikkink's framework concerns the study of the emergence of “good norms” (Barkin, 2003: 334-5), it can also be applied to the study of “bad norms,” see ftn. 6-7 above.

²³ It should however be emphasized that the deterrence norm is not in any way a deterministic process. In this manner, deterrence norm not only may be strengthened, but can be weakened.

²⁴ See in Buzan (1987: 200-1).

²⁵ Regarding plans of war-fighting, see Halperin (1987: 5-6). These obstacles were further reinforced by bureaucratic constraints (Rosenberg, 1984). For possible contradictions between ideas of war-fighting and mutual deterrence, see Trachtenberg (1991: 13, 103-7, *passim*); and Rosenberg (1984: 123, 129).

not adopted through deterministic forces,²⁶ but rather is advanced through social agents. Thus, although it has been asserted that nuclear weapons push actors to implement deterrence strategy,²⁷ some policy makers and scholars have rejected this and have suggested strategies from the 1950s and 1960s that contradict it.²⁸

The NSC-68 report, which was officially adopted in September 1950, aptly demonstrates American inconsistency in implementing and thinking about deterrence strategy. On the one hand, the report presents deterrence strategy as a necessity and includes some of its main terms, terms that would be further developed during the Cold War (Leffler, 1992: 360). On the other hand, the report presents deterrence strategy as a limited option that should be combined with, among other things, nuclear superiority, massive defense, and conventional forces,²⁹ a reasoning that contradicts a concept of deterrence strategy based on retaliation.

According to Finnemore and Sikkink's model, I suggest that in the "norm emergence" stage agents worked to transform the emphasis of American strategic thinking from war-fighting to deterrence. In the "norm cascade" stage, the Americans tried and succeeded in influencing the Soviets to adopt a deterrence strategy. In the "norm internalization" stage, the norm of deterrence was institutionalized, which is demonstrated by the convergence of both superpowers toward the strategy of MAD.

4.1 The Emergence of Deterrence Norm—The Early 1960s

In the first stage of the emergence of deterrence norm, "deterrence agents" worked to make deterrence strategy more attractive to policy makers—mainly by shaping its characteristics. The fact that these agents were predominantly academic scholars and researchers was significant in the shaping of deterrence strategy and literature (Jervis, 1979: 291).³⁰ Hence, although some scholars agree that deterrence ideas had a limited impact on strategy during the first years of the Cold War (Jervis, 1979: 289; Kratochwil, 1978: 175 Trachtenberg, 1991: 4), these ideas and the way they were presented at that time had a tangible impact on policy makers during the following years. These scholars, the "deterrence agents," concluded that mutual deterrence needed to be stabilized through the development of arms control as well as more cooperative relations between the superpowers (Weber, 1991b: 794-5; Buzan, 1987: 150; Adler, 1992: 113-7). Without the

²⁶ See, for example, in Halperin (1987: xii, 64).

²⁷ For the idea that the nuclear weapons have made deterrence strategy much easier to understand and even forced this strategy, see Buzan (1987: 136-7) and Kratochwil (1978: 155-6).

²⁸ See in Morgan (2003: 22-5, 38) and Buzan (1987: 197-209). The claim against the self-evidence of deterrence strategy is also strengthened by the distinct ways countries have adopted it and referred to it. Moreover, the word *deterrence* has different meanings in different languages (Vigor, 1975; Chilton, 1985: 104-110, 116).

²⁹ Regarding the need for a deterrence strategy, see FRUS (1950: 244, 251, 282-3). Regarding the NSC-68 report, see also in Gaddis (1997: 101); and Leffler (1992: 355-60). For criticism on the report, see in Trachtenberg (1991: 110); and Leffler (1992: 357).

³⁰ Regarding the civilization process of the strategy realm, see Booth (1975: 38); Kaplan (1991); and Dickson (1971). This process provided new thinking that was crucial in overcoming the traditional (mainly military) ideas about strategy. These scholars way of thinking about deterrence was also influenced by several rational approaches in different areas, such as political realism (Jervis, 1979: 289-90); economy (Trachtenberg, 1991: 13-4); and game theory (Freedman, 2003: 171-88; Zagare, 1990: 249).

influence of these scholars on the use of nuclear technology, the strategy of deterrence would have developed differently.

Two important characteristics of the deterrence ideas these agents presented made “deterrence learning” a much easier process. First, “deterrence agents” helped to organize knowledge in order to produce a clear conceptual framework that was easier to “sell” (Jervis, 1979: 291; Kaplan, 1991: 171-2). The strategic language and jargon developed by these scholars played an important role in increasing political and civilian awareness of strategic issues, as is demonstrated in the strategic discourse of the U.S., especially with regard to urgent foreign policy problems (Jervis, 1979: 290).³¹ Second, they based the idea of deterrence upon apolitical and ahistorical arguments (Jervis; 1979: 322-3; Trachtenberg 1991: 40, 44-46; Kaplan; 1991: 109). As a result, the agents who developed this concept paid very little attention to its operation in reality. This obfuscated empirical contradictions and problems with the idea of deterrence contributed to the consensus regarding its validity.³² As Adler argued, “because the science of nuclear strategy has no empirical reference points and data banks, it cannot be falsified” (Adler, 1992: 107). In other words, deterrence could become a heuristic tool, supplying simple, and even simplistic, solutions to complicated foreign policy problems, thus making it more attractive than other strategic options to decision makers. Moreover, the concept of deterrence could force rationality on decision making, convince decision makers to use deterrence practices, and even justify them (Morgan, 2003: 13; Kaplan, 1991: 72-3). Decision makers who adopted and implemented deterrence strategy used language and force structures that created a suitable environment for further implementation of these ideas.

The work of these agents and the emerging understanding that a strategy of defense can harm deterrence strategy led to a more comprehensive adoption of deterrence by the Kennedy administration from the early 1960s onwards. These ideas were further empowered by the Berlin crisis (1961) and the Cuban missile crisis (1962) (Adler, 1992: 115-6, 125-6; Levine, 1991: 142; Weber, 1991b: 794-9), and by the new presence of “deterrence agents”—scholars from MIT and Harvard—in the administration. This combination of agents and the compelling nature of their ideas explains not only why the change occurred but why these specific ideas were used to deal with the new strategic environment.

Arms control and deterrence were institutionalized and became an important factor in the domestic political game in the U.S. (Adler, 1992: 128-129, 132; Freedman, 2003: 245; Freedman, 2004: 14). McNamara, the Secretary of Defense under presidents Kennedy and Johnson, began to see arms control as a rational alternative to nuclear war and counterforce strategy, and he worked to persuade Johnson to establish arms control with the Soviets (Levine, 1991: 143-4).³³ In a similar way, Nixon, a week after elected in

³¹ The “deterrence agents” developed the concepts of massive retaliation, invulnerability, assured destruction, counterforce, pre-emptive strike, first strike, second strike, and flexible response. While some of these concepts were not completely new (Chilton, 1985: 115; Quester, 1966: 1-2), they have gained influence only in the context of deterrence.

³² For a review of the abstract thinking regarding nuclear weapons, see in Luke (1989: 212).

³³ However, this shift was not an immediate one. McNamara could not overcome the pressure of Congress to develop defense systems (Weber, 1991a: 92-5, 112-3). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the discourse regarding the need to develop these systems was constructed in a way that tried to avoid presenting it as a threat to the strategy of deterrence (Duffy and Blacker, 1984: 222; Garthoff, 1994: 165).

1969, shifted his public position towards the acceptance of sufficiency and rejection of superiority (Larson, 1991: 359-60)—a change that is highly important in the context of mutual deterrence. This change, however, cannot be solely explained by a material change in the balance of power between the superpowers. In other words, the achievement of parity is not, as some scholars have implied, necessary to the recognition of the need of sufficiency.³⁴

Until the mid-1960s there were a number of prominent differences between American and Soviet strategic thinking. These differences reveal the major obstacles to the Soviets' adoption of the new American idea of deterrence by punishment. For years the Soviets emphasized the importance of deterrence, but it was only as a part of a more comprehensive strategy that aimed to supply an absolute security by defense (Garthoff, 1978: 114, 122; Garthoff, 1994: 43).³⁵ It is not surprising then that the Soviets viewed their security as “synonymous with the insecurity of the potential enemy” (Horelick, 1977: 85 as referred by Booth, 1979: 84). In this manner, Soviet ideas about defense, war-fighting, survival, and winning in a nuclear war differed substantially from U.S. ideas about mutual deterrence and the importance of mutual vulnerability (Booth, 1979: 82-3; Buzan, 1987: 137).

4.2 The Distribution of the Deterrence Norm—The Mid-1960s

I argue that in the second stage, the “norm cascade” stage, the Americans tried and succeeded in spreading the norm to the Soviets, who subsequently adopted deterrence strategy. However, the achievement of this diffusion of deterrence strategy was not simple. Scholars debate whether the Soviets significantly changed their strategy, how deep this change was, and when it occurred. Some scholars claim that the change in Soviet strategy was marginal and adaptive. They argue that the Soviets saw mutual deterrence as a reality only after the achievement of parity in the late 1960s. Hence, these scholars claim that the Soviets did not in any way accept the idea that being subjected to the threat of retaliation is a preferable situation, as the strategy of MAD suggests (Lambeth, 1987: 213; Sienkiewicz, 1978: 84-86).³⁶ A problem with the claim of these scholars is that parity was accompanied by a change in Soviet perceptions according to which no superiority, as I later demonstrate, was needed for security.

³⁴ The realist argument, according to which mutual deterrence is the outcome of Soviet capabilities (Trofimenko, 1980: 9-10; in Weber, 1991a: 99-101) is limited; thus, the strategic change cannot be exclusively explained by the loss of American superiority (Simes, 1980-1: 94); see also in Garthoff (1994: 853). First, one needs to acknowledge the difference between MAD as a strategy and MAD as a strategic reality. Not only could a different strategy have developed independently of the strategic balance, strategies may have effects on the process of weapons acquisition. Moreover, the American consideration and adoption of sufficiency started before the Soviet achievement of strategic parity (Weber, 1991a: 819ft.18). Therefore, the U.S. would have been able to construct the Soviet threat as severe enough to pose unreasonable damage to America in order to force the adoption of the strategy of deterrence. In this respect, it is more likely that ideational changes that took part during this time made MAD a feasible strategy (Weber, 1991a: 89; see also Adler, 1992: 115).

³⁵ In this manner, some scholars argued that war-fighting capabilities and deterrence by denial could help to strengthen deterrence by punishment and increase its credibility; see in Simes (1980-1: 80-2, 91-2); Trachtenberg (1991: 6-7).

³⁶ See also in Freedman (2003: 247-8, 255, 329); and Buzan (1987: 137).

It is also difficult to establish the argument that the Soviets absorbed and institutionalized the concept of deterrence during the Khrushchev era: this process seems much more evident in later periods.³⁷ Thus, although there are some indications that Khrushchev himself was amenable to the concept of sufficiency (Taubman, 2003: 535), the domestic pressure against such a strategic modification points to the obstacles that existed for the internalization of the deterrence norm.³⁸ The Soviets' difficulty in accepting deterrence during the Khrushchev period was reflected in their adoption of a strategy that compromised between the approaches of nuclear deterrence and war-fighting (Freedman, 2003: 247, 249; Sienkiewicz, 1978: 87-8). Moreover, some of the explanations for the alleged change refer to economical considerations, which challenge the possibility that complex learning occurred (Weber, 1991b: 792-3). If a learning process took place, the reasoning behind the strategic change should have been deeper—not merely adaptive.³⁹

Conversely, other scholars claim that the change in Soviet strategic thinking was much more significant, and that it occurred in the Brezhnev era after a meaningful learning process. According to this approach, Western doctrine had an educative effect on Soviet leadership, persuading them to reformulate their ideas and plans. This diffusion of ideas was significant mainly from the 1960s onwards, and especially from the mid-1960s. It was enabled by direct meetings between Soviet and American officials (in which McNamara was a prominent figure) (Evangelista, 1999: 205-6; Chervov, 1987: 1-2, Bovin, 1987: 17), by informal meetings between American and Soviet researchers and scientists, and by American declarations, debates, news reports, and academic writing (Adler, 1992: 118, 121-3, 133; Freedman, 2003: 243-4; Evangelista, 1999: 200-1, 224-5; Weber, 1991b: 800) The previous Soviet strategic views were thus eroded and mutual deterrence was accepted.⁴⁰

This shift in Soviet strategic thinking was impressive considering the epistemic obstacles facing it and the institutionalization of ideas opposed to those of MAD, particularly in the military.⁴¹ Moreover, the Soviets had to overcome material obstacles. One of these was the structure of forces, which were organized according to a different strategy than that of deterrence. Another obstacle was the opinion of a domestic public which had learned during the Cold War that the Soviets needed a strategy other than MAD (Simes, 1980-1: 90, 92).

³⁷ For example, Garthoff argues that declarations about deterrence before the SALT talks did not describe mutual deterrence clearly (Garthoff, 1978: 126).

³⁸ See Holloway (1984: 31, 40) regarding claims of important Soviet figures who supported the notion of achieving superiority and who argued that winning a nuclear war is attainable (e.g., Chuev, 1993: 332, 390-1).

³⁹ Regarding adaptive causes in the following of norms, see for example (Florini, 1996: 380).

⁴⁰ For the Soviet acceptance of MAD and its operative implications, see Blacker (1991: 430-1, 457); Adler (1992: 136, 139-40); Weber (1991a: 115); Bluth (1992: 118-9); Garthoff (1994: 153, 850, 852); and Evangelista, (1999: 212-6, 223-4).

⁴¹ In this time, although Brezhnev and other major decision makers went through a significant learning process, they did not present a coherent policy implementing these ideas, which demonstrates the difficulties in confronting the opposition to these ideas (Blacker, 1991, 455-6, 459). See also Freedman (2003: 244) and Sienkiewicz (1978: 84, 91).

In this manner, the Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis can be seen not only as deterrence failure,⁴² but as a demonstration of the (violent) effects of the lack of institutionalized deterrence norm and the absence of intersubjective understanding of deterrence. Hence, for example, moderate messages sent by Khrushchev to placate the Americans in the Berlin crisis were considered threats (Trachtenberg, 1991: 219-20). Likewise, the Soviets misinterpreted American messages, which aimed only to enforce deterrence, and in this way forced the Americans to present harder and harder lines (Betts, 1987: 104-6; Trachtenberg, 1991: 220-1; Freedman, 2003: 161). The limited effect of the American warnings on the eve of the Cuban missile crisis can also be explained by using this line of argument (Taubman, 2004: 554). In other words, the context of war-fighting strategy, especially within the Soviet Union, made it difficult to implement a successful strategy of deterrence.

However, although the conclusions drawn from these crises in the early 1960s highlighted the importance of conventional weapons, in the long term these incidents strengthened the idea of mutual deterrence. These crises, and especially the Cuban missile crisis, emphasized the dangers of a nuclear war by making the threats much more tangible, demonstrating the superpowers' vulnerability (George and Smoke, 1974: 458-9; Weber, 1991b: 796-8; Gaddis, 1997: 261, 278; Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 355). As opposed to earlier abstract and general references to deterrence, the occurrence of these crises contributed to the superpowers' practical understanding of the need to establish "rational" deterrence relations, and the need to decrease the dangers associated with nuclear war. The solution—the implementation of a "cities avoidance" doctrine (Freedman, 2003: 225-6)—demonstrates that the superpowers came to acknowledge the need to make nuclear weapons a source of security and not a source of insecurity, all through the development of the intersubjective knowledge of mutual deterrence.

4.3 The Internalization of Deterrence Norm—The Early 1970s

The norm of deterrence was institutionalized in the "norm internalization" stage, demonstrated in the convergence of both superpowers towards a strategy of MAD in the SALT agreements (1972) and mainly in the ABM (anti-ballistic missiles) treaty. (Garthoff, 1978: 126, 133; Buzan, 1987: 150-1; Nye, 1987: 389; Weber, 1991b: 794-5, see also in Blacker, 1991: 442; Freedman, 2003: 254; Garthoff 1994: 647, 849-52).⁴³

The diffusion of the American ideas of deterrence (Adler, 1992: 135-9) led to the Soviet learning process, which then led to the assimilation of related concepts such as arms control and parity. It also led to the Soviet acknowledgement of the implications of "sufficiency" as well as of the problems with superiority (Tyushkevich, 1979: 449; Trofimenko, 1980: 19; Weber, 1991b: 800; Garthoff, 1994: 215-6). The institutionalization of the norm and the intersubjective knowledge created clarified for the superpowers that superiority is useless and that deterrence is the *rational* alternative.⁴⁴

⁴² Regarding problems with the implementation of deterrence strategy in the Berlin crisis, see (Betts, 1987: 90, 173; Trachtenberg, 1991: 220-1, 223; Gaddis, 1997: 140). Regarding problems with the implementation of deterrence strategy in the Cuban crisis, see (George and Smoke, 1974: 447, 465; Allison and Zelikow, 1999: 109, 111-2, 217; Morgan, 2003: 148).

⁴³ For a detailed description of the SALT process, see (Garthoff, 1994: 146-223).

⁴⁴ Hence, although Morgan's assertion that "[t]he superpowers never abandoned trying to escape from mutual deterrence" (Morgan, 2005: 757), the facts that they resided within this framework and established

Furthermore, both superpowers, rather than attempting to achieve superiority, were now satisfied with parity and equality.⁴⁵

The institutionalization of deterrence was exhibited not only through the SALT I agreements between the superpowers but in their individual domestic arenas. Compliance with the principles of the agreements became part of their framework of interests (Blacker: 1991, 455; Adler, 1992: 133-9). As such, the SALT agreements also became an instrument of further enhancing and institutionalizing deterrence ideas (Weber, 1991b: 803-4).⁴⁶

The adoption of the deterrence norm by both superpowers created force structures compatible with the norm, but more importantly it formed internalized mutual collective expectations for handling relations. While it was not impossible to break the norm, its internalization restrained such a shift. The norm created an interpretative environment in which the actions of the superpowers could be understood not as a direct threat to the other's security but as a way of maintaining deterrence. Such understandings further helped to repeatedly reproduce the normative structures and actions that were compatible with the deterrence norm.

As Adler suggests, the mutual expectations that deterrence would work encouraged the superpowers' policy makers to act as if these expectations were true (Adler, 1992: 108; see also Jeonniemi, 1989: 45). Thus, they implemented and deployed strategic doctrines and weapons systems compatible with the norm. Attempts to implement strategies that deviated from the norm met with counter measures to keep the norm. It was thus argued, for example, that the institutionalization of MAD ideas significantly constrained the Strategic Defense Initiative (Morgan, 1990: 136; Weber, 1991b: 806).⁴⁷ Moreover, beyond domestic pressure in the U.S., the Soviets also made efforts to turn American strategy back toward MAD (Booth, 1979: 44; Garthoff, 1994: 466-7).⁴⁸ These Soviet efforts further demonstrate both the strategic change that occurred

practices which aimed to support it, strengthen the argument that the norm affected the behavior of the actors. In other words, as many scholars who study norms suggest, it could be beneficial to show how the norm emerged despite the fact that it was counter to the actors' interests.

⁴⁵ Parity and equality can be seen as an "operative compromise" between the norm, which called for "sufficiency," and the strategic culture, which called for war-fighting capabilities. This compromise was needed to neutralize the opposition of military officers in both U.S. and USSR. Furthermore, the exclusion of the MIRV system from the SALT agreement was considered the price for military acceptance of the ABM agreement (Larson, 1991: 373-4; see also Garthoff, 1994: 154; see in Savelyev and Detinov, 1995: 25-6). Moreover, according to Potter, "Although proponents of MIRV have lobbied successfully for the continuation of the U.S. MIRV program, they have rarely challenged the basic premises of the anti-MIRV case" (Potter, 1978: 601). It is important to note that although MIRV are considered systems that destabilize mutual deterrence, such effects in many respects are dependent on the specific ways they are implemented (e.g., SLBM) (Potter, 1978: 618).

⁴⁶ Regarding the further institutionalization of MAD ideas in the Gorbachev era, see Weber (1991b: 806-7) and Blacker (1991: 435-6, 453-4).

⁴⁷ The institutionalization of deterrence norm can be seen as the reason that even contradictory measures have been justified as attempts to increase deterrence. See, for example, the Schlesinger Doctrine of 1974 in Levine (1991: 147) and Buzan (1987: 157), which can be understood as a tactical change (see Weber, 1991b: 804) and as an outcome of political-bureaucratic pressure (Garthoff, 1994: 215-6).

⁴⁸ In addition, the discourse of deterrence cannot be over-emphasized. First, deterrence is a speech act, which not only creates a way of communication but constitutes the actions and the actors' identities. Furthermore, following the opposition to this strategy by the Soviet and the American armies, as well as the

in the Soviet Union and the change in the level of institutionalization of MAD ideas. The fact that the Soviets tried to shift American strategy rather than merely acquire additional military capabilities to achieve strategic balance also demonstrates the power of the deterrence norm, which had “found” an agent who could maintain it.

Taking into account the Soviets’ previous ultimate goals, their strategic history, and the prominence of war-fighting strategy in their historical rhetoric, it is evident that the Soviets had to go through a complex learning process (Garthoff, 1978: 124). However, the changes in the Soviet’s strategic thinking cannot be entirely explained by the fact of its inferiority (Lambeth, 1987: 223; Blacker, 1991: 434, 441, 455; Freedman, 2003: 247; see also Larson, 1991: 384-5), nor by the concept of adaptation (Weber, 1991b: 801). Although it is possible that the high cost of achieving superiority made MAD ideas more attractive to the Soviets, these arguments fail to explain the timing of this change and the shift—which I will later demonstrate—in Soviet discourse, such that both sides referred to strategic stability as an aim in itself (Semenov, 1986: 8; see also Zhurkin, 1987: 6). In addition, it seems more likely that an inferior actor would be the proponent of a strategy of sufficiency, which is not the fact in this case. All of these explanations, then, fail to explain the timing of this process as well as the importance of the U.S. role in it.

4.4 Internalization of Deterrence Norm and Ontological Security

The establishment of the deterrence norm then not only reflects how the actors see themselves and their international roles, but it also reflects (and is dependent upon) the intersubjective understanding that the security of each actor is dependent on his opponent and on the security of his opponent. Such understandings are reflected in the concept of ontological security, which is concerned with the possibility of making interactions predictable. In this manner, deterrence strategy can be used as a mechanism against the “un-known,” and as such it is concerned not only with rational actions but with a willingness that the actions be predictable (Falk, 1989: 59; Jeonniemi, 1989: 45). In other words, institutionalized deterrence norm helps the actors to achieve not only physical security but ontological security, and these further help to increase the impact of the deterrence norm.

The institutionalization of deterrence ideas in Soviet Union and the influences of these ideas on the actors’ identities can best be demonstrated by the shift in the Soviet discourse regarding deterrence. Thus, the Soviets (with the Americans) came to construct mutual deterrence as the rational strategy (and as the only rational strategy) for the nuclear age. In other words, the superpowers needed to define rational and irrational actions for themselves. The concept of deterrence—which is so explicitly based upon rationality—highlighted the notion that using nuclear weapons would not be a rational act (Nash, 1997: 144-5; Bundy, 1988: 461).⁴⁹ In other words, the deterrence norm, which suggests that rationality is the way to deal with and justify relations between the superpowers in the nuclear age, became the dominant strategic rationale. It emphasized

European concerns that this strategy would undermine American commitment to its allies, deterrence discourse cannot be disregarded as a “cheap talk.”

⁴⁹ This acceptance followed an earlier American shift towards implementing rationality in the nuclear age, a shift that was also encouraged by the American civilian scholars (e.g., Kaplan, 1991: 10, 72-3).

the need to avoid war in terms of rational policy and defined which actions were appropriate for rational actors.

The Soviet Union contributed to the construction of deterrence as a rational strategy through a number of interconnected utterances. First, nuclear war was presented as a suicidal act—an act considered irrational in Western culture. Thus, in contrast to classical Soviet strategy—which saw winning nuclear war as a rational objective (Simes, 1980-1: 86-7)—the new discourse emphasized that this kind of war was not, as Clausewitz suggested, the continuation of diplomacy by other means, but was rather the “continuation only of madness” (Dmitriyev, 25.9.1963 as quoted in Holloway, 1984: 164). The number of such voices increased dramatically from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s and included Soviet military and political leaders, such as Brezhnev (Payne, 1980: 49-53; Catudal, 1989: 282-3 and in Holloway, 1984: 166).

Following this, rational deterrence was used to connect the irrationality of nuclear war with common security. Thus, discourse emphasized that limiting the strategic arms race was vital because the arms race increased the threat of war and the level of insecurity. For example, the head of the Soviet delegation to the SALT talks, Vladimir Semenov, declared,

Even in the event that one of the sides was the first to be subjected to attack, it would undoubtedly retain the ability to inflict a retaliatory blow of destructive force. It would be *tantamount to suicide* for the ones who decided to start war (Semenov as referred by Smith, 1980: 83, my emphasis; see also Garthoff, 1994: 153).

This quote, which was repeated by Brezhnev a few years later (Catudal, 1989: 133-5), clearly shows the change in Soviet strategic thinking. First, Semenov’s argument significantly demonstrates Soviet acceptance of American ideas about the need for arms control to stabilize deterrence. Moreover, Semenov presented (mutual) deterrence in a positive light in his claim that initiation of a war (by any side) is an undesirable aim. In this manner, Semenov avoided directly threatening the Americans. Thus, Semenov’s discourse supports mutual deterrence and the search for interconnected common security. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the expression “tantamount to suicide” was used earlier by Khrushchev—but in the context of a threat to the Americans:

The Imperialists know our strength: to attack us is *tantamount to suicide*; one would have to be insane for this. I do not believe they are as stupid as all that; they understand the consequences which the unleashing of war against the socialist countries may have for them (Khrushchev, 1.6.1959 as qut. in Goure, 1974: 26, my emphasis).

These “rational” utterances are summarized by a discourse according to which nuclear war poses a threat to humanity. Molchanov argued, “In the new condition, even elementary *common sense reveals* that the utilization of the colossal stockpiles of nuclear-missile weapons could result in a *holocaust for human civilization* and, at any rate, would give no advantages to the aggressor and end in his defeat and destruction” (Molchanov,

1974: 5 as quoted in Goure et al., 1974: 60, my emphasis).

Thus, not only was there a change in Soviet strategy and discourse, but the Soviets took an active role in shaping and further constructing deterrence strategy as rational, and in this helped to redefine both superpowers as rational actors. As Payne (2003: 414) suggests, “in the context of mutual vulnerability, confidence in deterrence became a tautology; any rational leader would be deterred from severe provocation by the fear of mutual nuclear destruction; national leaders are rational...thus, nuclear weapons would deter. In short, rational leaders would be deterred by mutual nuclear threats, because, by definition, they would be irrational if they were not so deterred” (see also Catudal, 1989: 126). Thus, when rationality in terms of deterrence strategy became constitutive of actors’ identity, it became an aim itself. In this respect, Windsor suggests that following Weberian process of “rationalization,” “[d]eterrence became its own institution, its own form of rationality, its own bureaucracy” (Windsor, 2002: 169; see also Freedman, 2004: 14, and in Mlyn, 1995: 69).

The process of defining “rational” and “irrational” points to the fact that the rational deterrence strategy is dependent upon social constructions, and therefore it could have developed differently (e.g., see Weber, 1991b: 805). In other words, these constructions enabled the idea that the threat of a second strike retaliation is a rational option, even though, as some scholars have suggested, this may not seem coherent for a fully rational actor. Paradoxically, nuclear weapons create the threats that nuclear strategy is needed to prevent. Nevertheless, and maybe because of this, as Isakova suggests (1990: 82, 84), mutual nuclear deterrence mentality turned out to be a tenacious way of life.⁵⁰

Deterrence role identities of the superpowers are created through their acknowledgment that they are dependent on each other for their own security. In this respect, any action that deviates from the norm threatens not only their security but their identities. Conversely, the actors’ ability to define rationality increases their ability to “predict” the future and through this to increase their level of ontological security. As Ruby suggests, “the rational actor assumption is a kind of basic trust system on which individuals depend” (Ruby, 2004: fn. 16 p. 16). “[T]o engage in a nuclear war,” Michael Howard states, “would be to enter into a realm of the unknown” (Howard, 1981 as quoted in Kozar, 1987: 4). Unlike nuclear war, rational deterrence provides certainty—or at least a more certain environment. It is not surprising therefore that prior to the internalization of deterrence practices, the superpowers had difficulties empathizing with each other or predicting how the other would respond.⁵¹ The SALT agreements, as Bomsdorf suggests, brought about the realization that the Soviet Union was striving for stability, common security, and more security for both sides: “Security against what? Security against whom? These questions are not asked anymore” (Bomsdorf, 1983: 100).

5. The American War on Terrorism—Influences of the Deterrence Norm and the Quest for Ontological Security

Another illustrative case study—the American war on terrorism—sharpens and further elaborates the arguments regarding the norm of deterrence and its connection to ontological security. As I earlier demonstrated, the internalization of the deterrence norm

⁵⁰ For similar assertion, regarding the U.S, see Tarr (1991:5).

⁵¹ For such an argument regarding the Cuban missile crisis, see Lebow and Stein (1994: 144).

led to the constitution of deterrence identity (such as the role identity of deterrer) and therefore shaped American political rhetoric—which continues to influence American strategic perceptions and discourse.⁵² Hence, the influences of the deterrence norm went beyond the strategies that were chosen during the Cold War. Thus for example, as Frey argues, “[The American] government often sees deterrence as the only way of signaling to its own people that it is determined to fight terrorism at ‘all costs’” (Frey, 2004: 41; see also Jervis, 2003: 318; Ruby, 2004: 27).

In this respect, I suggest that the challenge and the threat for the U.S. stems not only from the fact that it has not succeeded in implementing a deterrence strategy vis-à-vis al Qaeda. Rather, the U.S. tend to acknowledge that the construction of the kind of relationship it had with the USSR would not be possible with this organization. Therefore—and with respect to the American identity as a superpower that must demonstrate its power in world politics by practicing deterrence—this perceived inability to socially construct such “rational relations” of deterrence with al Qaeda threatens both the physical and ontological security of the U.S. I suggest therefore that it is not surprising that the war “against terrorism” was perceived as a solution to these threats.

Beyond retaliation and self-defense,⁵³ the ontological dimension of security in the war in Iraq (and Afghanistan) has been acknowledged in different ways by scholars. Löwenheim suggests that the war was meant to “restore shaken concepts of authority in world politics” and to return to former American routines (Löwenheim, 2007: 176, 215-6). Other scholars suggest that the terror attacks of 9/11 created uncertainty that by definition challenged American ontological security and routines (Zaretsky, 2002: 101; Ruby, 2004: 25; Epstein, 2007: 17). These attacks also challenged the American “identity as a guarantor of security” (Ruby, 2004: 27), as well as the American role identities of *exceptionalist* and benevolent *hegemon* (Epstein, 2007: 15-6).

While acknowledging the importance of these views, I suggest that looking at the American identity as that of a deterring actor may help to integrate the above-mentioned interpretations into explanations not only of the American response (i.e., the war on terrorism), but of the contradictory discourse regarding the feasibility and the importance of restoring a deterrence posture vis-à-vis terrorists. Acknowledging America’s deterrent identity connects the explanation of great-powerness with those emphasizing the American attempts to restore authority. More specifically, as a (detering) great power, America’s inability to deter al Qaeda increased the threat of the 9/11 attacks. Not only did it seem as if the U.S could not provide security for its own citizens, but the inability to deter aggravated the threats to the U.S identity as a deterring actor.⁵⁴

⁵² Despite the fact that there was, according to Iklé, an erosion in the salience of the norm of deterrence over the years, and although Reagan understood that reliance on MAD was dangerous, it took another eighteen years for Washington and Moscow to overcome the doctrine of MAD (2006: 51).

⁵³ As Löwenheim clearly demonstrates, it was well known to the Americans that not only was “fighting terrorism” inefficient, it had in fact made things worse by provoking further attacks (2007: 179-80), see also Ruby, 2004: 4; Adler, 2007)

⁵⁴ The assertion of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld exemplifies this kind of perception of threat, when he declared that the U.S challenge is “to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen and the unexpected. That may seem an impossible task. It is not. But to accomplish it, we must...take risks and try new things—so we can deter and defeat adversaries that have not yet emerged to challenge us” (Rumsfeld, 2002: 23, my emphasis).

However, the discourse regarding the war was not coherent. On the one hand, the American argumentation that the war in Iraq is part of the “war on terror” (2002) further demonstrates the influence of the rhetoric of deterrence. According to the Bush administration, Iraq had to be attacked because Saddam Hussein is not a rational actor and hence is not deterrable (Fleischer, 10.15.2002). Without discussing here whether or not this postulation is correct (see for example Jervis, 2003: 323-4), it exemplifies the use of deterrence to justify actions. For example, President Bush argued that

[f]or much of the last century, America's defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend (Bush, 1.6.2002).

On the other hand, in contrast to the above protestation that these kinds of threats cannot be deterred, for example, the spokesman of the White House, Ari Fleischer, has explained American strategy: “The President also believes that the use of force against Iraq will similarly send a powerful deterrent message to terrorists around the world” (Fleischer, 19.3.2003). The inconsistency with regard to the feasibility of deterring these actors is a result of the compelling nature of the rhetoric developed and enabled by the deterrence norm and deterrence identity, which became a discursive tool for the policy’s justification.

Another important point can be suggested with regard to Fleischer’s arguments that using force against (rogue) states may increase the American deterrent posture vis-à-vis terrorists. Although such argumentation can be understood as an attempt to preserve the world order, as Press-Barnathan (2004: 201) argues, it also demonstrates the American acknowledgement of the difficulties of deterring these actors. But more importantly, and in addition to Press-Barnathan’s view of this war against states as a mechanism of enhancing deterrence by returning to the known practices (Press-Barnathan, 2004: 201-2), I suggest that these actions can be understood as attempts to return to the well-known practice of deterrence (against states) simply because the U.S. is familiar with it. Therefore, these attempts cannot be interpreted as a conventional means of establishing future deterrence (and thus security), but rather as an attempt to provide ontological security and to enhance the feeling of security. It is thus not surprising, as Press-Barnathan (2004: 205) argues, that the U.S approach has failed to “win or even come significantly close to winning the war against terrorism.” My position is that the U.S. has not failed, because, at least in part, winning the war was not its main aim.⁵⁵

6. Discussion

I suggest that this paper has significant implications with regard to both the study of deterrence and the study of ontological security. The study of deterrence strategy as a norm illuminates how this strategy works, as well as how deterrence ideas are transferred among states through socialization and learning. In this respect, I argue that actors in

⁵⁵ In this respect, see also Epstein (2007: 18).

other conflicts (e.g., India and Pakistan) were influenced by this norm (see Krepon, 2001: 83-4).

However, the influences of the internalized deterrence norm are not restricted to such ideational phenomena as identity and discourse. As shown above, this norm might affect international strategic reality by shaping doctrine, strategies, weapons' acquisitions, and practices in the international arena. The norm, as well as the identities of the actors, could become part of the intersubjective context, which could lead the actors to behave appropriately. Hence, for example, if actors sharing the deterrence norm assume they are in a "MAD game," it is more likely they will avoid violence since they would implement strategies and acquire weapons systems that accord to deterrence.

I further claim that the arguments suggested in this paper have some policy-oriented implications on the questions of how actors can be influenced and why some actors are less easily deterred. Deterrence norm creates a context within which weapons are interpreted as a means of deterrence. Moreover, the importance of context and actors' intersubjective knowledge is not limited to the superpowers in the nuclear age, but can also apply to other kinds of actors. In other words, deterrence strategy will generally work better when actors have intersubjective knowledge of deterrence, which indicates that deterrence practices, to some extent, are dependent on the processes of learning and socialization.⁵⁶ In addition, this study suggests that strategic policy decisions must take into account not only the physical needs of the opponents but possible threats to identity and ontological security.

In addition, the research has a few interesting theoretical and empirical implications for the study of the connections among the concepts of physical security, ontological security, and identity, as well for the further mapping of these connections. The idea and practices of deterrence created the role identities of the actors, which gradually provided a substitute for earlier identities of aggressive enemy. This allowed the superpowers to escape from the ontological security dilemma, since they were provided with an alternative that both enhanced their physical security and did not threaten their role identities. The point here is that this is precisely the factor that aggravated the threats of 9/11. The American inability to deter was not only a physical security problem but an ontological one. Thus, attempts to practice deterrence and restore its deterrent posture resulted in the Gulf war.

A few further implications can be suggested. First, mutual deterrence practices may be understood as a mechanism that allows for breaking away from the ontological security dilemma. Not only are actors able to increase their ontological and/or physical security, but increasing either of these may serve to increase the other, and through this provide a more solid sense of security. Second, this study also enhances the assertion that establishing new identities may serve as a mechanism that allows for breaking away from the ontological security dilemma. Further, this research provides a reply to Copeland, who suggests that the "divide between constructivism and systemic realism is all about past socialization versus future uncertainty." He argues that constructivists have difficulties explaining how prudent rational leaders deal with future uncertainties (2000: 205-6; 210). This paper demonstrates that the constructivist approach may explain not only how uncertainties shape behavior, but how they result from the actors' identities.

⁵⁶ For a similar argument regarding the importance of examining the normative context in order to determine how deterrence strategy works, see Tannenwald (1999: 438, 439).

Therefore, considering deterrence as a construction of rational practices may explain how in some contexts it helps actors overpower uncertainties (Cold War) while in others it creates the uncertainties (post–Cold War terrorism).

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