



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF CULTURE
AND SOCIETY

Decision-Making in the United States:

Accounting for Belief Systems and Images

Irene de Boer

International Relations
Dept. of Global Political Studies Bachelor programme – IR103L
15 credits thesis
Autumn 2020
Supervisor: Scott McIver

Abstract

Despite many important findings in the study of cognitive approaches to decision-making, much remains unclear. Rather than asking why decision-makers made a particular choice, this thesis is interested in asking how such decisions are warranted by the speakers, how potential criticisms are averted, and how such decisions establish a particular self-image. The purpose of this thesis, then, is to deconstruct the American belief system and its images, and trace their expression in political discourse. The central argument suggests belief systems and images enable, reflect, and warrant foreign policy decisions, and requires a link be made between International Relations and political and social psychology. Building on a neo-classical realist framework, but incorporating the discourse analytic unit of the interpretative repertoire to examine political discourse, the thesis will demonstrate the empirical and theoretical validity of the argument with a case study of the Clinton Administration. The findings suggest that, while much remains to be done in the field, International Relations can successfully incorporate political and social psychological concepts to illustrate how belief systems and images enable, narrow, and reflect on policy options.

Word count: 13,415.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	5
	1.1 <i>Purpose and Relevance to International Relations</i>	6
	1.2 <i>Structure of the Study</i>	7
2	Review of the Literature	9
	2.1 <i>American Foreign Policy: A Neo-Classical Realist Framework</i>	9
	2.2 <i>Belief Systems and Decision-Making</i>	11
	2.2.1 Operationalisation of the Concept.....	12
	2.2.2 Belief Systems and Empirical Study.....	13
	2.3 <i>Images and Representation</i>	14
	2.3.1 National Images in Foreign Policy	14
	2.3.2 Images and Discourse Analysis	16
3	Methodology	17
	3.1 <i>Project Format and Case</i>	17
	3.1.1 The Clinton Administration, 1993-2001	18
	3.2 <i>Data Sources and Collection</i>	19
	3.2.1 United States National Security Strategies (1994-2000)	19
	3.2.2 Public Papers of President Clinton (1993-2001)	20
	3.2.3 Congressional Records (1995-2000).....	21
	3.3 <i>Discourse Analysis and Interpretative Repertoires</i>	21
	3.4 <i>Implications and Limitations of the Study</i>	23
4	Analysis	24
	4.1 <i>Interpretative Repertoires in American Foreign Policy Discourse</i>	25
	4.1.1 A Repertoire of <i>Evilness</i>	25
	4.1.2 A Repertoire of <i>National Interest</i>	27
	4.1.3 A Repertoire of <i>Development</i>	29

4.2 <i>Discussion and Some Observations</i>	32
5 Conclusion	38
6 Bibliography	40

1 Introduction

Like a schoolchild who works carefully first with the pencil, then with the eraser, then with the pencil again, he tore down what had happened and then carefully rebuilt it – redrew it in his mind – until both the facts and his perception of the facts jibed in a way he could live with.

–Stephen King¹

In general, foreign policy decision-making has frequently been likened to a deliberate chess game. The interactive sequence of moves and countermoves, the subsequent moves in reaction to past moves, resembles foreign policy discussions and negotiations. While foreign policy decisions may stretch from dramatic resolutions to the ordinary routine, fundamentally, almost every decision comes about in an interactive setting as a result of a sequence of prior decisions (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 4).

Probing such a sequence of decisions has a long history in International Relations, particularly in the subfields of foreign policy analysis and decision-making. After all, if the course of world politics is determined by decisions made by our world's leaders, a better grasp of how these decisions are made, could very well enrich our understanding of outcomes in the international arena (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 4). To this end, most analyses of decision-making have generally preferred cognitive approaches, rather than systemic ones, to 'get into the minds' of key decision-makers and uncover the processes leading up to a decision (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 5).

Over a significant period of time, arguably since the Second World War, such examinations have provided a deeper understanding into the factors shaping decisions, such as 'images and belief systems, emotions, analogies, the personality of leaders, leadership style, miscalculations and misperceptions, and environmental factors such as time constraints, ambiguity, stress, and risk' (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 3). Most notable, and specific to belief systems and images, has been the argument 'decision-makers act upon their definition of the situation and their images of states – others as well as their own. These images are in turn dependent upon the decision-maker's belief system, and these may or may not be accurate representations of 'reality'' (Holsti 1962: 244).

¹ King, Stephen (1981) *Cujo*. New York City: Viking Press.

1.1 Purpose and Relevance to International Relations

Yet, despite such important findings, much remains unclear in the study of cognitive approaches to decision-making and a great number of complications hamper empirical research. While this thesis does not claim to fill a gap in the literature, it does build on and aspires to extend some of several formative studies exploring cognitive factors in decision-making processes from a neo-classical realist perspective. In addition to accounting for systemic pressures and restraints, neo-classical realist authors (Rose 1998; Kaarbo 2015; Meibauer 2020) have demonstrated the possibility of inserting cognitive mechanisms as intervening variables in the decision-making process to account for particular foreign policies. However, rather than asking why decision-makers made a particular choice, this thesis is interested in asking how such decisions are warranted by the speakers, how potential criticisms are averted, and how such decisions establish a particular self-image.

To narrow down the subject matter, this thesis will concentrate on the belief systems and images of decision-makers, in particular those held in the United States in the course of the Clinton Administration, and argue belief systems and images enable, reflect, and warrant foreign policy decisions. It will do so by forming a link to political and social psychology in order to empirically trace belief systems and images, and by applying the discourse analytic unit of the interpretative repertoire to a review of the political discourse in the time period under examination.

The purpose of this thesis, then, is to deconstruct the American belief system and its images, and trace how these are expressed in political discourse during the Clinton Administration. Therefore, the research question is formulated as follows: *how are shared belief systems and images constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions?*

The argument will be demonstrated with a case study of political discourse throughout the presidency of William Jefferson Clinton, from 1993 to 2001, and examine decision-making regarding Armenia and Iran, specifically. This presidency proves a valuable case for a number of reasons. Foremost, the Clinton Administration was in office during most of the years immediately after the Cold War. At the beginning of the 1990s, the United States emerged victoriously from the struggle, and there was a momentous change to a unipolar world (Walker *et al.* 1999: 610-2). In this new strategic context, the United States was positioned as the sole superpower left, and, rather than manage old rivalries, new opportunities arose and potential spheres of influence called for the attention of decision-makers (Walker *et al.* 1999: 610). The

Soviet Union was no longer the biggest threat, which gave the United States more freedom of action to engage other issues and states. In this context, Iran came to symbolise a new enemy, requiring containment and deterrence, while the New Independent States (NIS) of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and in particular Armenia, embodied opportunities to tie the region to the West. These adjustments reflected the internal dispositions within individual decision-makers, or their belief systems and images they held of other nations (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 102; Walker *et al.* 1999: 611).

Along with such changing dynamics in the international system, attention to decision-making grew. But while International Relations contains a significant amount of scholarship on belief systems, images, and perceptions, many relate to the Soviet Union and the Cold War (Herrmann 1986; Holsti 1962; Walker 1977). Recently, there have been analyses regarding President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald Trump (Bazhatarnik 2019; Lindsay 2011; Renshon 2008), but the critical period after the end of the Cold War seems underrepresented in comparison to its empirical importance and theoretical possibilities, although studies by Jewett and Turetzky (1998), Renshon (2005), and Walker *et al.* (1999) are certainly exceptions. As the countries under examination are still crucial in United States foreign policy, a study closely tracing the decision-making processes and political developments in the past could provide a better understanding of the present and contribute to International Relations a more comprehensive understanding of the ways *shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions.*

1.2 Structure of the Study

Having set out the purpose of this thesis, and having argued for the relevance of the study, the structure of the thesis consists of several interrelated parts.

Chapter 2 will review existing research relevant to understanding the context of American foreign policy. A neo-classical realist framework will be proposed to incorporate belief systems and images as intervening variables in the decision-making process. Then, the most relevant research on these particular variables will be separately outlined, making clear what theoretical concepts and methodological choices this thesis builds on.

In *Chapter 3*, after a broad description of the Clinton Administration, and a further justification for the theoretical potential of the case, the proposed methodology and methods will be imparted. The data collected for the study, the National Security Strategies, statements

by President Clinton, and Congressional Records, will be outlined, and a detailed explanation of interpretative repertoires, as the main analytic unit of this thesis, shall be given. Chapter 3 closes with some implications and limitations to the study.

Chapter 4 contains an in-depth discussion of three interpretative repertoires in American political discourse reflecting the construction of belief systems and images to become resources for foreign policy decisions. These distinct, but interrelated, repertoires can be used together in political discourse, and some observations are offered regarding the effect on particular foreign policies.

The conclusion in *Chapter 5* will briefly summarise the findings and possible implications, and outline several promising openings for future International Relations scholarship to draw on insights from political and social psychology.

The thesis aims to contribute to an established literature on the role of belief systems and images in American foreign policy and decision-making, and offers an extension by examining how the use of interpretative repertoires in political discourse reflects attempts to warrant certain decisions, avert potential criticisms, and establish a particular self-image.

2 Review of the Literature

To study *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*, and, more generally, to contribute a more comprehensive understanding of American foreign policy and decision-making, this thesis proposes a neo-classical realist framework to account for the functioning of intervening variables in the decision-making process. These intervening variables, belief systems and images, are defined in the second and third sections of this review, connecting neo-classical realism to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and political and social psychology.

2.1 American Foreign Policy: A Neo-Classical Realist Framework

Neo-classical realism can be defined as a firmly established research program within International Relations, with a singular purpose to study the foreign policies of states, i.e. their responses to the constraints imposed by the international system (Onea 2012: 139). Bearing in mind the diversity of neo-classical realist theories and theorists, this section will review only those authors who directly contribute to the theoretical framework proposed in this thesis (Onea 2012: 140). The studies by Gideon Rose (1998), who initially coined the term neo-classical realism in *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, and, in addition, by Juliet Kaarbo (2015) and Gustav Meibauer (2020), are salient in this thesis and make clear why a neo-classical realist inspired framework can be used to study American foreign policy and decision-making.

Neo-classical realism challenges, but also integrates various forms of realist thought, as it accounts for both external and internal variables. While the scope and ambition of a state's foreign policy may be determined by its position in the international system, particularly its relative power capabilities, the relationship between such capabilities and foreign policy is indirect, as systemic constraints are first translated through intervening variables at the unit level (Rose 1998: 146; Walker and Post 2005: 64).

As a consequence, two further assumptions are developed in the neo-classical realist framework of this thesis. First, there is no perfect transmission belt between relative material and power capabilities and foreign policy behaviour (Rose 1998: 146-7). Rather, as decisions originate from actual political leaders, and it is their perceptions that matter, it follows we have to explore further how 'flesh and blood' decision-makers actually understand their situation and position in the international system (Rose 1998: 146-7, 158). Second, instead of assuming states seek security, this thesis posits, like Rose (1998: 152), 'states respond to the

uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking to control and shape their external environment. [States] are likely to want more rather than less external influence, and pursue such influence to the extent that they are able to do so". This notion sheds some light on United States engagement with the former Soviet countries in the case under examination, in particular its interest to turn these countries westward.

Rose's (1998: 152) understanding of the intervening variables at the unit level, however, is rather limited and narrow compared to Kaarbo (2015: 203-4). For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, this particular part of the framework will adopt a rather inclusive perspective, identifying various domestic political and decision-making factors which affect decision-making processes, including perceptions, motivations, political traditions, state identities, domestic institutions, and perceived lessons of the past. While these variables are, to a great extent, inspired by constructivism, most are already integral to any realist framework (Kaarbo 2015: 203-4). If only neo-classical realism could incorporate (limited) subjectivity, it could construct a link to Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and its crucial theoretical and empirical leverage of psychological research on decision-making, including beliefs, images, schema-based information processing, and threat perception and representation (Kaarbo 2015: 404-5).

The difficulty of establishing this link is addressed by Meibauer (2020: 21), who points out, despite the writings of Rose (1998) and Kaarbo (2015), many still consider neo-classical realism a "least likely case of integration" with regards to constructivist concepts and ideational variables, such as beliefs, ideas, and perceptions. To resolve this, Meibauer (2020: 21, 25) suggests an open, even interpretative variant of neo-classical realism, in which the "expectations of rational behaviour (at least) implicit in neorealism" are supplemented by ideas and beliefs, resulting in "a more realistic view of information gathering and processing in decision-makers". By no means does opening up to these cognitive processes imply 'irrationality'. Rather, it embodies a more realistic interpretation of the relationship between decision-making and foreign policy, taking into account the difficulties encountered because of memory problems, time pressure, and organisational structures, as well as the costs of ambiguity and misperceptions (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 8).

To incorporate cognitive processes, yet still uphold neo-realist commitments (materialism, positivism, and implicit rationality), Meibauer (2020: 22) clarifies the use of ideational variables in neo-classical realism. These notions are incorporated into the theoretical framework of this thesis and guide the further design and data selection. First, Meibauer (2020: 22) argues "[i]ndividual beliefs help decision-makers appraise the international environment by filling gaps of knowledge about the material world. However, to matter in foreign policy

deliberations, individual beliefs must have interpersonal relevance”. Second, this means “[d]ecision-makers feed their individually held diagnoses of a respective decisional scenario into foreign policy deliberations, where they argue with and try to persuade other decision-makers” (Meibauer 2020: 22). Argumentation and persuasion works through language, enabling instrumental and strategic communication, debate, and social interaction in the international system. It is up to the individual decision-maker to decipher this interaction, translate it into threats or opportunities for foreign policy, and appropriately pursue the state’s interests (Meibauer 2020: 27).

The focus on language as a ‘conduit’ of beliefs and as an empirically traceable phenomenon supports the methodological choices for the use of discourse analysis and textual documents in this thesis, while also encouraging closer examination of the materials (Meibauer 2020: 31). Explanations regarding the impact of beliefs on decision-making in foreign policy processes, must, therefore find significant verbal references to the variables that have been hypothesised as influential (Haber *et al.* 1997: 36; Meibauer 2020: 31-2). This helps avoid potential causal circularity, but is also embeds the process as intervening in the transmission belt from systemic constraints to unit level behaviour, giving the theoretical framework a firm foundation in neo-classical realist thought (Meibauer 2020:31-2).

2.2 Belief Systems and Decision-Making

Having established the value of a neo-classical realist framework to account for intervening variables in decision-making processes, it is necessary to turn towards the core of this literature review and further clarify these variables and their *construction in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*. Earlier research will inform the operationalisation of the theoretical concepts, and clarify the empirical relevance of belief systems, after which more attention shall be given to the methodological background of this thesis and possible complications for the study of belief systems.

Research on belief systems, and the relationship between belief systems, information-processing, and decision-making has a long history. Influential articles, such as *The Belief System and National Images* by Ole R. Holsti (1962) and *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (1964)* by Philip E. Converse (2006) have successfully demonstrated the critical role of belief systems in cognitive processes and will be taken up in this review, in addition to studies by James N. Rosenau and Ole R. Holsti (1983), Deborah Welch Larson (1994), and Jonathan Renshon (2008).

2.2.1 Operationalisation of the Concept

The conceptual framework of this thesis, following Holsti (1962: 245), defines the belief system as a ‘set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received. It orients the individual to his environment, defining it for him and identifying for him its salient characteristics’. In a single-case study on John Foster Dulles and the link between the belief system and perceptions of the Soviet Union, Holsti (1962: 245) draws our attention to a so-called dual connection between belief systems and decision-makers’ strategies, moves, and choices (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 102). While the direct link is the belief system informing us ‘what ought to be’, guiding the establishment of goals and ordering of preferences, the indirect link is the belief system organising perceptions by scanning, selecting, filtering, and linking incoming information to steer behaviour (Holsti 1962: 245). This thesis will repeatedly relate back to this dual connection, and shall expand it with a definition provided by Mintz and DeRouen (2010: 102), noting how

actions are mediated by thought processes that contain a mixture of feelings, beliefs inferred from previous experiences (old information), and current perceptions of stimuli in the present environment (new information). Both the old and the new pieces of information are associated with the arousal of feelings of positive and negative affect as motivational biases, which help to specify preferences for different courses of action.

Rosenau and Holsti (1983: 375) refer back to Holsti (1962) by noting belief systems, or visions, are not merely abstract ideas linked by a distinct, central value. Rather, belief systems comprise complex and concrete sets of attitudes and assessments, supposedly harnessed by an inherent logic as to be internally consistent. Consistency enables the holder of the belief system to assimilate new information to pre-existing images and theories or distort it to minimize disagreement with existing expectations. This would imply belief systems are self-contained, resistant to falsification, and not easily undermined (Rosenau and Holsti 1983: 375). The idea of cognitive consistency also assumes decision-makers pay unwarranted attention to information consistent with prior beliefs, images, and expectations, while downplaying any new developments conflicting or not compatible with these pre-existing ideas (Holsti 1962: 246; Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 98; Walker *et al.* 1999: 612).

To close, the conceptual framework of belief systems incorporates the idea of ‘constraint’, introduced by Converse (2006) to operationalise belief systems. Constraint may

mean “the success we would have in predicting, given initial knowledge that an individual holds a specified attitude, that he holds certain further ideas and attitudes” (Converse 2006: 3). This implies ideas and values, such as equality or freedom, “go together not simply because both are in the interest of the person holding a particular status but for more abstract and quasi-logical reasons developed from a coherent world view as well” (Converse 2006: 8). Elements of belief systems, then, are diffused through society in ‘packages’, presented as ‘natural wholes’: one idea-element logically follows the other (“If you believe this, then you will also believe that, for it follows in such-and-such ways”) (Converse 2006: 8-9). These implications of the social diffusion of belief systems are important to bear in mind as we further discuss the transmission of information and examine political discourse. Moreover, the idea of constraint reflects how leader’s foreign policy beliefs are checked by ideological orientations and domestic policy preferences, in addition to the political debate and partisan cues, which positions the interest in policy deliberations in this thesis (Murray and Cowden 1999: 476-7).

Taken together, these studies indicate a dynamic relationship between belief systems and decision-making processes, but some complications are noted in empirically studying belief systems (Converse 2006: 1). While Holsti (1962) informs the single-case study design, his quantitative analysis is not replicable in this thesis and some methodological decisions remain unclear. These are to be addressed in the following section.

2.2.2 Belief Systems and Empirical Study

Recent scholarship on belief systems has expanded the work of both Holsti (1962) and Rosenau and Holsti (1983), and provides this thesis with a stronger methodological background.

Starting out with the notion decision-makers use prior experience, images, and knowledge to simplify a complex reality, Welch Larson (1994: 22) argues belief systems, then, serve as constructed mechanisms to screen for inconsistent and irrelevant information, to cut down overwhelming amounts of incoming stimuli, and suggest standards and guidelines for behaviour. Empirical study of the relationships between beliefs and decision-making, therefore, while still complex, needs to make clear how belief systems affect core decision-making tasks, such as defining the situation, analysing and searching for options, and predicting possible outcomes, and how these effects can be inferred from the data (Welch Larson 1994: 24). To that end, Welch Larson (1994: 28-9), presents process-tracing as an appropriate method to study how beliefs influence information processing and enter into the decision-making

process, and supports the use of public and private statements as a basis to infer the subject's belief systems. While acknowledging officials often have other motives when presenting their ideas and making their statements, and while politicians mean to persuade their audience by using all available lines of appealing and forceful argumentation, to avoid such a pitfall, and to separate belief systems from advocacy or self-justification, consistency over time and across different situations is to be found. Renshon (2008: 833) builds on many of the previously mentioned studies as he traces change and stability in the beliefs of George W. Bush, extending Welch Larson's (1994) ideas about appropriate data sources by drawing on Bush's public speeches. Renshon (2008: 833), however, adds the additional requirement these statements focus primarily on foreign policy issues.

Collectively, both studies provide a rationale for the use of public political statements to identify the relationship between belief systems and foreign policy decisions in this thesis, and are therefore used as a methodological background for this thesis. The comprehensive time period in this thesis, covering both terms of the Clinton Administration, draws on Welch Larson's (1994) notion of consistency, while data collection will stick to the additional requirement set for political statements by Renshon (2008). Though both studies form an important part of the methodological background of this thesis, to study *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*, several necessary theoretical and methodological concepts and tools are still lacking. They are to be outlined below.

2.3 Images and Representation

Having operationalised belief systems as an intervening variable in the decision-making process, to illustrate the weight attached to images and representations in American political discourse, this thesis will take the work of Kenneth E. Boulding (1959) as a starting point of research on the impact of images in international relations, in particular the article *National Images and International Systems*. Research by Ole R. Holsti (1962), Brett Silverstein (1989), and studies by Amy Skonieczny (2001) and Constance Duncombe (2016) will be reviewed to assess the consequences of representations in political discourse.

2.3.1 National Images in Foreign Policy

To avoid some unnecessary debate on semantics, the term 'image', rather than 'cognition' or 'attitude' is used as it provides some welcome flexibility. This way, an 'image

can be something that an individual holds in his or her mind, something that is shared by a large group of people, or something that takes concrete form in a newspaper or on television” (Silverstein 1989: 903). Moreover, whereas the belief system denoted the ‘complete’ world view of decision-makers, the image signifies some subpart within that system, in a very real sense depending on it to provide accurate or inaccurate mental representations of ‘reality’ (Holsti 1962: 244). Like the belief system, images are ‘models’, assisting in the management of incoming information, but images are also stereotypes the mind uses to categorize people, states, and events, and to bring about desired outcomes (Holsti 1962: 245; Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 101). Categorisation, or classification, as the result of a ‘quick and easy’ image, further sidesteps the responsibility of truthfulness or accuracy and could lead to bias and overgeneralization (Doty 1996: 10; Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 101).

To expand on the workings of images in decision-making, Boulding (1959: 120) suggests

the people whose decisions determine the policies and actions of nations do not respond to the ‘objective’ facts of the situation, whatever that may mean, but to their ‘image’ of the situation. It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behavior.

Three dimensions in the formation of national images are therefore important to the theoretical framework of this thesis: a nation’s geographical space, its perceived friendliness or hostility, and its perceived strength or weakness (Boulding 1959: 124). While the last dimension, in particular, relates back to Rose’s (1998: 158) impression of the importance of perceptions, these dimensions further illustrate how national images can become a part of a state’s strength by, for instance, influencing the ability to build alliances or achieve policy objectives (Castano *et al.* 2016: 264). The ability to achieve established objectives connects to a final point made by Boulding (1959: 125), who argues “‘stable friendly relations seem to exist mainly between strong nations and weaker nations which they have an interest in preserving’”. These dimensions, as well as the final argument, will be taken up in the discussion of this thesis.

Now, however, a complication in the literature suggests itself. One nation may hold many different images, meaning a distinction is necessary between those that affect decisions in international relations, and those that do not. Roughly speaking, we can identify some powerful images being held by the head of state, the secretary of state, and members of the legislature (Boulding 1959: 121). This distinction not only informs the selection of public statements this thesis aims to examine, but further connects images to the essential role of ‘flesh

and blood' policy-makers in the neo-classical realist framework (Rose 1998: 158). Because, after all, despite being trained, experienced, and in the public eye, even government officials are subject to the psychology of images (Silverstein 1989: 904, 909).

2.3.2 Images and Discourse Analysis

Now that some conceptual questions have been cleared up, this thesis extends the methodological structures in Skonieczny (2001) and Duncombe (2016) on images and representation in decision-making processes, specifically by asking how particular images of a state may impact their policies, tactics, and strategies (Skonieczny 2001: 438).

In a case study on the discursive construction of NAFTA, Skonieczny (2001: 437) demonstrates the application of political psychology to foreign policy decision-making by arguing the decision-making process can be affected by beliefs and perceptions, as well as personalities of influential personalities. To suggest individuals may control what constitutes meaning, Skonieczny (2001: 438) highlights how a discourse becomes established through the use of representational elements in language, like certain phrases, images, myths, and metaphors. These elements, this thesis will argue, are circulated to become "symbols of a larger discursive construction that comes to define the thing" in a manner to maintain distinct social patterns and legitimise the decisions of specific political actors (Skonieczny 2001: 438).

While language used in political statements constructs a cluster of ideas, images, symbols, and practices, and provides a way of talking about a particular thing, it is important to recognise these clusters of ideas and images do not have to reflect 'reality' as such. Rather, they are slices of a complex reality, highlighting certain features over others and becoming established through the associations they are able to evoke (Skonieczny 2001: 434). Hence, rather than simply being a conduit of neutral information, particular discourses thrive on the assertion there is no neutral ground, to provoke misrecognition, foster hate, and exacerbate tensions between two countries (Bazhatarnik 2019: 43-4; Doty 1996: 5). It is through such language images enable certain decisions and practices to become possible.

Duncombe (2016: 622), applies similar notions to American political discourse, suggesting the use of binary representations to establish an 'us' versus 'them' frame of mind in the American-Iranian relationship. Accordingly, Duncombe's (2016: 629) discourse analysis, making use of policy documents and public statements of various American administrations, not only shows the value of regarding images and representations as intervening variables in foreign policy decision-making, but also provides greater insight into

the American representations of Iran and of itself that are found in the statements selected for this thesis. Duncombe (2016: 629-30), like Lindsay (2011: 767) draws our attention to the American self-image as exceptional, rational, a leader of the free world and international community, and a force fighting for 'good'. Iran, on the other hand, is represented as a threat, dangerous, aggressive, and revisionist. These oppositions matter, also in the following discussion, because "[b]oth Iranian and US experiences of these representations act to securitise notions of 'threat' or 'danger', reinforcing mistrust or suspicion of the foreign policy choices and activities of each state" (Duncombe 2016: 637-8).

To summarise, while the studies presented thus far are certainly illustrative of the larger representational trends in American political discourse and point to practical methodologies in political psychology, as well as appropriate data sources and definitions, an overarching concept to connect various forms of discourse to belief systems and images, as well as decision-making, is still lacking. To examine, then, how decisions are warranted by the speakers, how potential criticisms are averted, and how such decisions establish a particular self-image, social psychology is brought in, specifically the concept of interpretative repertoires. As this is a distinct methodological issue, it will be discussed in the next section.

3 Methodology

The theoretical concepts and frameworks in existing research, as outlined above, will help understand *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*. This section will further design the study, briefly describing the case of the Clinton Administration and Armenian-Iranian cooperation, and sources of data, and further expand on the usefulness of interpretative repertoires to trace belief systems and images in American political discourse.

3.1 Project Format and Case

The study extends the research designs of Holsti (1962: 244-5) and Renshon (2008: 833) who both respectively examined the link between belief systems, national images, and decision-making processes in single-case studies on John Foster Dulles and President George W. Bush. In terms of methods, however, this thesis differs from Holsti (1962). The research design builds on the two key assumptions proposed by Meibauer (2020: 25) to integrate constructivist concepts and ideational variables with neo-classical realism. First, individual belief systems help decision-makers assess the international system by fitting incoming

information into pre-existing theories. These belief systems require interpersonal relevance, however, so second, these assessments enter into foreign policy deliberations. Decision-makers will argue with and try to persuade their peers, enabling language to become a form of instrumental and strategic communication (Meibauer 2020: 22). Meibauer (2020: 31), like Welch Larson (1994: 28-9), Renshon (2008: 833), and Silverstein (1989: 909), also informs the choice and selection of data in the understanding language is an empirically traceable phenomenon, permitting the examination of belief systems and images in political discourse. The discourse analytical strategies used by Skonieczny (2001) and Duncombe (2016) prompted attention to political and social psychology to apply appropriate methodological concepts to the case, specifically informed by Holstein and Gubrium (2011), Klüfers (2014), Potter (1996), and Wetherell and Potter (1988).

3.1.1 The Clinton Administration, 1993-2001

The case itself, of the presidency of William ‘Bill’ Clinton, was selected to illustrate the argument belief systems and images enable, reflect, and warrant foreign policy decisions. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, this presidency proves a valuable case for several reasons. The end of the Cold War put the United States in a peculiar, new position, in which elite belief systems and images played a significant role to adjust to a new strategic context through the interaction with external constraints (Walker *et al.* 1999: 611-2). But while the Soviet Union ceased to be the biggest threat to the United States, the new freedom of action to engage other issues and states came to be epitomised in the parallel policies of containment and engagement. Iran came to symbolise a new, but enduring, enemy, and the Clinton Administration was the first to represent the Islamic Republic of Iran as a ‘rogue state’. Allies and former foes alike were unambiguously told to cut ties with the country to maintain their independent stance. Interestingly, Armenia, as a small nation in the South Caucasus and neighbour of Iran, received particular attention from the Clinton Administration.

These developments trace themselves to distinct changes in the United States South Caucasian policy under President Clinton. Initially characterised by ambiguity and passivity, the policy gradually transformed to one of increased American presence in and engagement with the region (Gresh 2006: 7). While the United States sought to uphold and, where possible, increase Iran’s isolation in order to limit its political and economic reach in the South Caucasus, the latter sought out closer relations with Armenia to strengthen the diplomatic and economic ties between the two countries (Gresh 2006: 7). Likewise, for Armenia, economically and

politically still reeling from the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the time period under examination was a critical spell due to the enduring Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade preventing much-needed aid and supplies from reaching the country. It is this particular blockade, the consequences it had for increased Armenian-Iranian cooperation, and the United States response that will be the subject of discussion further in this thesis.

Briefly, in terms of empirical relevance for current international relations, the case was chosen as it can be related to the recent rise in tensions between Iran and the United States. It would serve to look at some of the historical developments in the relationship between these two countries, specifically how such relationships are built on belief systems and images, and how they become visible in political discourse, then and (possibly) now. Moreover, despite the occasional rise in American-Iranian tensions, Armenia has, on numerous occasions, declined to cut ties with Iran (RFE/RL 2018). The historical insight the discussion in this thesis aims to provide, could, therefore, contribute to a better understanding of the present.

3.2 Data Sources and Collection

To deconstruct the American belief system and its images in political discourse, and trace *how these shared belief systems and images become resources for foreign policy decisions*, this thesis is based on textual documents collected through internet-based archival research. To incorporate a variety of sources, the documents will include the United States National Security Strategies (NSS) from 1994 to 2000, released by the Clinton Administration, relevant public writings, speeches, and statements by President Clinton from 1993 to 2001, and relevant Congressional Records from 1995 to 2000 relating to the case under examination.

3.2.1 United States National Security Strategies (1994-2000)

Briefly, the National Security Strategy (NSS) is a report by the President that serves to communicate the national security vision to the legislature. The NSS comments on the proposed use of all aspects of United States power needed to realise the administration's security objectives, and is mandated to include United States national and international interests, commitments, proposed policies, and required defense capabilities to implement these objectives (NSS Archive).

The choice to include these reports stems from the indication of intent evident in the texts, and the way they are a basis to understand the course and tone of interaction with other states, as well as the stated objectives of the Clinton Administration, and how the international

environment is perceived and responded to. Specifically, these Strategies identify ways to engage the rest of the world and opportunities for leadership to shape the external environment and protect the national interests. The Strategies were collected from the Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, which has collected most of the reports since 1987, and are noted in Table 1.

Table 1. *National Security Strategies, 1994-2000.*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Citation</i>
1994	A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement	N94
1995	A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement	N95
1996	A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement	N96
1997	A National Security Strategy for a New Century	N97
1998	A National Security Strategy for a New Century	N98
1999	A National Security Strategy for a New Century	N99
2000	A National Security Strategy for a Global Age	N00

3.2.2 Public Papers of President Clinton (1993-2001)

Relevant public writings, speeches, and statements by President Clinton were collected through the online archive of the Office of the Federal Register (OFR), available as the Public Papers of the Presidents series. Each volume contains the public statements of the President that were released by the Office of the Press Secretary during the specific time period, making the series a significant source of historical reference (Public Papers of the Presidents, OFR). Moreover, the ease of accessibility and the fact that all writings are available online made this case a better choice for study than more recent presidencies.

To limit the information present in the volumes to a manageable amount, the research design relates back to Renshon (2008: 833) by selecting statements that are focused primarily on foreign policy issues, either concerning American-Armenian, American-Iranian, or Armenian-Iranian foreign relations. Where essential for clarification, references to the Caucasus, New Independent States (NIS) of the Soviet Union, or the Middle East as the wider regional context were included. Considering the large number of relevant papers and speeches that met this point of criteria, Table 2 notes only those texts that have provided extracts in the following analysis.

Table 2. *Chronology of the Public Papers of the President, 07/20/1993 – 07/01/2000.*

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Citation</i>
07/20/93	Interview with Larry King	F93
08/24/94	Teleconference Remarks With B'nai B'rith	E94
09/24/96	Remarks to the 51st Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City	E96

3.2.3 Congressional Records (1995-2000)

This thesis further includes Congressional Records from the Senate and the House, obtained through the online archive of Congress, as a third source of data to ensure triangulation. The online archive allows search results to be refined, which means the relevant records for this thesis were found through the search words ‘Iran’ AND ‘Armenia’. In addition, like the statements by President Clinton, the records were selected for concerning American-Armenian, American-Iranian, or Armenian-Iranian foreign relations. The data was forced to be limited to the years 1995 to 2000, coinciding with 104th, 105th, and 106th Congress. The years 1993-1994, coinciding with the 103rd Congress, are not searchable through the online archive, but must be browsed by date. Due to time constraints, these records were not included, but considering the large number of relevant records that did meet the criteria stated above, they are argued to be sufficiently representative of the time period,

3.3 Discourse Analysis and Interpretative Repertoires

The overall design, while relating back to discourse analytical strategies used by Skonieczny (2001) and Duncombe (2015), further builds on concepts supplied by political and social psychology in Holstein and Gubrium (2011), Klüfers (2014), Potter (1996), and Wetherell and Potter (1988). These authors informed the study and possible use of interpretative repertoires as analytic units in discourse analysis. While discourse analysis has become a common method in International Relations scholarship, the use of interpretative repertoires is not widespread. By drawing on social and political psychology, therefore, this thesis aims to create an interdisciplinary connection and outline where future research could continue.

First, for clarification, following Carabine (2001: 268) the term ‘discourse’ is understood as encompassing

the ways that an issue or topic is ‘spoken of’, through, for example, speech, texts, writing and practice. These various different and sometimes contradictory ways of speaking about a topic or issue come together – that is ‘cohere’ – to build up a picture or representation of the issue or topic.

This definition requires a qualitative approach in order to examine closely *language in use* and, more specifically, the functions of *patterns* and *clusters*, emerging from the discourse under examination (Gill 2000: 180; Skonieczny 2001: 434; Taylor 2001: 6). To this end, a linguistic analysis of discourse, able to work at various levels of the text, will be applied. The most basic level comprises words and grammatical structures, such as ‘[c]hoice of vocabulary; semantic relations between words (e.g. synonyms, hyponyms); denotative and connotative meaning; collocations (i.e. patterns of co-occurrence); metaphorical uses of words, etc.’ (Fairclough 2001: 241-2). This includes the deictic use of words like ‘we’ and ‘our’ (Taylor 2001: 28), which relates back to Holsti’s (1962) content analysis, but can also be extended to Duncombe’s (2016: 622) study on binary representations. Broader elements merge single words and collocations to form ‘categories, metaphors, idioms, rhetorical conventions, and interpretive repertoires’, the second level of linguistic analysis (Holstein and Gubrium 2011: 352).

The interpretative repertoire, as a construction that can be used argumentatively and rhetorically to achieve a particular outcomes, is argued to be a critical link to understand expressions of belief systems and images in political discourse (Milne 2009: 1014). Briefly, the repertoire is ‘a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events’ (Potter and Wetherell 1987: 138). More importantly, interpretative repertoires are coherent ways of speaking about the world. They are, as is were,

the ‘building blocks of conversation’, a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon and utilized in the course of everyday social interaction. Interpretative repertoires are part and parcel of any community’s common sense, providing a basis for shared social understanding.

(Edley 2001: 198)

Shared social understanding is essential, because, after all, ‘[i]f the audience does not understand what the speaker wants to accomplish, [or if] he says something outside the discursive frame, the audience may turn a deaf ear to it’ (Klifiers 2014: 282). Thus, interpretative repertoires are like ‘rules of use’. They constrain, but also guide, the speaker and

their audience to describe and perceive things in ‘familiar ways’, or as common-sense facts which are not open to question (Klüfers 2014: 282). This is done through commonly used lines of argumentation and figures of speech, which limits or silences other ways of talking about a topic (Milne 2009: 1015). As such, the repertoires become resources for action and decision-making. In addition, interpretative repertoires are often culturally and historically embedded, and therefore reflect the logics of reasoning and strategies of action within a specific cultural context (Klüfers 2014: 283). In Milne’s (2009: 1020) words, they function as a mirror on society.

As interpretative repertoires are open to change, can be expanded, or challenged, an inclusive coding policy is required to develop tentative interpretative schemes which may need to be revised along the way (Wetherell and Potter 1988; Edley 2001: 198). From an examination of patterns of similar arguments, images, figures of speech, and categories, a number of different repertoires were identified in the American political discourse on Armenia, Iran, the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade on Armenia, and increased Armenian-Iranian cooperation. Three will be discussed further in the analysis, labelled evilness, national interest, and development, to clarify how these repertoires are generally used, before considering the details of their content and discussing how utilising the interpretative repertoires together may warrant particular decisions, avert potential criticism, and establish a distinct self-image.

To end, one core requirement of discourse analysis involves the use of extracts of the original source material, rather than summaries or paraphrases, to illustrate larger patterns in the discourse under examination. This helps avoid a ‘politics of interiority’, where explanation comes about through persuasion rather than demonstration, and will allow the reader to assess the interpretations made (Duncombe 2016: 627; Potter 1996: 17).

3.4 Implications and Limitations of the Study

Before moving from an explanation and justification of method to analysis and discussion, several implications and limitations of the study need to be addressed to ensure validity and reliability.

The first implication is regarding the use of public, rather than private, statements by President Clinton, as well as by members of Congress, and concerns the question whether the belief systems of decision-makers are accurately reflected in such sources. Public statements have been criticised for the possibility they do not reflect the true personal beliefs of decision-makers. Renshon (2008: 845), in his analysis of the beliefs of President George W. Bush, is

aware of this point of critique, and answers on three levels: practical, theoretical, and empirical. This thesis shall do the same to justify the reliance on public statements. First, on the practical level, the public record is often far more extensive and access is often quite straightforward and unproblematic. Open access to private material, on the other hand, often requires years or even decades due to declassification and publishing. Second, on a theoretical level, is the assumption “a leader’s public behavior is constrained by his public image and that, over time, his public actions will consistently match his public beliefs” (Renshon 2008: 845). While actions and beliefs may diverge for some time, and on some occasions, in general, beliefs and actions converge, making public resources a valuable resource to provide insight into decision-making processes. Further, on an empirical level, the use of public statements is justified by recent evidence suggesting they may reflect beliefs more sincerely and to a greater extent than previously predicted (Renshon 2008: 845).

To safeguard reliability and internal validity further, then, discourse analytic research has to account for coherence and build upon the insights of established research (Gill 2000: 187). In a way, this research “provides a check upon the adequacy of earlier studies” (Gill 2000: 187). Likewise, as mentioned before, by presenting the original materials being analysed, “in order to allow readers to make their own evaluation and, if they choose, to put forward alternative interpretations”, discourse analysis is more open about the research process than most other practices, which may require taking observation and interpretation for granted (Gill 2000: 188). As a final point, because some aspects of the decision-making process will remain invisible, for some part due to access restrictions, this thesis is limited to the extent it does not make any claim to ‘truth’ or ‘reality’, or aims for precise predictions. Rather, it aims to acknowledge the complex and dynamic nature of the social world by offering a situated interpretation of the *construction of belief systems and images in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions* and how such decisions are warranted through the use of interpretative repertoires.

4 Analysis

The puzzle this thesis aims to address, and the research question that follows, asks *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*. Rather than ask why decision-makers made a particular choice, this analysis is interested in probing how such decisions are warranted by the speakers, how potential criticisms are averted, and how such decisions establish a particular self-image.

Having established the theoretical and methodological concepts and frameworks, the present section is to explore three interpretative repertoires in American political discourse with regards to Armenia and Iran, considering both their implications and how their content reflects American belief systems and images. Thereafter, the discussion will connect these repertoires and their use in political discourse to decisions and deliberations regarding the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade on Armenia, prompting increased Armenian-Iranian cooperation to the dismay of many American politicians.

4.1 Interpretative Repertoires in American Foreign Policy Discourse

This section will discuss further the three interpretative repertoires found within an analysis of American political discourse during the Clinton Administration. The repertoires, labelled evilness, national interest, and development, and the details of their content will be discussed as an expression of American belief systems and images, before considering the implications of their functioning in decision-making and discourse.

4.1.1 A Repertoire of *Evilness*

The use of the repertoire of *evilness*, particularly as a way of speaking about Iran, serves as a rhetorical ‘tool kit’ to construct a distinct image of the Islamic Republic (Klüfers 2014: 283). The discursive construction of the country as a threat to the United States and its interests, as dangerous, irresponsible, radical, and revisionist, concurrently serves two roles. First, the repertoire validates a specific version of reality in which certain events and objects are made ‘foreign’ by means of a division between inside and outside, or self and other (Campbell 1990: 270). This division, or classification, not only sidesteps truthfulness and accuracy, but renders the speaker’s interpretative activities and personal involvement irrelevant and less visible by presenting accounts as derived neutrally from the facts (Doty 1996: 10; McKinlay and Potter 1987: 445). Representational elements to create this version of reality, such as certain phrases, images, myths, and metaphors, become established, almost common-sensical, and thrive on the assertion there is no neutral ground between ‘us’ and ‘them’. These elements, in addition to limiting available policy options, transform foreign policy to a ‘boundary-producing political performance’ (Campbell 1992: 61-2) in order to maintain distinct relational patterns (Skonieczny 2001: 434). This means foreign policy is not a response to the ‘objective’ facts of the situation, but rather follows from and relies on the ‘image’ of Iran, to reduce and simplify

incoming information to make sense of the external environment (Boulding 1959: 121; Castano *et al.* 2016: 362).

The repertoire is drawn upon time and time again to be utilised in political deliberations to craft a shared social understanding of the hostility of the Islamic Republic (Castano *et al.* 2016: 353; Klüfers 2014: 282). The extracts under A, in addition to illustrating the consistency and regularity of the repertoire, are provided to exemplify some of these images, representations, and views regarding Iran as expressed by American decision-makers. Take note of the repetitive, at times metaphorical, use of some terms (in *italics*), as well as the semantic relations between the words, and any mention of appropriate foreign policy decisions.

Extract A

- (1) We must not allow Iraq, Iran, and other *agents of terrorism* and assassination to *dominate* the world politically and to *terrorize innocent people* (F93: 1148).
- (2) Two key obstacles of that future are Iraq and Iran and the *radical groups* they continue to support. [...] Of equal importance is our effort to *contain Iran*, the world's leading state *sponsor of terrorism*, the pledge to work with *like-minded countries* to meet the challenge of Iran's support for *terrorist groups* (E94: 1498).
- (3) deterring *threats to regional stability*, particularly from Iraq and Iran as long as those states pose a *threat* to *U.S. interests*, to other states in the region, and to their own citizens (N95: 30).
- (4) As long as Iraq *threatens* its neighbors and people, as long as Iran *supports and protects terrorists*, [...], they should not become full *members of the family of nations* (E96: 1650).
- (5) [Iran's conduct] remains far *outside international norms* [...]. Moreover, there is no doubt that Iran and Libya are *rouge states*. The leaders of these regimes continue to *violate* every standard of *acceptable behavior* (Representative Hamilton, July 23, 1996: H8126).
- (6) As a result of this, Iran is largely a *pariah state* (Senator Cohen, July 25, 1996: S8746).
- (7) [North Korea, Libya, Iran, and Iraq are in] a small, little *family* here of *truly outrageous regimes*, [...] we have *sanctions* against or we are working to try to *diminish the influence* of in one way or another (Senator McConnell, July 25, 1996: S8811).
- (8) [Iran] is a *terrorist-sponsoring nation*, *destabilizing* its region, and so there is *world condemnation* of Iran (Senator Cohen, July 25, 1996: S8814).

In these extracts, the division between Iran, and like-minded regimes, and the United States, is used to explain and warrant sanctions, containment, and denying Iran to become part of the ‘family of nations’ until a change of behaviour is achieved.

The extracts further illustrate the second role of this particular interpretative repertoire, specifically how it works to silence other potential positions on and views of Iran. This indicates the likelihood people in different contexts accept and share different values, beliefs, and images, which become concrete through communication (Milne 2009: 1015). Milne (2009: 1015) has argued limiting or silencing potentially challenging or nuanced images, through the rhetorical organisation of speech, is ‘emblematic of ongoing debates and conversations in communities and societies representing the ambivalence that is central to questions and issues involving value and meaning’. This echoes Meibauer’s (2020: 22) position on the importance of interpersonal relevance of beliefs and images, and the way political discourses are organised to be persuasive of particular worldviews to achieve shared social understanding in a specific community (Gill 2000: 176). It further relates to ideas of cognitive consistency, as such images of Iran are rather consistent over the observed time period, linking it to the importance of political debate and partisan cues (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 98; Murray and Cowden 1999: 476-7; Walker *et al.* 1999: 612).

4.1.2 A Repertoire of *National Interest*

The repertoire of *national interest* stresses American leadership in the world by placing a rhetorical emphasis on influence, power, responsibility, and values. It reflects closely belief systems in political discourse, by presenting the ‘set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received’, and through which the order of political goals and preferences is established (Holsti 1962: 245).

This particular repertoire, in its role of articulating a ‘desired end-state’ of how the world ‘ought to be’ according to American decision-makers, most clearly illustrates the performative nature of discourse, also identified as its action or function orientation (Gill 2000: 175). Language on the national interests of the United States is not merely language, it is not merely an epiphenomenon, but it is a *practice* in its own right. As Gill (2000: 175, emphasis in original) notes, “[p]eople use discourse to *do* things – to offer blame, to make excuses, to present themselves in a positive light, etc. To highlight this is to underline the fact that discourse does not occur in a social vacuum’. Rather, discourse is a social practice, constructed to fit the

context in which it takes place, and even statements which initially may seem trivial serve to perform specific functions.

The extracts under B can be situated in the time period after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. At the time, President Clinton's doctrine was characterised by enlargement and engagement, reaching out particularly to the NIS to bring about democratic and economic development, and the promotion of civil and human rights. Drawing upon the need for American leadership, principally because of its economic and military capabilities, in addition to the appeal and necessity of American values, the elements in the repertoire are used to create those circumstances in which the United States is in the best position to realise its interests, which are constructed in a more positive and selfless light. The belief that other countries both want and need the United States to lead the international system, reflects its status as a global superpower for almost half a century since the Second World War. This conviction has extended itself to President George W. Bush, as well as President Barack Obama (Lindsay 2011: 765). The universality of democracy and freedom, likewise, can be extended to the Bush Administration, and has been considered a valuable rhetorical device to position the speakers to construct meaning supportive of this particular reality, and counter domestic opponents and critics to either agree or to explain why they are opposed to spreading democracy and freedom (Lindsay 2011: 770; Milne 2009: 2015).

To a lesser extent, like the repertoire of evilness, this repertoire also functions to silence competing views of American engagement with the rest of the world. The rhetorical organisation of the language used allows American politicians to dismiss the possibility of isolationism, as the speakers argue this has never led to security or prosperity in the past, embedding the repertoire in a specific cultural and historical context to reflect decisions made within that specific context (Klüfers 2014: 283). Inspect the extracts under B, and consider how the choice of vocabulary and recurrent patterns draw out the construction of engagement as a common-sense fact, warranting international leadership guided by core values.

Extract B

- (9) *American leadership* in the world has never been more important, for [...] *democracy, liberty, civility, pluralism* (N95: 1-2).

- (10) we must exercise *global leadership*. We are not the world's policeman, but as the world's *premier economic and military power*, and with the strength of our *democratic values*, the U.S. is *indispensable* to the forging of stable political relations (N95: 7).

- (11) we must be prepared and willing to use all appropriate instruments of *national power* to *influence* the actions of other states and non-state actors. [...] we must have the demonstrated *will* and *capabilities* to continue to exert *global leadership* and remain the preferred security partner for the community of states that share our *interests* (N97:6).
- (12) Underpinning that *international leadership* is the power of our *democratic ideals and values* [...] by promoting a world of open societies and open markets that is supportive of U.S. *interests* and consistent with *American values* (N97:6-7).
- (13) our foreign policy must reflect our *values* [...] we can't ignore basic *human rights* or fundamental *American values* (Senator Mikulski, June 30, 1999: S7875).
- (14) Since the beginning of our *democracy*, our policies and actions have also been guided by our *core values* -- *political and economic freedom*, respect for *human rights*, and the *rule of law*. A stable, peaceful international security environment is the *desired end state* -- one in which our nation, citizens and interests are not *threatened* (N00:9, 13).

A final point regarding the extracts above relates back to the theoretical assumptions set out by Converse (2006: 8) and Murray and Cowden (1999) on the diffusion of elements of the belief system. Where the extracts under B speak of ideas and values, such as democracy, liberty, civility, and pluralism, they 'go together' not simply because it serves the interests of the speaker, but for more quasi-logical reasons, set in a cultural context, as well. The belief system becomes discursively constructed through 'packages', presented to society as a 'natural whole', but in actuality also following from ideological orientations, domestic policy preferences, and partisan cues (Converse 2006: 8-9; Murray and Cowden 1999: 477). The consistency over time indicates, although such rhetorical constructions may perform specific argumentative functions, the extracts are a fitting illustration of the belief systems held by the Clinton Administration (Welch Larson 1994: 29).

4.1.3 A Repertoire of Development

The repertoire of *development*, comprises a lexicon that supports a particular way of talking about Armenia and the wider region of the South Caucasus, often situated in the post-Soviet era and the economic and political problems many states in the region faced. In such a way, the repertoire reminds us once more that foreign policy is about practice and actions, but it is through discourse these actions are warranted.

By drawing on an established register of terms and metaphors to characterise actions, events, and subjects, and by mobilising certain geographical understandings, American leaders are able to provide reasons for meaningful foreign policy decisions (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 191). To this end, decision-makers ‘spatialise’ international politics to ‘represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples, and dramas’ (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 192). This practice works to construct representational elements which function as building blocks in political discourse on Armenia and the NIS, but also follows a distinct cultural logic of American involvement in international relations (Fairclough 2001: 241-2). While this is evident in the repertoire of national interest, as well, it needs to be reiterated here, as it is a response to a different cultural context.

The extracts under C illustrate how engagement with the countries of the former Soviet Union, and in particular Armenia, gives ‘rise to an attempt to reconstruct foreign places in an American image’ (Ó Tuathail and Agnew 1992: 196). Democracy, markets economics, human and civil rights, independence, and freedom, highlight the American self-image as an exceptional, good, and benevolent leader of the community of free nations (Duncombe 2016: 629-30; Lindsay 2011: 767). At the same time, the elements of this repertoire are part of a larger representational construction (Skonieczny 2001: 438), placing Armenia and the NIS at risk of falling into the hands of either China, Iran, or Russia, warranting active United States support for these countries. Hence, the repertoire contains, to some extent, a prescriptive element. It constructs a necessity to consolidate United States influence in the region for a prosperous and secure international structure, and thus prevents the option of being ‘penny-wise and pound-foolish’ (Representative Yates, September 17, 1998: H7954). In the extracts under C, note in particular the metaphorical use of some terms, as well as the geographical and historical situatedness of the discourse.

Extract C

- (15) It is in our interest to do all that we can to enlarge the *community of free and open societies*, especially in areas of greatest *strategic interest*, as in the former Soviet Union (N95: 2).
- (16) today marks the fourth anniversary of Armenia’s independence from the Soviet Union. We as Americans welcome their *independence* and through our *humanitarian efforts* strive to help this *fledgling democracy* grow and *prosper* (Senator Dole, September 21, 1995: S14027).

- (17) The Armenian people, having survived [...] seven decades of *Soviet-oppression*, have struggled valiantly to rebuild their country as a *democracy* while establishing good relations with the *world community* (Representative Pallone, January 24, 1996: E2121).
- (18) We have the opportunity to help these countries *rebuild* from the ground up and to *encourage* them to continue their strong *independent stances*, especially in relation to Iran (Senator Brownback, October 30, 1997: S11449).
- (19) First, we want to see *democratic government* take root in these states. [...] frankly, there is a lot of work ahead of us in that regard. [...] as it is in America's *interest* to help these countries open up a *window to the West* to lessen their *manipulation* by their larger neighbors (Representative Gilman, November 8, 1997: E2241).
- (20) what we are seeking to do [in the NIS] is to create an area of *democracy*, an area of *free enterprise*, an area of *independence* free from these world powers that seek to *dominate* them, in a group of nations that seek to be *united with the West, again* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7838).
- (21) [Armenian people are] yearning to be *free*, yearning to be *associated with the West*, yearning not to go back under Russian dominance or to be put under *Iranian dominance* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7839).
- (22) This region has generally taken a back seat to U.S. foreign policy. We have generally deferred to Russia and to Iranian policy and said we are going to let these drift along. [...] Do we engage and try to make what difference we can? Or do we ignore and let the region drift without us, becoming either *violently anti-Western, anti-American*, or become, once again, an *extension of Russia, China, or Iran?* [...] They seek our *support* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7839).
- (23) The United States, as the *leader of the free world*, has welcomed the arrival of Armenia into the family of *democratic nations* (Representative Pallone, September 21, 1999: H8456).

In some manner, like the repertoire of evilness, the repertoire of development serves as a rhetorical 'tool kit' to construct a particular image of Armenia and the NIS. The use of this particular register of terms necessarily characterises these countries as integral to United States interests, but also maintains distinct relational patterns consistent with United States objectives and preferences for the region (Holsti 1962: 245; Skonieczny 2001: 434). The consistency of these assessments over time indicates belief systems and images are rather self-contained and not easily undermined (Rosenau and Holsti 1983: 375)

4.2 Discussion and Some Observations

There are scholars who would argue the identification of interpretative repertoires is the endpoint to an analysis of discourse (Talja 1999: 3). If that were the case, all that remains for this thesis would be a conclusion. Consistent with the research question, however, *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*, this particular section will extend the analysis to reflect on particular United States decision-making regarding increased Armenian-Iranian cooperation.

Specifically, the practical application of core American belief systems and images in the interpretative repertoires can be observed in the American response to the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade on Armenia, effectively isolating landlocked Armenia from the rest of the world and pushing it to establish closer economic and political relations with Iran. The blockade and the possibility it would provide Iran more leverage in the wider region, directly opposed United States security objectives in the region, and was most clearly debated in relation to Amendment No. 1118, ‘‘amending the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to target assistance to support the economic and political independence of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia’’, and the secondary Amendment No. 1119, ‘‘striking language in the underlying amendment which would provide the President with authority to waive restrictions on aid to the government of Azerbaijan under Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act, without requiring Azerbaijan to lift its economic blockade on Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, if the President determines it is in the national interest’’ (McConnell Amdt. No. 1119: Roll Call Vote No. 191).²

The Freedom Support Act was signed into law in 1992 to support freedom and political reform, open market economies, and provide financial assistance to the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7839). Section 907 of this Act, however, specifically prohibits the Azerbaijani government from receiving direct bilateral aid from the United States government as a result of its blockade on Armenia. For the entire duration of the Clinton Administration, Section 907 remained unchanged. Only after the events of 9/11 did the Senate amend the Act to provide the President with the ability to waive

² Amendment No. 1118 will hereafter also be referred to as the Brownback amendment, while amendment No. 1119 will hereafter also be referred to as the McConnell *et al.* amendment.

Section 907 to support United States efforts to combat international terrorism (Zarifian 2008: 119).

Due to the importance of foreign policy deliberations to provide belief systems and images with interpersonal relevance, for the individual decision-maker to decipher this interaction, translate it into threats or opportunities for foreign policy, and appropriately pursue the state's interests (Meibauer 2020: 22, 27), but also because the discussions in Congress show a clear awareness of the dangers of an isolated Armenia turning to a fundamentalist and revisionist Iran, the arguments found in the Congressional Records are taken to reflect closely the belief systems and images held by American political leaders. The extracts under D and E, therefore, without making big claims to the 'truth', provide clear use of all three interpretative repertoires and subsequent rhetorical organisation of the discourse, and allow some observations to be made on the link between belief systems, images, and decision-making.

To do this, first, it is important to note how these findings have been produced through the neo-classical realist framework. In addition to accounting for systemic pressures and restraints, neo-classical realist authors (Rose 1998; Kaarbo 2015; Meibauer 2020; Walker and Post 2005: 64) have shown the possibility of inserting belief systems and images as intervening variables at the unit level in the decision-making process, allowing examination of the ways certain decisions are warranted by the speakers, how potential criticisms are averted, and how such decisions establish a particular self-image.

The extracts under D provide a selection of the political statements supportive of the Brownback amendment. As in the previous sections, the interpretative repertoires are indicated in *italics*, to draw attention to coherence and recurrent patterns in language use, but also the common-sensical nature of the statements.

Extract D

- (24) It is the Clinton Administration's policy to promote rapid *development* of Caspian energy resources through multiple pipelines and diversified infrastructure networks to reinforce Western *energy security*, and provide regional consumers *alternatives to Iranian energy*. [...] to tie the region securely to the *West* [...] Iran's *economic isolation* imposed by U.S. sanctions is leading Teheran to look for new opportunities as well as new markets in the region (Senator Byrd, May 8, 1997: S4208).

- (25) If the oil supplies only go [...] south to Iran, the *industrialized world* does not benefit, and perhaps others who do not share the *civilized goals* that *we* in the United States espouse will benefit (Representative Livingston, September 17, 1998: H7952).
- (26) Now who do my colleagues think sits to the south? Does anybody know? [...] To the south is Iran. Iran is doing everything they can, in other words, to drag everything down there so the pipelines will have to go through it. And then the Iranians can continue to *control* and continue to *blackmail* the world, trying to *bring down Israel* and all of the other countries over there. [...] Section 907 is an outdated provision which hampers our foreign policy options in the Caucasus (Representative Solomon, September 17, 1998: H7988-9).
- (27) Do we want to further *American interests* in this area, or do we by this wish to help the *Iranian interests* in this area? (Representative Skelton, September 17, 1998: H7996).
- (28) [This provision] is strongly supported by all the countries in the region outside of the Armenians. I think it would be a *great benefit* to Armenia as well. [...] Repealing of Section 907 would allow for commercial and technical assistance to aid in the *development* of infrastructure, trade, pipeline projects, and to further *development of democracy* so they don't fall *into the hands of the Iranians* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7840).
- (29) Also, they talk about the issue of the blockade: Somehow Azerbaijan is blockading Armenia. [...] You can see Armenia has outlets they can use through Iran or through Georgia, which is up here. *So there is not a blockade on Armenia.* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7863).
- (30) These young countries [NIS] have stated that they *seek stability, democracy, and prosperity*. We have a chance to contribute to their efforts if we stand with them (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7870).
- (31) You really need to have this all hooked in together [to] have a coherent U.S. policy so that we meet *our interests* in the region. It is clearly to have this engaged, not fall *in the hands of the Iranians* or back to the Russians, so we can *build and grow with them* (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7874).

Having argued, building on the work of Klüfers (2014: 283), that repertoires reflect logics of reasoning and strategies of foreign policy action in a particular context, and construct a sense of a particular phenomenon in strategic communication and interaction (Meibauer 2020: 22; Potter 1996: 10), an examination of these extracts, in the first place, finds verbal

references connected to the repertoire of evilness in many of the arguments put forward. In particular, this repertoire serves as a rhetorical ‘tool kit’ to create a distinct version of reality in which Iran is constructed as a threat to United States interests in the region. This particular image, by defining the external environment in the South Caucasus in terms of threats and opportunities, establishes there is no neutral ground in the region. Rather than being a response to the ‘objective’ facts of the situation, the policy option that is warranted, revoking Section 907, follows from a divisive, ‘boundary-producing political performance’ with the objective to maintain distinct relational patterns (Boulding 1959: 121; Castano *et al.* 2016: 362; Campbell 1992: 61-2; Doty 1996: 10; Skonieczny 2001: 434). It is the hostile image of Iran that permits removal of a provision that ‘hamstrings’ foreign policy options, and situates the United States as a better, even civilised, alternative to Iran.

Interesting in this light, however, is the claim there is no blockade on Armenia and, therefore, the Brownback amendment to revoke Section 907 should be supported (Senator Brownback, June 30, 1999: S7863). While it is clear the region must not fall under Iranian influence, where necessary, Armenia has outlets through Iran it can use. This variation underlines the rhetorical nature of speech, and how it is imperfect, individually held perceptions and definitions of the environment, as well as the ability to persuade others of these views, that matter in policy deliberations (Holsti 1962: 245; Meibauer 2020: 22; Rose 1998: 146-7).

Further, the extracts under D roughly outline a particular order of political objectives and preferences (Holsti 1962: 245). It is here the belief system affects the definition of the situations and the search for policy options (Welch Larson 1994: 24). After all, to firmly establish a United States presence in the region, to follow a coherent policy line with all countries, the option to revoke Section 907 becomes matter-of-fact, a way to secure strategic interests in the area. In addition, this illustrates the performative nature of discourse and the fact that it does not occur in a social vacuum (Gill 2000: 175). Rather, it is in relation to Iran that statements regarding development and national interest are made meaningful.

Although slight differences can be observed, similar arguments emerge in the extracts under E, providing a selection of the political statements supportive of the McConnell *et al.* amendment.

Extract E

- (32) Armenia cannot *wean* itself from *foreign assistance* or *fully develop* its economy until the blockades it currently suffers under are gone and better relations are established with its neighbors

to the East and Southwest. Moreover, both Russia and Iran stand ready to fill the *political vacuums* (Representative Porter, July 29, 1997: H5992).

- (33) at a time when Armenia is introducing *market reforms* and integrating its economy with the *West*, at a time when Armenia is in *dire need*, the blockade has virtually isolated Armenia from the *rest of the world* (Representative Torres, September 17, 1998: H7953).
- (34) Section 907, in my judgment, made sense when it was enacted, and it continues to make sense today. [...] Since Armenia is entirely landlocked, they are left with *hardly any alternative*. They have a small border with Iran; but, of course, that is the very outcome *we do not want to encourage* in terms of where they turn for supplies (Senator Sarbanes, June 30, 1999: S7868).
- (35) I believe that we all have similar *goals* for the region which include: *economic development* and cooperation; fostering of *democratic principles*; and the adherence to *universally recognized human rights standards*. Allowing for the waiver of Section 907 runs counter to these important *goals* [but the] amendment would enable us to strengthen relations with the Caucasus—without compromising our *values* (Senator Levin, June 30, 1999: S7875).
- (36) [On Azerbaijan] The United States Congress has the *responsibility* to prohibit the provision of bilateral assistance to governments with which we have *serious concern*. This is not a sanction; rather, it is a means of making our *foreign policy goals* clear (Senator Feingold, June 30, 1999: S7876).
- (37) One of the *greatest foreign policy priorities* in the post-Cold War world is to *assist* former Communist countries in making the difficult transition to *democracy* [to] embrace *liberty, free markets, and the rule of law*. [...] I support Senator Brownback's attempts to promote an *East-West axis* in the region, and I believe it is critical that we encourage these former republics to look *westward*. By allowing the blockade to endure, however, we are leaving Armenia with only *North-South options* (Senator Torricelli, June 30, 1999: S7877).

The supporters of the McConnell *et al.* amendment, while drawing less on the repertoire of evilness in the records under examination, still share a common discursive frame and social understanding of Iran's hostility (Klüfers 2014: 282). Relating back to the three dimensions of national images (Boulding 1959: 124), the extracts under E show crucial awareness of geographical space, perceived hostility, and perceived strength. With Armenia situated in the post-Cold War world, being left with only 'North-South options', and Iran is not an alternative the United States should encourage, ending the Azerbaijani-Turkish blockade on Armenia is

the only way to encourage a turn to the West. This warrants support for the McConnell *et al.* amendment, but also connects to an observation made by Boulding (1959: 125), who notes ‘stable friendly relations seem to exist mainly between strong nations and weaker nations which they have an interest in preserving’.

In the extracts under E, this further extends to a combination between the repertoires of development and national interest. The arguments indicate a shared social understanding of the responsibility to conduct foreign policy in line with American values, and rhetorically constructs the objectives to assist the post-Cold War world as a ‘package’: transition to democracy, liberty, free markets, and the rule of law ‘go together’ not simply because it serves the interests of the speaker, but for more quasi-logical reasons, set in a cultural context and resulting from a particular self-image, as well (Converse 2006: 8-9; Murray and Cowden 1999: 477). It is through American values the United States is argued to be in the best position to realize its interests. In addition, the elements of these repertoires are part of a larger representational construction (Skonieczny 2001: 438), placing Armenia at risk of falling into the hands of Iran, and warranting United States support to the country by retaining Section 907. In such a way, the repertoire reminds us once more that foreign policy is about *practice* and *actions*, but it is through discourse that these actions are made meaningful and justified.

In June 1999, the McConnell *et al.* amendment was agreed to, and subsequently, the Brownback amendment, as amended, was agreed to by voice vote (McConnell Amdt. No. 1119: Roll Call Vote No. 191).

Table 4. *Result: Amendment No. 1119 agreed to.*
Measure of Party Support on the Vote

<i>Yeas (53)</i>	<i>Nays (45)</i>	<i>Party Cohesion</i>
Democrats – 34 or 64%	Democrats – 11 or 24%	Democrats – 75%
Republicans – 19 or 36%	Republicans – 34 or 76%	Republicans – 66%

Not voting (2)

5 Conclusion

The argument at the core of this thesis was the suggestion United States belief systems and images enable, reflect, and warrant foreign policy decisions. It was proposed decision-makers communicate their belief systems and images in their foreign policy deliberations, and that, furthermore, such strategic communication and interaction could be examined by applying the discourse analytic unit of the interpretative repertoire. The study in response to the research question, *how shared belief systems and images are constructed in American political discourse to become resources for foreign policy decisions*, therefore, deconstructed and traced belief systems and images in American political discourse, and applied the argument to foreign policy deliberations during the Clinton Administration to offer some observations regarding the functioning of belief systems and images in practice.

While this thesis does not claim to fill a gap in the literature of International Relations or foreign policy analysis and decision-making, the analysis did address the relative difficulty to integrate constructivist concepts and ideational variables with neo-classical realism. Without significant contributions by political and social psychology, in terms of theoretical and methodological concepts, the framework would potentially be too weak to successfully embrace a more realistic, cognitive view of decision-making processes (Meibauer 2020: 25; Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 8). As several initial assumptions have shown to be crucial in the analysis, however, the examination has pointed to the enduring value of neo-classical realism in studies of foreign policy decision-making, while illustrating the potential of combining traditional theoretical frameworks of International Relations with political and social psychology and discourse analytical units.

In addition, the analysis has shown how research on belief systems and images, and potentially other causal mechanisms (Mintz and DeRouen 2010: 3) can throw light on more general decision-making processes, as well as be applied to specific foreign policy deliberations. Moreover, the findings of the analysis complement, at times in broad lines or fine detail, the conclusions of Boulding (1959: 121) and Skonieczny (2001: 434) concerning the functioning of images and representations. Rather than reflecting 'reality' as such, the images are employed as slices of a complex reality, to warrant narrow foreign policies and maintain distinct relational patterns.

One of the important aspects of the discourse analytic perspective, drawn out in this study, is that it has illustrated, in the role of interpretative repertoires to articulate how the world 'ought to be', language as a practice in its own right. The data sources this thesis has

examined, support the suggestion discourse is used to *do* things, it is a social practice, occurring in a particular social context, where even statements which initially may seem trivial serve to perform specific functions (Gill 2000: 175).

The contributions of this thesis would suggest future work could take up further openings of research into foreign policy and decision-making. It would be interesting and worthwhile to see a similar framework extended to other presidencies and other sets and sources of data, contributing to the link between International Relations and political and social psychology. Moreover, regarding this particular case and the insights it could give us into other foreign policy deliberations, extending Murray and Cowden's (1999: 476-7) arguments on ideological orientations and domestic policy preferences, in addition to partisan cues, to the Vote in Table 4 could potentially be a worthwhile effort to deepen our understanding of decision-making processes.

6 Bibliography

- Bazhatarnik, Maria (2019) 'The Image of the Enemy in the Publications of Donald Trump Administration (on the Material of the US-Iran Relations)', *Bachelor's Thesis*, Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution for Higher Professional Education, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow.
- Boulding, Kenneth E. (1959) 'National Images and International Systems', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (3:2), pp. 120-131.
- Campbell, David (1990) 'Global Inscription: How Foreign Policy Constitutes the United States', *Alternatives*, (15:3), pp. 263-286.
- Campbell, David (1992) *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Carabine, Jean (2001) 'Unmarried Motherhood 1830-1990: A Genealogical Analysis', in Wetherell, Margaret and Taylor, Stephanie, and Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Castano, Emanuele and Bonacossa, Alain, and Gries, Peter (2016) 'National Images as Integrated Schemas: Subliminal Primes of Image Attributes Shape Foreign Policy Preferences', *Political Psychology*, (37:3), pp. 351-366.
- Converse, Philip E. (2006) 'The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (1964)', *Critical Review*, (18:1-3), pp. 1-74.
- Doty, Roxanne L. (1996) *Imperial Encounters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Duncombe, Constance (2016) 'Representation, Recognition and Foreign Policy in the Iran-US Relationship', *European Journal of International Relations*, (22:3), pp. 622-645.
- Edley, Nigel (2001) 'Analysing Masculinity: Interpretative Repertoires, Ideological Dilemmas and Subject Positions', in Wetherell, Margaret and Taylor, Stephanie, and Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Fairclough, Norman (2001) 'The Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis', in Wetherell, Margaret and Taylor, Stephanie, and Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Gill, Rosalind (2000) 'Discourse Analysis' in Bauer, Martin W. and Gaskell, George (eds.) (2000) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage Publications.

- Gresh, Geoffrey (2006) 'Coddling the Caucasus: Iran's Strategic Relationship with Azerbaijan and Armenia', *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, (1:1), pp. 1-13.
- Haber, Stephen H. and Kennedy, David M. and Krasner, Stephen D. (1997) 'Brothers under the Skin: Diplomatic History and International Relations', *International Security*, (22:1), pp. 34-43.
- Herrmann, Richard K. (1986) 'The Power of Perceptions in Foreign-Policy Decision Making: Do Views of the Soviet Union Determine the Policy Choices of American Leaders?', *American Journal of Political Science*, (30:4), pp. 841-875.
- Holstein, James A. and Gubrium, Jaber F. (2011) 'The Constructionist Analytics of Interpretive Practice' in Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) (2011) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Holsti, Ole R. (1962) 'The Belief System and National Images: A Case Study', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (6:3), pp. 244-252.
- Jewett, Aubrey W. and Turetzky, Marc D. (1998) 'Stability and Change in President Clinton's Foreign Policy Beliefs, 1993-6', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, (28:3), pp. 638-665.
- Kaarbo, Juliet (2015) 'A Foreign Policy Analysis Perspective on the Domestic Politics Turn in IR Theory', *International Studies Review*, (17:2), pp. 189-216.
- Klüfers, Philipp (2014) 'Security Repertoires: Towards a Sociopragmatist Framing of Securitization Processes', *Critical Studies on Security*, (2:3), pp. 278-292.
- Lindsay, James M. (2011) 'George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership', *International Affairs*, (87:4), pp. 765-779.
- McConnell Amdt. No. 1119: Roll Call Vote No. 191, *Congressional Record*, (145:95), June 30, 1999. Online: https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=106&session=1&vote=00191 [Last accessed: May 13, 2020].
- McKinlay, Andrew and Potter, Jonathan (1987) 'Model Discourse: Interpretative Repertoires in Scientists' Conference Talk', *Social Studies of Science*, (17:3), pp. 443-463.
- Meibauer, Gustav (2020) 'Interests, Ideas, and the Study of State Behaviour in Neoclassical Realism', *Review of International Studies*, (46:1), pp. 20-36.
- Milne, Catherine (2009) 'Interpretative Repertoires as Mirrors on Society and as Tools for Action: Reflections on Zeyer and Roth's *A Mirror of Society*', *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, (4:4), pp. 1013-1022.
- Mintz, Alex and Karl DeRouen (2010) *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Murray, Shoon Kathleen and Cowden, Jonathan A. (1999) 'The Role of 'Enemy Images' and Ideology in Elite Belief Systems', *International Studies Quarterly*, (43:3), pp. 455-481.
- National Security Strategy (NSS) Archive (1994-2000), *Historical Office: Office of the Secretary of Defense*. Online: <https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/National-Security-Strategy/> [Last accessed: April 30, 2020].
- Onea, Tudor (2012) 'Putting the 'Classical' in Neoclassical Realism: Neoclassical Realist Theories and US Expansion in the Post-Cold War', *International Relations*, (26:2), pp. 139-164.
- Ó Tuathail, Gearóid and Agnew, John (1992) 'Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy', *Political Geography*, (11:2), pp. 190-204.
- Potter, Jonathan and Wetherell, Margaret (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Potter, Jonathan (1996) 'Discourse Analysis and Constructionist Approaches: Theoretical Background' in Richardson, J.T.E. (ed) (1996) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology and the Social Sciences*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Public Papers of President Clinton (1993-2001), *Office of the Federal Register (OFR), National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)*. Online: https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/ppp/president-42_Clinton,%20William%20J. [Last accessed: April 30, 2020].
- Renshon, Stanley A. (2005) 'William Jefferson Clinton's Psychology', in Post, Jerrold M. (ed.) (2005) *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Renshon, Jonathan (2008) 'Stability and Change in Belief Systems: The Operational Code of George W. Bush', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (52:6), pp. 820-849.
- Representative Gilman, 'The Silk Road Strategy Act of 1997', *Congressional Record*, (143: 156), November 8, 1997, p. E2241.
- Representative Hamilton, 'Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996', *Congressional Record*, (142: 109), July 23, 1996, p. H8126.
- Representative Livingston, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999', *Congressional Record*, (144: 124), September 17, 1998, p. H7952.
- Representative Pallone, 'Armenian President Ter-Petrosian Works to Build Democracy, Stability', *Congressional Record*, (141: 175), January 24, 1996, p. E2121.

- Representative Pallone, 'Issues of Importance in the Republic of Armenia', *Congressional Record*, (145: 123), September 21, 1999, p. H8456.
- Representative Porter, 'Special Order Concerning the Visit of President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan', *Congressional Record*, (143: 109), July 29, 1997, p. H5992.
- Representative Skelton, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999', *Congressional Record*, (144: 124), September 17, 1998, p. H7996.
- Representative Solomon, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999', *Congressional Record*, (144: 124), September 17, 1998, p. H7988-9.
- Representative Torres, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999', *Congressional Record*, (144: 124), September 17, 1998, p. H7953.
- Representative Yates, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1999', *Congressional Record*, (144: 124), September 17, 1998, p. H7954.
- Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) (2018) 'Pashinian Says He Made 'Clear' to U.S. that Armenia Will Maintain Ties With Iran. Online: <https://www.rferl.org/a/pashinian-says-made-clear-to-us-bolton-armenia-will-maintain-ties-with-iran/29578365.html> [Last accessed: May 10, 2020].
- Rose, Gideon (1998) 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, (51:1), pp. 144-172.
- Rosenau, James N. and Holsti, Ole R. (1983) 'U.S. Leadership in a Shrinking World: The Breakdown of Consensuses and the Emergence of Conflicting Belief Systems', *World Politics*, (35:3), pp. 368-392.
- Senator Brownback, 'Submissions of Concurrent and Senate Resolutions', *Congressional Record*, (143: 149), October 30, 1997, p. S11449.
- Senator Brownback, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2000', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999, p. S7838-40, S7863.
- Senator Brownback, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999, p. S7870-4.
- Senator Byrd, 'American Interests in the Caspian Sea Region', *Congressional Record*, (143: 59), May 8, 1997, p. S4208.

- Senator Cohen, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997', *Congressional Record*, (142: 111), July 25, 1996, p. S8746.
- Senator Cohen, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997', *Congressional Record*, (142: 111), July 25, 1996, p. S8814.
- Senator Dole, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1996', *Congressional Record*, (141: 148), September 21, 1995, p. S14027.
- Senator Feingold, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999, p. S7876.
- Senator Levin, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999: S7875.
- Senator McConnell, 'Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1997', *Congressional Record*, (142: 111), July 25, 1996, p. S8811.
- Senator Mikulski, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999, p. S7875.
- Senator Sarbanes, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999: S7868
- Senator Torricelli, 'Amendment No. 1118', *Congressional Record*, (145: 95), June 30, 1999: S7877
- Silverstein, Brett (1989) 'Enemy Images: The Psychology of U.S. Attitudes and Cognitions Regarding the Soviet Union', *American Psychologist*, (44:6), pp. 903-913.
- Skonieczny, Amy (2001) 'Constructing NAFTA: Myth, Representation, and the Discursive Construction of U.S. Foreign Policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, (45:3), pp. 433-454.
- Talja, Sanna (1999) 'Analyzing Qualitative Interview Data: The Discourse Analytic Method', *Library & Information Science Research*, (21:4), pp. 459-477.
- Taylor, Stephanie (2001) 'Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytic Research', in Wetherell, Margaret and Taylor, Stephanie, and Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Walker, Stephen G. (1977) 'The Interface between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (21:1), pp. 129-168.
- Walker, Stephen G. and Schafer, Mark and Young, Michael D. (1999) 'Presidential Operational Codes and Foreign Policy Conflicts in the Post-Cold War World', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (43:5), pp. 610-625.

- Walker, Stephen G. and Post, Jerrold M. (2005) 'The Search for Causal Mechanisms', in Post, Jerrold M. (ed.) (2005) *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: With Profiles of Saddam Hussein and Bill Clinton*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Welch Larson, Deborah (1994) 'The Role of Belief Systems and Schemas in Foreign Policy Decision-Making', *Political Psychology*, (15:1), pp. 17-33.
- Wetherell, Margaret and Potter, Jonathan (1988) 'Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires' in Antaki, Charles (ed.) (1988) *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Zarifian, Julien (2008) 'La politique étrangère Américaine en Arménie: naviguer à vue dans les eaux Russes et s'affirmer dans une région stratégique', *Hérodote*, (2:129), pp. 109-122.