

Grasping the Role of Emotions in IR via Qualitative Content Analysis and Visual Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The chapter inquires into the role of emotions in discursive constructions of self and other in International Relations (IR). It analyses how Iran is constructed in US security policy discourse vis-à-vis the US self, by conducting a qualitative content analysis of US policy and strategy documents, complemented by a visual analysis of cartoons in US media that picture Iran, the Iranian leadership and US-Iranian relations. A particular focus lies on the developments leading up to and following right after the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran.¹ Doing so, the chapter considers the role of US national identity in constructions of Iran and the link between national identity and emotions, that is, in which instances there is an emotional footprint in or emotional framing of articulations—be it text or visuals—regarding the self’s national identity and regarding the self versus the

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other. National identity may be seen as describing a given political community with institutions, rights and duties in a historic and defined territory, with shared myths and memories, and a given way to comprehend and define the self (Smith, 1991, p. 9 ff.). A national identity is differentiated from something other in order to exist. It requires the production of difference, which may also include the creation of otherness (Holland, 2014, p. 203). National identity, and the understanding of how the self differs to and relates with others—how self and other are constructed, is also formed in narratives on and experiences with the other (see also Neumann, 1999). Likewise, political behaviour towards the other is shaped by self-other constructions and the particular emotional content. Paying attention to the emotional factor and to specific emotions can tell us much about how US discourse constructs Iran, the underlying motivations and the plausible effects on relations. The chapter thus hopes to contribute specific insights to the debate on the role of emotions in IR, in particular on the identity-emotion nexus, how to methodologically grasp emotions in discourse, and how methods can be fruitfully combined.

The combination of the two selected methods gives the researcher not only multiple tools and perspectives with which to inquire into the topic. Together, the qualitative content analysis and the visual analysis filter out from policy and strategy documents specific articulations on how US discourse constructs self and other and which emotional framing is present. As cartoons are more pointed in what they represent and how, the emotional appeal can be grasped. With cartoons illustrating societal thinking and decision-makers being part of society, there exists a link between decision-maker representations and cartoons' meaning. The triangulation can also strengthen the validity of results. The chapter proceeds as follows: it elaborates the theoretical and methodological approach; illustrates the results of the empirical application; and offers implications regarding the changes in US discourse, the continuing mistrust, and efforts to re-build relations, as well as regarding methodology and further research needs.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Issue of Subjectivity in Designing Research on Emotions

Underlying the applied theoretical and methodological approach are particular epistemological and methodological considerations, such as that knowledge about social phenomena, and about emotions, cannot be

directly accessed. The premise is that we see and understand the social world with our particular views of self and other, which are formed in experiences with the other(s) and through our culturally shaped filters (see, e.g. Harré & Sammut, 2013, pp. 26–28; May, 2013, pp. 72–73). These views include biases and subjectivities. Also researchers are subjective, as pointed out (see, e.g. Ulbert, 2005, pp. 24, 27), in terms of following a particular research interest, making certain interpretations, and applying their cultural lens. The approach to gaining knowledge should then also include the reflection by the researcher about approaching a given topic. This, we may argue, also encompasses a critical angle where gained insights can serve as partial basis for critiquing existing knowledge, power structures and resulting policy. To deal with researcher subjectivity, methodological tools are useful. When working with a qualitative content analysis, the researcher has at the disposal a systematic, theory-led method, and can further document the research process, and triangulate (see also Mayring, 2003, pp. 42–44; Ulbert, 2005, p. 27). A visual analysis is likely more subjective, that is, the researcher may easily also react emotionally to images viewed. In fact, scholars (Holland, 2007, pp. 196, 201, 207–208) see researchers as not detached and thus emotionally affected in their work, but argue that emotions actually add to the understanding of what is researched. This author agrees that subjectivity cannot be completely avoided and proposes to reduce it by approaching the research interest of emotional framings with the help of a systematically built and theory-led category construct (for more on studying emotions via textual and visual analysis, see further below).

Emotions

Emotions are seen here ontologically as integral part of human thinking, perception/interpretation and behaviour, meaning that emotions are closely linked with identity formation and expression, social processes, (political) decision-making and the shaping of self-other relations. Since the emotional turn in IR, scholars (e.g. Bleiker & Hutchison, 2008; Crawford, 2000; Wolf, 2011, 2012) have highlighted emotions as considerable factor impacting political behaviour and international interaction. Holland (2007) sees emotions as essential in knowledge production, too. How to soundly grasp emotions conceptually and methodologically is still evolving though. For example, as Hutchison and Bleiker (2014, p. 491 ff.) state, how emotions gain political relevance and impact should be a

focus in research. They recommend to apply a macro-micro angle, focusing both on the impact of emotions vis-à-vis identity, understanding and behaviour, and on the process of particular emotions becoming socially and politically relevant.

Through emotions we define ourselves in light of collective identities, make decisions based on norms and morals, and even act as states towards other states (Fierke, 2012, p. 93; Haidt, 2013). The sharing of emotions within a group shapes the views of self and other, a dynamic that allows the in-group to differentiate itself from out-groups (Sasley, 2011, p. 457) and, thus, to construct the self vis-à-vis others with a particular national identity. Also, interstate relations are shaped by emotions. Scholars have shown that a given state tends to be seen as the source of the felt emotions towards that state (Ahmed, 2004, p. 11; Leep, 2010, pp. 332–335). Furthermore, at the state level there can be an amplification of emotions, making emotional reactions towards another state more intense (Wolf, 2011, p. 118). This seems to apply particularly to (views of) enmity, as is illustrated in the case study. Thus, the focus on self-other constructions provides a unique perspective for examining how interstate relations are defined and shaped in light of the understanding of the self, (particular) others, certain issues and developments, and seen-as-appropriate policy needs. Constructing self and other can also involve processes of othering, where another state becomes the key or even radical other, which shapes self-other relations in a typically negative manner (Neumann, 1999).

Another important aspect that deserves mention is emotionalisation. When the understanding of a particular context or situation is emotionalised, its emotional content and intensity are increased; we may see emotionalisation as both adding an emotional framing or strengthening an existing one and as intensifying present emotions. Especially conflicts allow for emotionalisation, in that they provide fertile ground and give room for emotionalising the contested issue(s) as well as self and other. Simplifications or simplified portrayals of the situation by those involved or having interests in it are often found. Political actors may also have stakes in such simplifications and apply these to benefit their political agendas. Emotionalising the situation and the involved issues and actors adds weight to the claims made. For example, the highlighting of threats and dangers regarding another state or a change in relations with that state may evoke certain reactions, including those that are desired by the claimant. At the same time, emotionalisation has its costs. In the articulation of threats and dangers, scholars (Agnew & Muscarà, 2012; Holland, 2014;

Neumann, 1999) highlight the discursively created boundaries between self and other in processes of othering and their long-lasting effects on perception and interpretation, as well as on behaviour and relations. While there is little research on the particular link between emotions and othering (see for example Hansen, 2006; Holland, 2014; Neumann, 1999), considering emotions in IR adds a perspective to understand how self and other relate, and how political developments and applied policy impact relations.

Uncovering Meaning and Emotions

To assess meaning regarding self and other, and the emotional content, we may consider the meaning expressed in text and images. Useful textual sources are policy and strategy documents. These offer insights on the strategic orientations and objectives of a country, thereby expressing views on the own role in global affairs vis-à-vis another state, and visions to shape interstate relations and the international system. Views of various other states include different ascriptions to and constructions of these others. National security policy documents, for example published by IPU/DCAF (2005, p. 33), illustrate the particular approach of a government to provide security, the specific understanding of security, perceived threats and dangers to the self, as well as security interests and preferred and pursued policy means. Such documents thereby express relations of the self to various others as well as the varying intensities of threat to the self, making them fruitful for uncovering meaning and emotions in discursive self-other constructions.

Also, images express meaning. The visual turn in IR and the research on visuality (see, e.g. Bleiker, 2009; Hansen, 2015) focus on visuals' impact on people and their actions via motivating certain emotions in certain portrayals and representations. Images are a useful source for the researcher on emotion due to their illustration of the condensed essence of a particular view of a topic and its emotional frame; studying images complements this easy-to-grasp essence to results of lengthy text analysis. Images tend to be remembered better or quicker than pure text. Cartoons, as one type of visual and typically composed of one image or a series of images, are also a focus in IR scholarship (see, e.g. Dodds, 2010; Manzo, 2012). Images/visuals can inform about existing representations of self and other in IR, and about a particular geopolitical outlook (MacDonald, Dodds, & Hughes, 2010).² Regarding political

issues represented in visuals, Baudrillard sees the border between reality and illusion blurring in today's media age and argues that representation in media is required to make political events real (2002, p. 30). This becomes visible in political struggles and contestation being couched in and referring to cultural myths and narratives that give statements shared meaning (Bronfen, 2006, p. 23).

Cartoons, and other popular culture media, express widely shared geopolitical representations, and political leaders utilise such references to connect with an audience. The creators of cartoons also highlight or build relations between viewers and situations. Effective cartoons provoke the viewer, but since they are culture-specific they can suggest different interpretations (Dodds, 2010, pp. 114–119; Hughes, 2007, p. 987). Cartoons resonate with the viewers' feelings regarding a particular issue and/or actor entity; the contextual knowledge required to understand a cartoon is typically provided by mainstream sources such as public media. That cartoons are taken serious by those who are being portrayed and/or criticised is illustrated by events following the publication of Mohammad cartoons in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten*, or by images shown by the French *Charlie Hebdo*. Cartoons, therefore, have an implicit, at times explicit, political dimension. Even though it is not decision-makers of a country that issue cartoons, but journalists and caricaturists, they all come from the same society and thus at least partly share a cultural, social and political outlook regarding self and other. Cartoons can express critical views of self and other, and of their relation. Cartoons allow one to pinpoint issues in an ironical or mocking manner, they may contest certain other portrayals and their inherent understandings, and they evoke emotions. Dodds (2010, p. 114), for example, argues that visuals can illustrate conceptions of regions such as the Middle East as dangerous, in turn suggesting apparent dangers or threats to the US or Americans. Hansen (2011, p. 53 f.) thus calls for considering such images and any linked text, along with policy discourse the image might refer to.

The chapter conducts a qualitative content analysis of key US policy and strategy documents and of statements by US decision-makers regarding Iran and the Iranian leadership, especially those relating to the Iranian nuclear program. Additionally, the visual analysis considers cartoons in US media picturing Iran, the Iranian leadership and US-Iranian relations. Cartoons were selected based on the media's circulation being significant, such as national circulation for newspapers,

and of thematic relevance; an Internet search was conducted to identify newspapers with national circulation and other media sources with relevant cartoons (using the keywords: cartoons, images, US, Iran, Iranian regime, Iranian nuclear agreement/deal). We may assume that cartoons in media with national circulation have a large reception. Cartoons provide insights on the popular sharing of representations in official documents.

The benefits of mixing qualitative content analysis with a visual analysis reside in the combination of perspectives on different content type and depth, and different emotional appeal. The visual analysis is considered complementary due to a smaller sample of cartoons and the stated greater subjectivity involved in interpreting them. The more detailed statements in policy and strategy documents can be fruitfully compared with and complemented by cartoons' content and expressed meaning. Since cartoons tend to offer more pointed representations and are not smoothed out, they appeal more directly to emotions. They are meant to evoke emotions, and they can be highly charged with emotions. The additional consideration of cartoons thus adds value when aiming to understand and research the role of emotions in IR. As cartoons arguably express a part of societal thinking, of which national decision-makers are a part, we may assume some link between representations by decision-makers and what is expressed in cartoons. The limits and caveats of mixing these methods come from their different nature regarding source, author, scope, and context of creation. Their difference as to depth and explanatory potential, including with regards to cartoons needing more interpretation influenced by the viewer's subjectivity, can be a limit. There may also be distinct underlying assumptions. The analysis will show if this actually presents a problem that cannot be overcome. It seems that the benefits of such an approach outweigh the potential weaknesses. Mixing different methods brings value due to triangulation being generally beneficial for adding validity and depth to understanding. Flick (2003, p. 311 ff.), for example, argues for triangulation increasing validity, objectivity and knowledge.

Qualitative Content Analysis

By using qualitative content analysis, this contribution analyses communication content, the given social and political context and the particular perspectives of actors as speakers, in a replicable manner (see also Bortz &

Döring, 2005, p. 329). Qualitative content analysis is an empirical, systematic and theory-led method that examines recorded and fixed symbolic material to study a particular society's communication. As a method of inference, it allows conclusions about aspects such as the speakers' understanding and motivations regarding a topic (Behnke, Baur, & Behnke, 2006, p. 339; Mayring, 2003, p. 12). It thereby enables the researcher to grasp the emotional content and framing in representations of a particular other, namely Iran and the Iranian leadership.

Following a specific research interest and drawing on Mayring's summarising technique of qualitative content analysis (2003), the author reduced text in policy and strategy documents via abstraction to a manageable amount that mirrored the original. In order to abstract text passages in a systematic manner, deductive categories were developed based on the research interest of how Iran is represented in US discourse, and on surveyed literature. The research interest in how Iran is in security matters portrayed as friend, rival or threat; the relevance to the self-understanding; made arguments; and the emotional framing were used to formulate the following deductive categories:

- US constructions of the self, and national identity
- US constructions of Iran
- US articulations regarding self and other in relation
- articulated threats and challenges to US national security
- articulated threats and challenges to US national security interests abroad
- articulated security needs
- articulated emotions and emotional representations of Iran, the Iranian leadership and US -Iranian relations

The author coded the text material qualitatively; coding units were parts of sentence, so that content could be sufficiently grasped. Since the deductive categories proved fairly comprehensive, no additional (inductive) categories were formulated.³ Filtering and categorising text via categories enabled the author to abstract text, reduce text material, crystallise relevant information, and make structural connections and systematic comparisons as basis for interpretation. Documents analysed include policy and strategy documents, presidential remarks and speeches, speeches by other administration officials, senator and representative statements, as well as think tank papers. The author selected

documents based on a systematic search on administration, ministerial, congressional and think tank websites (with the keywords: Iran, Iranian regime, Iranian nuclear agreement/deal, US -Iranian relations). Documents had to be longer than a few sentences and thus exclude short press statements; researchers are called upon to decide at what length and substance a document is included in an analysis. Results of the qualitative content analysis were grouped after all material was coded.

As a general pattern in discourse, the author observed a debate on how threatening Iran actually was; this debate cut across the political spectrum in the US, although the threat was ‘painted’ as more severe on the Republican side. Another pattern relates to views before and after the nuclear agreement on July 14, 2015: documents from before clearly construct Iran as threatening, documents afterwards express a somewhat weakened threat. In addition, documents of the executive under Obama showed a general softening in language towards Iran. Almost all documents express US fears of a nuclear-armed and irrational Iran. Other topics in documents were the usefulness of sanctions, Iranian sponsorship of terrorism and the issue of trust/mistrust.

Visual Analysis

As stated farther above, the author conducted an Internet search for relevant cartoons with the following keywords: cartoons, images, US, USA, Iran, Iranian regime, Iranian nuclear agreement/deal. In total, 12 cartoons were pre-selected based on clarity of what is presented and ease of understanding (it is admitted that another researcher may have selected some other cartoons, depending on knowledge of and own ideas regarding the topic, but it is also supposed that the content portrayed would be similar). Five particularly telling cartoons are discussed in detail further below. Cartoons were analytically approached for their degree and elements of condensation (reducing complexity), repetition (increasing effectiveness), dramatisation (provoking), exaggeration (changing understanding of something) and caricature of leading personalities, as well as for the policy needs expressed (see also Dodds, 2010, p. 118; 2007). The expressions about self and other, intentions and motivations for action, character ascriptions and the emotional amplification were considered, such as in cartoons depicting national decision-makers (see also Hughes, 2007, pp. 976–978, 989).

As cartoons often are coloured, considering the colouring gives us another tool to assess cartoons and their emotional content; colours may be seen as additional, important dimension of visual meaning. As Andersen, Vuori and Guillaume (2015, pp. 441–442) state, colours have a performative function via the significations and associations we give them, acting as shorthand when we (want to) communicate. Emotional content is further expressed in discourse regarding the behaviour of the other and (assumed/interpreted) motivations for specific behaviour, as well as in character ascriptions made to the other. Attending to self-descriptions also adds insights on the particular aspects involved in US self-other constructions vis-à-vis Iran.

Based on the above stated elements and functions of cartoons, especially by Dodds (2010, 2007) and Hughes (2007), and the research interest here, the visual analysis proceeded with defining categories to grasp visual content, its meaning and the emotional framing regarding the US self and Iranian other. The approach combines deductive and inductive categories to grasp both the more explicit portrayals and the implicit framing, for example via colour use (researchers will need to adjust their design according to their research interest). The categories are:

- description of what is shown, theme
- portrayals of political leaders of the US and Iran
- portrayals of US -Iranian relations, and of similarities and contrasts
- portrayals of threats/dangers
- portrayals of needed policy by the US
- repetitions (among cartoons)
- aspects of dramatisation/exaggeration
- emotions expressed
- emotions evoked by researcher (affect felt)
- stylistic means, including colour use

Attention was also paid to expressions of similarities/equations and oppositions/dichotomies regarding self and other. In particular, those cartoons that were created right around the Iranian nuclear agreement were analyzed in depth; those published in the 2000s were considered for context. Cartoons were then viewed/coded using the defined categories; for each cartoon, ideas/interpretations were retrieved per category, as well as additional thoughts. During the analysis, a number of themes fitting with the above-mentioned aspects and categories came to the fore, in

particular the reduced complexity, repetition of certain meanings (such as deception by Iran, or naivety of the US), dramatisation/exaggeration of some items by oversizing certain elements (such as Iranian nuclear means of power), and the caricature of leaders (such as Obama). Results of the visual analysis support the pattern of US mistrust of Iran, and added the view of a naive, weaker US and Iran posing as powerful, challenging state; regarding the latter, cartoonists apparently aimed to ridicule the US seemingly budging to Iran's tough stance and trusting Iranian regime on its words, despite its breaking of commitments in the the past. Cartoons thus illustrate a perception of US-Iranian dichotomy in aims and power. The use of red colour helped to dramatise certain elements in cartoons, and to paint a picture of danger. In particular, colour use, expressed humour and some of the oversized elements evoked emotions in the author despite her researcher position; attempting to analyse cartoons as objectively as possible though, it was helpful to look at cartoons several times, note own feelings and then proceed with the analysis. The author concludes that a visual analysis (in particular of cartoons) is both interesting and amusing and can add essential additional insights to a text analysis.

THE US SELF AND THE IRANIAN OTHER IN US DISCOURSE: EMPIRICAL DISCUSSION

Overall, the analysis illustrates the construction of a dangerous Iranian other. Before the nuclear agreement, Iran and the Iranian leadership were portrayed as the evil other that threatens the US and the world with its nuclear program, along side sponsoring terrorism and regional destabilisation; afterwards, discourse showed more diversity in constructions and includes views of Iran as possible partner for the US and the world.

The *qualitative content analysis* has brought to light a pattern of expressed US fears regarding a potentially nuclear-armed Iran, present in nearly all analysed documents. To understand why a nuclear-armed Iran would present such a grave threat, the discursive context must be considered. Before the agreement, Iran was portrayed as hostile, aggressive, radical, misleading, insincere, terror-sponsoring, as regional destabiliser, international outcast, and declared enemy of the US and Israel—clearly, Iran was the dangerous and threatening other. Iran was said to have ignored and rejected respective UN resolutions and non-proliferation treaties. Fears of a nuclear-armed Iran have even led to calls for US surgical strikes against suspected Iranian nuclear facilities; debated were somewhat

unspecific warnings of needing to prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb versus the potentially enormous effects of a military strike for regional and global stability (Fisher, 2013; Kroenig, 2012; USIP, 2011; Weighing, 2012).

Sanctions were another hard policy tool to respond to the perceived Iranian threat. Implemented sanctions against Iran, and the value of increasing sanctions or threatening to do so, were continually discussed. Some argued that the sanctions' great political and financial costs would bring Iran to the negotiation table (Cordesman, 2014; Obama, 2013), others doubted sanction effectiveness (Beinart, 2015; Gladstone, 2013). With sanctions having increased the cost of Iranian actions, they were counted among the factors that contributed to a changed Iranian position. Another considered factors was the change in Iranian leadership.

A further issue is the US construction of Iran as a sponsor of terrorism, radicalism and extremism. Iran is accused of intentionally destabilising the region to benefit own power interests (Fisher, 2013; US Department of State, 2014, 2012). Regarding the region, Iran's declared hostility against Israel is considered highly destabilising and of great concern; the US also sees Iran as acting against US regional interests (Cordesman, 2014) and misleading the world. Opposite we find the construction of the good, responsible and internationally supported US, acting to promote a stable and secure Middle East. For example, US officials are portrayed to have increased pressure upon the Iranian leadership only slowly in order to promote positive change in Iran (USIP, 2011).

When Obama entered the White House in 2009, US discourse towards Iran showed fewer dichotomies in the constructions of self and other. He emphasised the need for diplomacy to motivate positive change in Iran and for activating Iran's nascent reform movement. Yet, also under Obama's two administrations, the construction of Iran as threatening and destabilising actor that must be globally integrated remained (Obama, 2013; White House, 2013, pp. 4, 8); the US did still engage in othering Iran. But when Iran's president, Rouhani, offered dialogue in 2013, Obama took the opportunity, recognised Iranian goodwill (Obama, 2013) and thus added a positive element to the US construction of Iran. Yet, Iran was still called upon to prove its goodwill regarding its nuclear program (ibid). US discourse expressed continuous mistrust of the Iranian leadership—another pattern in US discourse—with many reminders of Iran having broken past commitments.

After the beginning of dialogue at the end of 2013, US discourse was split on the issue of trusting Iran. A large part, including Obama and his

administration officials, highlighted the dialogue as positive development (Kerry, 2014), which even led to the re-opening of the US embassy in Tehran after 36 years. Supporters of dialogue saw in it a strengthening of US security, and great value for regional stability and global peace (White House, 2015a, 2015b). No alternatives were seen when viewing Iran's activities and potential realistically (Beinart, 2015). Critics of a dialogue with Iran mistrusted the Iranian leadership's sincerity. Criticism of the agreement centred on allowing Iran to keep thousands of centrifuges and continue some enrichment, on imposing only time limited restrictions, on inspections being pre-announced and on lacking guarantees for Iranian compliance (Mascaro, 2015). Especially US Republicans were adamantly opposed to any deal with Iran, speaking of a cheating and untrustworthy Iran (Hatch, 2015a, 2015b; Lane, 2015). Critics among Democrats warned of an Iranian leadership unwilling to moderate behaviour, and criticized the agreement's complexity and loopholes, legitimising Iran to pursue its nuclear arms program and lacking safeguards (Alexander, 2015; Burr, 2015; Schumer, 2015). Altogether, the qualitative content analysis has shown a significant shift in US discourse: Iran and its leadership are articulated as threat, but as lesser one. Instead of the extremist and dangerous US other only, Iran is now also linked with some positive elements; yet strong mistrust continues.

The *visual analysis* has even more clearly illustrated a strong US mistrust of the Iranian leadership and intentions for the peaceful settlement on the nuclear issue. The US was pictured as naive versus a strong-positioned and uncompromising Iran, alluding to imbalanced relations. An example is a 2015 cartoon picturing US Secretary of State Kerry and Iranian president, Rouhani, in a frame entitled 'US-Iran Framework'; outside that frame we see Rouhani sitting on a nuclear bomb (Varvel, 2015). Kerry is happily smiling, Rouhani not. The cartoon implies hidden intentions of the Iranian leadership, and Iran not wanting to give up its nuclear weapons plans. The image expresses a naive US, and thus imbalanced US-Iranian relations; Kerry's and Rouhani's different facial expressions strengthen this. The nuclear bomb, outside the framework, presents a clear danger that is controlled by Iran; dramatisation is used to make the point. Viewers are led to believe that Iran is more powerful and thus threatening.

Similarly, another cartoon criticizes the US for trusting Rouhani on his word. It shows Abraham Lincoln, representing the US, looking satisfactorily at the mobile phone with a photograph sent by Rouhani who took a

selfie of his face but not the nuclear bomb he is sitting on. The message reads ‘See? No Nukes! [Smiley]’ (Koterba, 2015). Iranian leaders are portrayed as deceiving, and the US as overly trusting, weak and/or naive.

The claimed power imbalance between the US and Iran, and the Iranian threat, are portrayed pointedly in cartoon that shows a threatening Iranian leader screaming ‘Death to America’ before the agreement, and afterwards still screaming the same, only with a nuclear bomb and a large bag of US Dollars (McKee, 2015). The money and the bomb imply an Iran unhindered in building nuclear weapons but now equipped with more resources to do so. The strong facial expressions, the screaming and the reddish background exaggerate the threat and evoke alarming feelings. The colour of red is associated with danger and serves to increase the threat’s intensity. Iran is shown as able to threaten the US and the US as giving in.

Another cartoon consists of two images (Vaidyanathan, 2015, cartoon by Gary Varvel). The first shows Kerry holding an olive branch at Rouhani, saying ‘We are extending an olive branch to you, if you disarm’. Rouhani looks hesitantly. The second shows Kerry looking surprised at his cut-off arm with the olive branch on the floor; Rouhani is walking away with an oversized saber. Kerry’s olive branch and Rouhani’s saber, and the act of cutting off an arm, express imbalanced US-Iranian relations. Kerry’s surprise illustrates US naivety. Rouhani rejecting the olive branch and walking away from Kerry express Iranian unwillingness to cooperate with the US. The oversized saber, almost as large as Rouhani, may present an exaggerated Iranian hard-power approach.

Another two-image cartoon ridicules Obama’s red line (Foden, 2015). The first image shows Obama drawing with an oversized red marker a solid and clearly visible red line, entitled ‘Hard red line’; Rouhani, standing behind, says ‘No’. The second image shows Obama drawing with a light pink marker a hardly visible light pink line, entitled ‘Fuzzy pink line’; Rouhani says ‘I can live with that’. We see a bent-down Obama capitulating before Rouhani. Implied, here, are a strong Iran that can dictate its terms to the US, and an unprincipled Obama. The use of red colour again has the performative function of distinguishing and communicating what to do and what not. The change from red to light pink suggests diminishing clarity and distinction, and implies a line that may be crossed much easier.

Cartoons thus repeatedly express the theme of the US mistrusting Iran/the Iranian leadership, as well as Iran misleading the US by still keeping the nuclear bomb and rejecting US offers. The US is shown as giving

in and being naive towards Iran. Iran is shown as not earnestly interested in cooperation. The aspect of imbalanced relations is thereby re-stated.

IMPLICATIONS

Future US-Iranian Relations

The noticeable shift in US security policy discourse, as demonstrated by the results of the qualitative content analysis, constructs Iran as a lesser threat starting in 2015/2016. Iran and the Iranian leadership have moved from the aggressive, extremist, dangerous and threatening other to a still threatening other that is, however, also a possible partner. Iran is now also linked to some positive elements. Yet, despite the new US-Iranian dialogue and the first steps of cooperation, there is still significant mistrust of the Iranian leadership expressed in US discourse, and othering of Iran still takes place. The analysis of cartoons has added a pointed and emotional picture regarding a deceiving, powerful and armed Iran versus a naive US. Iranian intentions are viewed critically, and there are hints at perceived hidden intentions to still build nuclear arms. The comparison of available cartoons published around the time of negotiations showed that most cartoons expressed these views. In light of the discursive shift shown by the qualitative content analysis above, there is therefore a debate shaped by remarkably diverging views, including a nascent split between the official discourse and the general public.

While constructions of Iran have become more nuanced, continued views of a threatening and cheating Iranian other and further existing mistrust hamper balanced US-Iranian relations. Negative character ascriptions to and negative emotions towards the other are interlinked and mutually confirming. In addition, we may consider the US self's need for emotional stability. When views of Iran as key threatening other, after having informed decision-makers for over three decades, are challenged by new developments, there is likely an incentive to maintain views. A completely new picture of Iran and the Iranian leadership may challenge the US self identity, and alternative views may have difficulty to become accepted. There is still a large opposition to the agreement, likely motivated by continuing mistrust. Those that favour a hard line against Iran may also actively emotionalise discourse and link negative emotions to Iran, the agreement and improved relations. Resulting constructions and the linked emotions develop their own force, inform interaction, and become part of multi-layered institutional structures. This is why heavily emotionalised discourse and policy are difficult to overcome.

Building positive US-Iranian relations may be facilitated by what White (1998, p. 122; 1984, p. 160) calls realistic empathy that serves as corrective to harmful misperceptions. Together with an understanding of emotions as something shared, hostility may be reduced and relations improved. Since emotions are something that we experience physically and bodily, the emotional component in relations seems important. Working to enable trust via positive interactions may reassure the self and help to overcome mistrust. Placing relations on a larger basis by extending them to the societies may stabilise positive change. Also, the healing of relations is significant. Recent work on emotions in US security policy towards Iran discusses the aspect and function of healing relations (Reinke de Buitrago, 2016). In light of the new US administration under President Donald Trump, however, US-Iranian relations may worsen again, and the nuclear agreement is at risk.

*Methodological Implications: The Value of Combining Analyses
of Different Scope, Focus and Depth*

Implications relate to the combination of the two analytical methods. In order to better understand the impact of (distinct) emotions on perception, discourse and international relations, it seems highly useful to further strengthen methodological tools and refine existing methods for precise application. During the conduct of this analysis, it has become clear that the combination of the two methods is a fruitful endeavour by adding perspectives to approach emotions in IR for a deeper understanding. Although the applied methods differ in scope, focus and depth, they complement each other. Qualitative content analysis generates rich details and uncovers discursive claims, which in turn can inform policymaking; visual analysis identifies additional ‘sticky’ aspects of an interstate relationship by putting the emphasis on public views on specific issues that are reproduced using means of exaggeration and dramatisation.

A challenging matter is the linking of the two analyses. They differ in nature with regards to the context that is available to study the perceptions of a particular issue. Thus, when looking at a document as part of qualitative content analysis, the researcher typically has much more surrounding context; cartoons stand as they are, with little context or none that is immediately available for analysis. To bring the results of each method in contact and compare them, the researcher needs to zig-zag between the particular insights of each and shift back and forth between different scopes, foci and

depths, ideally thus producing a completed mosaic that provides a richer understanding. Interlinking insights from policy and strategy documents and from cartoons requires considering wider policy discourse and context, as well as particular issues and viewpoints together. To deal with potential hurdles of combining both methods, possibly arising from their different scope, focus and depth, it has proven useful for the researcher to maintain solid awareness of the different nature of sources. For other researchers interested in this combination of method, it would be important to have sufficient sources of text and cartoons; not all subject matters in IR are frequently covered by cartoons. Both methods are also highly interpretive, and with researchers being subjective, care must be taken to minimise co-constructions influenced by own biases resulting from socialization in a specific educational environment or a specific national culture. Another challenge, or limit, is the interpretation of cartoons from countries of which the researcher lacks cultural knowledge. This also applies to text sources; having lived in the country whose material is analysed seems helpful. In further developing this combined methodological approach, it seems significant to concentrate on building robust and differentiated categories that can be applied to all results to enable easier comparison.

It is concluded that used in combination, visual analysis is complementary and insightful. The combination has allowed the researcher to illustrate a popular reproduction of enmity and threat perceptions; representations by security policy decision-makers resonate in wider society via popular media and journalists' representations. The construction of enmity towards Iran thus exceeds what is stated in policy documents, implying that US-Iranian relations are not only shaped by conflicting interests but also by emotions that are re-produced and activated by journalists. This implies for media a quite active role in the shaping of perceptions of another state and relations with that state. Combining the two methods therefore offers potential for other studies of interstate relations and cases of threat/enemy construction.

From the analysis, a number of avenues for further research have become clear. One of them relates to the above-stated active role of media. How active a role media can play in influencing national politics regarding international/transnational issues has been illustrated (see Reinke de Buitrago, 2014). But finding out about national media concretely contribute to the shaping of interstate relations is of further interest. Research on the role of emotions in IR needs to further specify the dynamics of how the self's emotions towards and (cognitive) perceptions of the other influence

each other. An interesting question to answer would be how a perception of another state as more positive/less threatening, resulting from changing political circumstances, can stimulate more positive emotions, and which other factors are needed for such a development. Of further interest would be what may be called emotional interdependencies, that is, how self and other are emotionally dependent on each other and how a change in the external environment may affect this interdependence. More research also seems to be needed on particular emotions and their possibly distinct impact. Thus, we should inquire into the difference between various emotions and how this difference plays out in perceptions of self and other.

NOTES

1. The Iranian nuclear agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was signed by Iran, the five permanent UN Security Council members (China, France, Russia, UK and US), Germany, and the EU on July 14, 2015 in Vienna.
2. For a review of the nexus between geopolitics and visual culture, see Hughes (2007).
3. Inductive categories may be formed when deductive categories prove too large or when the analysis yields new content beyond the already existing categories.

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