

Reaching the tipping point of force in counter proliferation:
Exploring conditions leading to the Israeli pre-emptive use of force in Osirak (Iraq) and Al-Kibar
(Syria) and its implications for Iran.

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Abstract

In the past, the threat of nuclear arms and the states and actors that might gain access to such technology has resulted in the pre-emptive use of military force against states. Israel attacked Iraq (Operation Opera in 1981) and Syria (Operation Orchard in 2007) in order to prevent or forcefully disrupt their nuclear proliferation efforts. Currently, concern about Iran's nuclear program has raised debate about the possibility of an Israeli pre-emptive attack. This thesis employs hypotheses from realist, constructivist and liberal theory to explain the use of force in counter-proliferation, using a strategy of within-case and across-case analysis of both prior attacks. I locate determining conditions that led Israel to use force in counter proliferation. The hypotheses explore conditions such as uncertainty about state identity, the perception of threat, the risk of shift in regional power balance, prior military hostility, hostile public statements made by state leaders, undeterrability and the domestic support of state leaders. Most of these conditions are present in the current case of Iran, when considering the possibility of a pre-emptive Israeli attack. If Iran's military support to Hezbollah is interpreted as indirect military hostility, all the conditions for an Israeli pre-emptive attack would be present, when considering the conditions leading to the previous two Israeli attacks in counter proliferation. The analysis suggests there is a high chance that this will cause Israel to use pre-emptive force in order to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, as the "Begin Doctrine", on which Israel's security policy is based, will not accept such high security risks.

Keywords: Counter proliferation, use of force, anticipatory self defense, security, nuclear proliferation, Israel, Osirak, Al-Kibar, Iran

Introduction

When considering international security, the effects and dangers of proliferation are some of the most alarming issues of our time. Nuclear weapons were introduced in 1945 and have been playing an important role in international relations ever since. During the Cold War, the nuclear arms of the U.S. and the Soviet Union were central in the bipolar strategic relationship that shaped international politics for more than fifty years (Gartzke & Kroenig 2009). The *nuclear five* (U.S., Russia, U.K., France and China) became the incumbent states possessing nuclear arms and it is known that Israel has nuclear arms as well, though it has never denied nor confirmed it. The nuclear five perceived the proliferation of India, Pakistan and North Korea, however, as threatening. These states have done nuclear tests since the signing of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970, which confirms their possession of nuclear technology. The international community is also alarmed about Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya, which have pursued or still are pursuing nuclear proliferation (Gartzke & Kroenig 2009). Their proliferation is perceived as alarming, considering their connections with terrorist organizations or their status as “rogue states”.

The terrorist attacks against the U.S. on September 11, 2001 raised the concern about the effects to international security if such forceful Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) would be accessible to such groups (Gartzke & Kroenig 2009). The post 9-11 Zeitgeist of “War on Terror”, influenced by the “Bush Doctrine” (Spector & Cohen 2008) resulted in a U.S. security strategy that involved counter proliferation as a means to prevent terrorist organizations or rogue states with close ties to terrorist organizations, which are considered undeterrable, to have access to WMD (Payne 2004).

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The security strategy of counter proliferation was, however, not new. It was used earlier in 1981 by Israel in order to prevent Iraq from obtaining nuclear weapons (Braut-Hegghammer 2011). The Osirak bombing is the first “successful” act of counter proliferation, which ever occurred outside the frame of a conventional war (Maerli & Lodgaard 2007).

Currently, concerns about Iran’s nuclear program have raised debate about the possibility of an Israeli pre-emptive attack. Despite the claim of the Iranian regime, that it aims to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, its rival states fear that Iran is covertly developing nuclear weapons (Takeyh & Dueck 2007). Despite the current mutual understanding of both the CIA and the Mossad about the relatively low level of threat of Iran’s nuclear program (Haaretz, 2012, March 18), five Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated (Dickey, Schneiderman & Dehghanpisheh 2010) and three mysterious explosions took place in Iran (Haaretz, 2012, January 11). Media speculate that the attacks were coordinated by the Israeli intelligence service. The media speculations about the mysterious assassinations and blasts in Iran fit the vision of Israel’s state leader Benjamin Netanyahu about Iran’s nuclear program. He persistently repeats his opposition to a nuclear armed Iran and argues that a nuclear Iran would be an existential threat to Israel (Raas & Long 2007). He perceives the Iranian nuclear program as “the paramount issue of our time” (Janicek 2012) and demands Iran to freeze all uranium enrichment (Janicek 2012).

Despite the Israeli threats of unilateral military force, ten years have passed since the first suspicions about Iran’s covert nuclear program were made public, without any direct military confrontation with Iran. In the meantime, many speculations about a pre-emptive strike

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against Iran were made. But Israel did, however, discuss a “five-front strategy” with the U.S., between 2004 and 2007, against Iran (Bergman 2012). This strategy involved political pressure, covert measures, counter proliferation, sanctions and regime change (Bergman 2012). From the five measures Israel suggested, only two yet need to take place, namely counter proliferation and regime change. Considering Israel’s “five-front strategy”, which has partially already been executed, it is still possible that Israel strikes Iran pre-emptively. But under which conditions will such an event take place?

Studying the two prior cases of pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation by Israel, namely the Osirak bombing in 1981 and the bombing of the Al-Kibar nuclear facilities in 2007, will shed light on the conditions under which Israel has used force in counter proliferation in the past. Studying the relations between these states with Israel, the situational context and other factors that played a role, could provide some explanation to Israel’s security policy decisions.

The question this thesis tries to answer is mainly under what conditions states resort to the use of force to prevent other states from acquiring nuclear weapons. By answering this question, through the study of Israel’s counter proliferation actions against Iraq and Syria, it would be possible to explore the possibility of an Israeli pre-emptive attack against Iran.

Realist theory provides an explanation to the question why states use force against other states. Realists argue that the international system consists of self-interested states, which use force to protect their own security interest. There are, however, different kinds of realist theories

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which have different ideas about why and how states try to realize their security interest (Walt 1998). The general realist argument could also explain the concept of anticipatory self defense in case of an imminent threat by an opponent state (Walt 1998). The imminent threat of an attack is the determining factor for a state to use force in order to prevent being attacked (Litwak 2002), according to realist theory.

According to offensive realists states seek to increase their power with hegemony as their ultimate goal (Mearsheimer 2001). In this line of thought it is more effective to exploit the opponents fear of war by using credible threats and punishment in order to achieve security objectives (Ray 1998). Offensive action is therefore needed to increase security and to survive (Mearsheimer 2001).

Defensive realists, on the other hand, argue that accumulating too much power can work against the state itself. They argue that when a state continues actions in order to acquire more capabilities, it will eventually cause a balancing reaction that will risk its own security (Fiammenghi 2011). Robert Jervis argues that the accumulation of military capabilities will only trigger opponent states to overbalance, because they will misperceive this act as "aggressive", when in fact, the state attaining arms is only seeking to enhance its security (Jervis 1976). In other words, defensive realists claim that acquiring more capabilities (nuclear proliferation) by entrant states causes a shift in the regional power balance. This becomes a threat to other states, which do not want to be deterred and thus act in order to restore that balance, by the use of force. Defensive realists also argue that great power wars occurred because "domestic groups fostered exaggerated perceptions of threat and an excessive faith in the efficacy of military force" (Walt

1998). Realists argue that power is the best predictor of threat and therefore emphasize material factors (Rousseau & Garcia 2007).

According to liberal theory, however, decisions about the use of force are the result of state-society preferences (Moravcsik 1997). Liberal theory explains that interests and preferences of societal groups can affect the preferences of the state, also in case of interstate conflict. The support they give the state and state leader depends on whether the state preferences are equal to their preferences. Consequently, when a state leader notices a decrease of his domestic support, he could choose certain policy options, which he thinks would fit the preferences of societal groups and would result in an increase of his domestic support.

In this thesis I argue that the higher the perception of threat and uncertainty about the identity of a rival (possibly) attaining nuclear arms, the greater the sense that a state is undeterrable and hence the more likely the use of pre-emptive force against the proliferating state. I use the rational deterrence approach, the offensive and defensive realist approaches, constructivist theory and liberal theory to explain this argument (Fiammenghi 2011). I derive a set of hypotheses from these theories and apply them to the cases in a within-case and across-case analysis of the bombing of the Osirak (Iraq, 1981) and the Al-Kibar (Syria, 2007) nuclear facilities.

In the first chapter, I explore the different realist, constructivist and liberal approaches to the use of force in international conflicts. In the second chapter I discuss the research design for exploring the model and the operationalization of the variables. In the third chapter I present the

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results of my empirical case studies. Finally, I consider the theoretical and policy implications of my findings in the conclusion.

1. Why states use force

There are a range of means states could choose from as a reaction to the proliferation efforts of their rival states. Which conditions lead to aggressive reactions of states to decide to use force in order to prevent the nuclear proliferation of their adversaries? In this chapter I present an overview of the explanations provided by constructivist theory, realist theory and liberal theory and derive hypotheses from them to find causal relations between conditions and the pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation. Considering the different paradigms of the theories, the explanations vary from realist theory focusing on the material structures, constructivist theory focusing on ideational factors and liberal theory focusing on societal influences on state preferences. In the within-case analyses in chapter three, I will explore the hypotheses to explain Israel's use of pre-emptive force in Iraq and Syria.

In this thesis I argue that conditions as state identity and the perception of threat could determine whether states resort to the use of force in counter proliferation. Using the constructivist approach, I argue that *the higher the "perception of threat" and uncertainty about the identity of a rival (possibly) attaining nuclear arms, the greater the sense that a state is undeterrable and hence the more likely the use of pre-emptive force against the proliferating state*. This hypothesis is rooted in constructivist theory that argues that social structures, like norms, beliefs, and identities constitute world politics. Constructivist theory opposes neorealist concepts of material structures, like the balance of power. Constructivists argue that material structures only have meaning within the context of social rules. For example, having a neighboring state with nuclear capabilities has a different meaning depending on whether it is an ally or an enemy (Frederking 2003).

An illustration of the Israeli state identity is reflected in its security vision, expressed by Menachem Begin, Israel's Prime Minister from 1977 to 1983, who said at the press conference, two days after the bombing of the Osirak nuclear facility in Iraq (Spector & Cohen 2008):

“We chose this moment: now, not later, because later may be too late, perhaps forever. And if we stood by idly, two, three years, at the most four years, and Saddam Hussein would have produced his three, four, five bombs.... Then, this country and this people would have been lost, after the Holocaust. Another Holocaust would have happened in the history of the Jewish people. Never again, never again! Tell so your friends, tell anyone you meet, we shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal. We shall not allow any enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction turned against us”.

This statement expresses the sense of identity that Israel has due to the history of the Jewish people and the Holocaust. There are conflicting elements in state identity and the uncertainty that comes from the closed character of the Arab states towards Israel and vice-versa, which could have increased the perception of threat that resulted in a pre-emptive use of force in Israel's counter proliferation approach (Post 2004).

In the “construction of threat” model, Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero demonstrate that despite the different approaches of realists and constructivists to threat perception, both power and identity have great influence (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). The main difference in approach is the emphasis on material factors by realists versus emphasis on ideational factors by constructivists (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). In their experiments, they demonstrated that “the most feared states of all have both the power to injure and a different identity”, while

states with a shared sense of identity can reduce the perception of threat (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). In their model they include the realist claim that the perception of threat increases when a states has a weak position in terms of military capabilities. They also claim that there is an interactive relationship between power and identity, which means that when identity is completely shared, power asymmetries do not impact threat perception. While in case of no shared identity, more military power causes a high threat perception (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007).

In order to demonstrate the differences between Arab and Israeli identity, which could define the perception of threat and increase the likelihood of force, constructivist theory calls on theories from political psychology in seeking to explain the behavior of individuals (McDermott 2004), such as the model of Allison Astorino-Courtois. In her model of “Cognition, Perception and Behavior” she demonstrated that perception of threat by rival states is also affected by beliefs of decision makers and how they handle uncertainty. In this model she presents cognitive maps expressing the measures “first order connectedness”, “causal connectedness”, “cyclicity” and “cognitive imbalance” (Astorino-Courtois 1995) as means to demonstrate differences between state identities. The measure of causal connectedness, for example, indicates the “extent to which information about the decision environment is both differentiated and integrated by the decision maker”(Astorino-Courtois 1995). The analyses of the Astorino-Courtois model demonstrate that decision makers' cognitive attributes are important factors in explaining Arab and Israeli behavior. This is clearly demonstrated when studying the causal connectedness measure between Arab and Israeli decision makers. The study demonstrated that Arab decision

makers base their decisions on preexisting beliefs, while Israeli decision makers were more rational (Neack 2003).

1.1 Realist Theory

When considering the use of force in counter proliferation constructivists believe that relations between states are based on their perception of each other, while realist theory argues that relations between states are determined by their levels of power derived from their military and economic capabilities (Booth 1991). According to realists, the struggle for power among self-interested states is a central theme in international relations. Classic realists, like Hans Morgenthau believed that states had a desire to dominate other states, which resulted in war and use of force. Neorealists like Kenneth Waltz, however, believed that the international system had more affect on peace and war. Their focus is more on security than on power. Waltz argued that the international system consisted of a number of great powers, each trying to survive. According to Waltz, this condition leads states to balance against more powerful rivals instead of bandwagoning with them (Walt 1998). Because of the balancing behavior of weaker states, Waltz claimed that a bipolar power balance was more stable than a multipolar system (Walt 1998), which differed from Morgenthau's classic realist view on power balance.

The central classic realist argument that states act as self-interested actors and want to dominate other states could explain why states use military force when they perceive an imminent threat to their own security. This could also explain why states would use force preemptively. The imminent threat of an attack is then the determining factor for a state to use force in order to prevent being attacked (Litwak 2002).

1.1.1 Offensive realist approach

According to offensive realists states seek to increase their power in order to assure their security (Fiammenghi 2011) and would even use force to maintain their position. Offensive realists as Fiammenghi argue that if states are in a powerful position, they will continue accumulating capabilities in order to maintain that position (Fiammenghi 2011). Offensive realists argue that states will seek to balance an opponent that is increasing its power by acquiring military capabilities. They also argue that using force against the opponent can be advantageous for the state wanting to keep the status quo at the regional level (Fiammenghi 2011). In other words, proliferating states would cause a shift in the regional power balance and threaten the status quo. Therefore, incumbent states would use force in order to prevent that shift of status quo. From these variables in the offensive realist approach, this hypothesis follows:

The higher the risk that the attainment of nuclear capabilities by a rival state would shift the regional power balance, the more likely it is for a state to use pre-emptive force against that rival state.

1.1.2 Defensive realist approach

Defensive realists, on the other hand, argue that increases of military capability do not result in a more powerful position, because opponent states will balance against this development by also acquiring more capabilities (Fiammenghi 2011). This results into an arms race.

Defensive realists argue that great power wars occur because “domestic groups fostered exaggerated perceptions of threat and an excessive faith in the efficacy of military force” (Walt 1998). So, not the threat against the status quo, but the perception of threat is the determining

factor for the use of force, according to defensive realists. The difference between the defensive realist and constructivist approach regarding the perception of threat is that defensive realists are more focused on explaining *why* particular decisions result in the perception of threat, while constructivists focus more on understanding *how* the perception of threat is socially constructed (Krause 1998). The defensive realist hypothesis on the perception of threat and the use of force is: *The increase of the perception of threat regarding the attainment of military capabilities of a rival state increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against that rival state.*

1.1.3 Rational deterrence approach

The rational deterrence approach is the base for

“policy that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the costs of using military force will outweigh the benefits” (Huth & Gelp 1993).

The strong deterring power of nuclear weapons is clear, but according to Huth, Gelpi and Bennett, they will only deter if the challenged state perceives a credible threat from the proliferated state.

According to Allen Weiner, however, terrorist groups and rogue states regimes have changed the basic rules of deterrence policy (Weiner 2006). According to the paradigm of the Bush Doctrine, terrorist groups and rogue states are undeterrable (Delahunty & Yoo 2009). Additionally, Smith argues that one of the problems of rogue states when applying deterrence theory is that rogue states have unpredictable leaders with an unknown level of risk acceptance (Smith 2003). They could use this uncertainty in a “rationality of irrationality,” strategy and threaten other states by pretending to be potentially undeterrable (Smith 2003). Smith also argues

that rogue states will use their WMD to win a regional conflict by threatening their use to avoid battle or by using them to deter neighbour states in an asymmetric way (Smith 2003). An example is the possible proliferation of Iran and the asymmetric way it would deter Israel by its proxy army, Hezbollah at Israel's borders. Thus, deterrence strategy would only be effective if the opponent state accepts the status quo and the balance of deterrence is not in their favour (Smith 2003). Considering the variables that are present in the rational deterrence approach, and the main question of this thesis, this hypothesis follows: *The increase of the perception of undeterrability increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against the rival state.*

1.2 Liberal theory

When considering the question of use of force in counter proliferation liberal theory highlights a different angle, namely the role of domestic politics in defining preferences in interstate relations and conflict (Moravcsik 1997). According to liberal theory policy decisions are shaped by identities, interests and social values of individuals and groups from within and outside the government. Thus, when policy would be less a reflection of societal preferences, support for the government would decrease. Consequently, when the domestic support of a state leader tends to decrease, he will have to act in order to correct his policy. This would mean that when state leaders lose domestic support, for example for not being able to realize a sense of security, they would be willing to use extreme measures, fitting the preferences of powerful societal actors, by using force in an interstate conflict or counter proliferation, in order to regain the sense of security and domestic support. When applying this theory to explain security decisions based on societal criticism of a failing security policy, this hypothesis follows: *The decrease of domestic*

support of a state leader and his security policy increases the likelihood of the state taking radical measures, such as using pre-emptive force in counter proliferation.

1.3 Discussion

When trying to explain the use of force in counter proliferation, realists, constructivists and liberalists provide different perspectives, which makes it necessary to discuss their logic, criticism and the choice of including them in this thesis. To begin with, the constructivist approach to this thesis differs the most from the realist and liberal theories, by focusing on social constructs and ideas when explaining the relations between states. By using this approach, important aspects of historical, social, religious and cultural factors can be taken into account when explaining the use of force in counter proliferation by Israel against its adversaries. There is a history of military violence between Israel and its Arab adversaries in the region, which could be an important factor to explore in this thesis. There is also a religious and cultural difference between Israel and its adversaries, which could explain their security policy decisions and also the ideological or religious differences will be explored by using constructivist theory. Constructivism criticizes realist theory for discounting the role of community (Ruggie 1998) and disregarding the effects of idea's and identities (Wendt 1999). The realist perception of international relations is that of states playing in an anarchic international system as rational actors aiming for their self interest by using power. This theory could explain the rationality of Israel's security policy, based on balance of power and deterrence theories, which will add an important dimension in the analysis on the thesis question, but will not be enough to explain the use of force in counter proliferation within the context of Israel's relations with its Arab adversaries or the role of other societal actors. Liberals, however, consider international conflicts

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as the result of a two-level game, in which domestic bargaining between state and non-state actors define policy choices in international relations. Liberal theory criticizes realist theory for not considering the role of societal ideas, interests and institutions (Moravcsik 1997). Using liberal theory as an explanation of Israel's use of force in counter proliferation allows the inclusion of factors as the role of institutions and social groups in state-society relations, which influence interstate relations and security policy decisions. The choice to add this theory in explaining Israel's security policy decisions allows the inclusion of the role of Israel's political institutions, which play an important role in its foreign policy, like the position of the political coalition in the Knesset regarding foreign policy.

2. Research design

Why do states use force to prevent other states from attaining nuclear weapons? The solution of this puzzle depends on the chosen theoretical framework and the combination of hypotheses exploring the role of conditions and the causality in empirical case studies. A realist would provide an answer exploring issues in the field of balance of power, the perception of threat of the rival's military capabilities or the logic of deterrence theory. A constructivist, on the other hand would provide an answer that emphasizes (the uncertainty about the rival's) state identity and the perception of threat resulting from the identity of the rival state. Liberals would provide a different kind of solution to the puzzle by focusing on the influence of domestic groups in defining state preferences and the reaction of state leaders to these preferences. I argue that not all conditions have an equally important role in causing states to use force in counter proliferation. Certain conditions, like prior military hostility, hostile public statements by state leaders and clashing identities, create a context (Falleti & Lynch 2009). Within this context other conditions (causal mechanisms), like perception of threat (both constructivist and defensive realist variant), power balance, undeterrability, and state leader's reaction to loss of domestic support lead to the outcome of the use of force in counter proliferation. The interaction between causal mechanisms and the context defines the outcome. In this chapter I present the research method and design which is used to explore the research question of this thesis. The first section describes the scope and limits of the in-variate within-case approach and presents the variables that are used in the hypotheses. The second section explains the chosen cases and the final section explains the operationalization of the model and the methods used to present causal relations between the variables and the cases.

2.1 The limits of the approach

Scholars disagree about the reasons why states use force in counter proliferation and how their behavior can be studied in order to draw a possible pattern. I have selected a variety of theories, approaches and variables for this study in order to provide views from different angles. The choice for these theories is based on the general theories used in articles explaining the use of force in interstate conflicts. The analysis is based on a study of two empirical invariate case studies, which are compared in a cross-case method. Though the outcome of both cases are the same, the process leading to the outcome will try to highlight conditions that did not lead to the use of force and conditions that did lead to the use of force. This approach requires a historical narrative of both cases, which makes it complex and difficult to represent simply, depending on the selection of sources. The chosen sources describing historical events will be used from different perspectives in order to prevent political bias. The complexity of the Arab-Israeli conflict, however, includes the risk of dealing with biased information. A second limitation is the method of case studies in general. However a case study can show the processes involved in causal relationships, it also limits the number of possible outcome (Punch 2005). And by emphasizing one aspect of the case, other aspects might be concealed. Additionally, the choice of a qualitative research instead of a quantitative research, leads to an outcome of the analysis which will not be quantifiable (Punch 2005). This within-case study will focus on the causal relationships between the variables of military use of force, power balance, perception of threat, state identity, undeterrability, prior military hostility, hostile public statements by state leaders and domestic support of state leaders.

2.2 Case selection

The current tensions about Iran's nuclear program has prompted a debate about the possibility of an Israeli pre-emptive strike. In this debate it is important to include the specific conditions that could possibly determine an Israeli attack on Iran. In order to find these conditions, two prior cases will be considered, in which Israel used force pre-emptively in order to prevent them from attaining nuclear capabilities. The cases I have selected for this study are the Israeli bombing of the Osirak nuclear facilities in Iraq (1981) and the case of the Israeli bombing of the Al-Kibar nuclear facilities in Syria (2007). Since the scope of my research is limited to the pre-emptive use of military force within the context of counter proliferation, other cases of military conflict between Israel and other states will be excluded.

2.3 Operationalization

For this research I have consulted books, articles and online news articles to gather information about the cases and the different theories and approaches. Three main theories (constructivist, realist and liberal) have been explored in the theory chapter. I also described the different approaches and ideas that come from these different theories. The hypotheses which have been drawn from these theories are used in a within-case analysis in order to explore their explanatory power and display the conditions under which states use force in counter proliferation. In a cross-case analyses, the cases are compared to each other in order to find patterns and conditions which played a role in solving the puzzle.

In the within-case analyses I present causal relations between the conditions in the hypotheses and the events in the cases leading to the outcome of use of force in counter

proliferation. I divide the conditions in the hypotheses in two groups, namely the conditions creating the context and the conditions that are the causal mechanisms (Falleti & Lynch 2009). The conditions, which I refer to as the causal mechanisms are the intervening variables. The conditions, which I refer to as context are the environmental and structural setting (Falleti & Lynch 2009). According to Falleti & Lynch causal relations can be explained by presenting the interaction between the context and the causal mechanisms. The temporal aspect of the context plays a role as well. Sequencing, describing when things happen, may affect how and whether a specific causal mechanism will trigger a specific outcome (Falleti & Lynch 2009). Difference in tempo and duration between the cases, describing how long it takes before an outcome presents itself, may suggest a different kind of causal mechanism. Falleti & Lynch argue that the interaction between mechanisms and context determines the outcome. After using the method to distinguish context and causal mechanism, I will explain their interaction in each empirical case study and explore its implications for the case of Iran, in the conclusion.

The variables of identity and the perception of threat have been measured in a political psychological model by Allison Astorino-Courtois in her model of Cognition, Perception and Behavior to present cognitive maps (Astorino-Courtois 1995). In her analysis, she presented differences between the Israeli and Arab state identity which explain the high perception of threat (Astorino-Courtois 1995). By analyzing these cases, I will interpret the data to present the conditions that have been determining in both cases for Israel to use pre-emptive force in counter proliferation (Punch 2005).

3. Empirical Case Studies

Current debate about possible Israeli plans of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities generate interest in the conditions which in previous cases played a role for Israel to use force above other available measures in counter proliferation. This chapter provides within-case analyses of the pre-emptive use of force by Israel in the case of Osirak-Iraq (1981) and Al-Kibar-Syria (2007) and compares the outcome of both cases in a cross-case analysis. Firstly, the within-case analyses start with an overview of historical events, presenting major domestic and interstate occurrences relevant for this study, providing a context of the relations between the states. The overview includes domestic political developments and preferences, statements of state leaders and their ideological dominance, military hostility and other relevant relations with (neighbor)states or actors influencing security policy decisions. The history of military hostility between both Iraq and Syria with Israel characterizes the enmity between the Arab states and Israel, which is partially based on the creation the Jewish state in Palestine, the Israeli handling of the Palestinians, ideological clashes and territorial disputes. I argue that these conditions create a context, interacting with other conditions (causal mechanisms) that defined Israeli security policy decisions. In the following sub-section the constructivist hypothesis regarding the conditions of state identity and the perception of threat is used to explore causal relations between these conditions and the case. Thirdly, the offensive realist hypothesis is used to explore its explanatory power regarding the condition of power balance. Fourthly, the defensive realist hypothesis explores the conditions of perception of threat regarding the military capabilities of the rival state. The next sub-section presents the applicability of the rational deterrence theory and the final sub-section explores the liberal hypothesis and the condition of domestic influences on security policy. However the differences of the two cases, the outcome of the cross-case

analysis states that the risk of a shift in power balance (if a rival state would attain nuclear weapons), the perception of threat regarding the military capability of the rival state and the domestic loss of support of the state leader together are the three conditions that triggered Israel in both cases of Iraq and Syria to use pre-emptive force in counter proliferation.

3.1 Within-case study 1: The Israeli attack of Osirak-Iraq, 1981 (Operation Opera)

War and hostility. The history of hostility and tension between Israel and Iraq, marking the period prior to the Israeli attack of the Osirak nuclear facilities, reveals numerous events and factors that created a context which eventually interacted with causal mechanisms, leading to an Israeli attack on Iraq in 1981. The hostilities between Iraq and the state of Israel started shortly after the Israeli state declared its establishment on May 14, 1948 (Morris 2008). Iraq did not acknowledge the Israeli state and perceived this act as a great threat for the Arab world. Iraq, as its other Arab neighbors, were humiliated by Israel's victories in its War of Independence in 1949, the Sinai Campaign in 1956, and the Six Day War of 1967 (Rodman 2020). The history of military conflict between Israel and Iraq is a contextual condition interacting with other causal mechanisms, explaining the course of action leading to the Osirak bombing.

Saddam's perception of Israel. The perception of the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein of the state of Israel was that of an aggressive state that had taken Arab land by force and which wanted to sustain its military superiority in the region (Brands & Palkki 2011). Throughout the late 1970's, Saddam Hussein made hostile public statements against Israel. At a speech (Conflict Records Research Center 2012) on The Role of the Iraqi Armed Forces in the Arab-Zionist

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Conflict at al-Bakr University (June 3, 1978) Saddam even referred to the use of weapons of mass destruction, stating that

“...they told us, "We will hit you with the atom," we will say, "We will hit you with the atom too.” The Arab atom will finish them off, but the Israeli atom will not finish the Arabs. But when the atom does not have a match on the other side, it would end the battle. And by Israel having an atomic bomb, there will be no battle and no Iraqi soldier will stay on the front line, because each one of them is going to come to Iraq to see what happened to his family. The defeat by the atom is going to be overwhelming. The Arab nation should consider the issue of possessing the atom, as a goal related to its civilization’s fate. It is not enough to say that the Zionist enemy possesses the atom and then walk away. We have to say what we are going to do in such a case, and we should have a clear conception of the battle. At that point, we will adapt the politics according to these conclusions” (Conflict Records Research Center 2012) .

Two years later, he stated in a public meeting in 1980 that “Our worst enemy is Zionism” and presented himself as the leader who should unite the Arab region to defeat the “Zionist enemy” (Brands & Palkki 2011). Saddam Hussein made it clear during his meetings with his top military and civilian advisers, between 1978 and 1981, that he thought that an Iraqi nuclear capability would be necessary in order to deter Israel (Brands & Palkki 2011). The hostile public statements Iraq’s state leader made against Israel must be perceived as a condition giving shape to the context, which influenced Israeli security policy decisions.

Saddam’s Pan-Arabist ideology and proliferation. Saddam’s statements about attaining nuclear weapons to deter Israel or the “Zionist entity”, was not just a critical strategic issue for

him, but an identity issue as well. Inspired by Arab heroic historical figures as Saladin (Post 2004), Saddam Hussein perceived himself as the Arab leader who would save the oppressed Arab people by defeating the “Zionist entity” (Brands & Palkki 2011). According to James G. Mellon, Pan-Arabism is the reaction against

“neo-colonialism through the assertion of nationalism founded on the notion that through cooperation across state borders the Arab world could mobilize indigenous resources in such a way as to challenge Western dominance of the international economic, political and strategic milieu” (Mellon 2002).

In the early 1950’s, Saddam was inspired by Gamal Abdel Nasser, the young activist leader of Pan-Arabism and he joined the Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party in Iraq and remained active and became its vice-president in 1968 (Post 2004). Saddam was, however, aware of Israel’s powerful position and knew that taking offensive military action to achieve Israel’s defeat, would be very risky. During his strategic meetings, Saddam expressed his worries about Israel’s possession of nuclear arms and what it would mean if Israel would use them as a reaction to an Arab attack (Brands & Palkki 2011). Saddam considered nuclear weapons as a necessary and powerful coercive tool in order to be able to deal with Israel. He did not, however, intend to use nuclear weapons to attack Israel. According to transcripts of his strategic meetings, he believed that by having nuclear weapons he could neutralize the Israeli nuclear threat and pressure Israel into a conventional war, together with his Arab allies, forcing Israel out of the territories it had occupied since 1967 (Brands & Palkki 2011). Iraq’s nuclear ambitions combined with its hostile attitude against Israel alarmed Israeli politicians even more.

Israel's political earthquake & Menachem Begin's ideology of Eretz Israel. In Israel, the period between 1973 and 1981 was a time in which it suffered much damage following the Yom Kippur War, which meant a decline of the Labor's movement, and the rise of the Likud Party, leading to a dramatic change in Israel's political landscape. In the election of 1977 Menachem Begin, the leader of the Likud Party was elected Prime Minister (Rabinovich & Reinhartz 2008). This movement in Israel's domestic politics had its implications on Israel's state-society dynamics and dramatically reshaped the debate over the country's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Menachem Begin was ideologically convinced of an ancient Jewish sovereignty over the entire area west of the Jordan River. He marked this new phase in Israel's foreign policy by stating that

“the future of the West Bank is not negotiable since it is an integral and inalienable part of the historic Jewish homeland” (Shlaim & Yaniv 1980).

This new ideologically infused hard-line politics sharpened the opposition against Israel's Arab adversaries. The clashing ideologies of Saddam Hussein's Pan-Arabism and the Eretz Israel ideology of Menachem Begin should be considered as elements expressing the state identity of both states.

3.1.1 Iraq's state identity & Israel's perception of threat

Not only the hostilities of Iraq and the hostile statements of Iraq's state leader, but also the Israeli uncertainty about the identity of the Iraqi state created a context that raised the perception of threat that could have resulted in pre-emptive use of force (Ghabra 2001). State identity can be considered a contextual condition, because it is structural and a relatively constant condition. In relation with its society (Hopf 2002), the Iraqi state under Saddam

Hussein's regime reflected values that were not shared by Israel. Since the coming of power of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in 1968, the Iraqi government used terror through police, military and its intelligence agency to intimidate Iraqis (UNHCR 1995). Cases were made public through media about amputations, branding and the death penalty (UNHCR 1995). In July 1978, the Hussein government issued a decree that anyone whose ideas conflicted with those of the Ba'ath Party leadership would be subjected to execution. The Hussein government mainly targeted ethnic Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims with its cruelties (Head 2004). The Iraqi government stated that such decrees of amputations, brandings and death penalty was based on the sharia, the Islamic law. The sharia, however, is subject to various interpretations and therefore more a reflection of the Iraqi political agenda than the laws of Islam (UNHCR 1995). The randomness that was the result of the enforcement of the sharia, the oppression of Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims and the cruel character of the Islamic decrees of death and torture reflected a state identity which did not fit the democratic values that the Israeli identity consisted of (Keisser-Sugarman 2012).

Using the construction of threat model of Rousseau and Garci-Retamero on the different societal identity of Iraqi and Israel shows how Israel could have perceived the level of threat coming from the Iraqi state (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). Firstly, the model states that a weak position in terms of military power increases the perception of threat. The increase of perception of threat is a causal mechanism, since an increase of threat implies that it is not a constant factor. When analyzing the threat perception felt on the Israeli side, we would have to conclude that this was not the case before the Osirak bombing in 1981. Israel had more military capability than Iraq (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). However, when using the second variable of the construction of threat model, the importance of shared identities comes to the

forefront. The model states that a shared identity reduces the threat perception (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). When considering the oppressive character of the Iraqi societal identity before 1981, under the Saddam regime, we must conclude that there could not have been a sense of shared identity between Israel and Iraq (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). This finding could mean that due to the differences in identity between Israel and Iraq, the condition of state identity (contextual condition) interacts with the condition of perception of threat (causal mechanism), triggering Israel's security policy decisions. Even though Israel had more military power compared to Iraq, the high perception of threat could have raised the alarm about the intentions of Iraq in case it would increase its military power (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero explain this by stating that there is an interactive relationship between power and identity. When shared identity is high, threat perception is lower.

A different way of applying the constructivist theory of threat perception based on identity to explain how Israel perceived Iraq, is by using tools provided by political psychology, as the Allison Astorino-Courtois model of "Cognition, Perception and Behavior". This model is used to present cognitive maps expressing differences between Arab identity (Astorino-Courtois 1995) in decision making processes. In her analysis Allison Astorino-Courtois presented empirical evidence to suggest that decision makers' cognitive attributes in identity were important factors in explaining Arab and Israeli behavior (Astorino-Courtois 1995). Astorino-Courtois' model can be used to explain how Israel perceived Iraq, based on how the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein expressed his beliefs and how he handled uncertainty in decision making processes. This model shows that one of its measures, causal connectedness, presents that Saddam Hussein based much of his rhetoric and his decisions in dealing with Israel on

preexisting ideas and not so much on ad hoc events (Astorino-Courtois 1995). The way he addressed Israel in his public speeches and the way he referred to the Israel-Palestine conflict exemplifies this.

The Astorino-Courtois analysis and the construction of threat model of Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero add to the input presenting an interaction between the contextual condition of state identity and the causal mechanism of perception of threat, leading to the outcome of the use of force. The hypothesis regarding the variables perception of threat, uncertainty and identity could explain the Israeli security policy and the pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation. *HYPOTHESIS: The higher the “perception of threat” and uncertainty about the identity of a rival (possibly) attaining nuclear arms, the greater the sense that a state is undeterrable and hence the more likely the use of pre-emptive force against the proliferating state.*

3.1.2 Nuclear Iraq & the regional balance of power

When considering the occurrences in the late 1970's in the Middle East, there are certain developments regarding Israel's position on the balance of power scale that could have triggered the Osirak bombing, besides the constructivist contextual variables of identity differences. Israel had the strongest military capabilities in the Middle East, a good relationship with the U.S. and had just signed a peace treaty with Egypt. It had the strongest position in the region and considered Iraq as its greatest rival, considering Iraq's nuclear plans which had already started in the 1950's with the help of the Soviet Union and their high oil revenues (Snyder 1983). With their high oil revenues, Iraq could afford nuclear technology from France, which was advanced and seeking for clients (Snyder 1983). The Iraqi request that followed in 1970 for a Pressurized

Water Reactor PWR, however, made the French suspicious about Iraq's plans with its nuclear program (Snyder 1983). France eventually sold the Osiris reactor to Iraq. This brought the scenario of nuclear Iraq even closer. Israel was convinced that Iraq's acquisition of nuclear weapons would leave Israel to face an overwhelming Arab quantitative conventional superiority (Levy 2008). Consequently, Israel perceived any conventional balance of terror in the Middle East as far less stable than the U.S.-Soviet balance of that time (Levy 2008). In order to prevent this scenario of power shift, Israel needed to act in order to weaken the Iraqi position.

Determined to stop Iraq's further development as a regional political and military power In 1981, Israel did the unthinkable; it supported Iran against Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war by providing Iran with arms from its own stocks, in Operation Seashell (Bergman 2007). The logic for Israel to support Iran, even though the Ayatollah's were everything but receptive to friendly talks with the "Zionist occupier", was mainly to diffuse the pan-Arabist movement that Saddam Hussein wanted (Bergman 2007). But Israel did not have intentions to reestablish the same kind of close ties with Iran as during the time of the Shah. In fact, it was Israel's hope that

"that the two sides would weaken each other to such an extent that neither of them would be a threat", as David Kimche, the head of Israeli Foreign Ministry said (Bergman 2007).

Considering Iraq's general anti-Israel position, as expressed in public statements of the Iraqi President and the deterring force of a possible nuclear Iraq, Israel feared a devastating shift in the regional balance of power, which would be in its disadvantage. Additionally, Israel's diplomatic efforts had already failed and left Israel with fewer policy options. Consequently, the risk of shift in the regional balance of power implies a change in the situation and can therefore

be perceived as a causal mechanism, interacting with contextual conditions of state identity, hostile public statements of the Iraqi state leader, prior military hostility leading to the outcome of the use of force. This causal relation between the conditions implies that the offensive realist hypothesis of power balance is applicable to explain Israel's efforts to stop Iraq. HYPOTHESIS: *The higher the risk that the attainment of nuclear capabilities by a rival state would shift the regional power balance, the more likely it is for a state to use pre-emptive force against that rival state.*

3.1.3 Iraq's threatening military capabilities

Even though Israeli concerns about Iraq's nuclear capability already started in the mid-1970's, the domestic debate about the effects of a pre-emptive attack, including world opinion, violation of international norms and the risk of provoking a Soviet-supported Arab counter attack, asked for cautious and strategic security decisions (Levy 2008). In the meantime Iraq increased its nuclear capabilities, including bombers that could shoot nuclear warheads into Israel. But the five to one position of Israel against its Arab adversaries made Israel aware of the unifying effect of a possible strike against Iraq. Israel also feared that a pre-emptive strike would alienate the United States (Levy 2008). But Israel had also learned from the wars of 1967 and 1973 that Israeli conventional weapons could no longer deter a possible Arab invasion. Weighing the pro's against the con's took some years during Begin's time as Prime Minister and explains why Israel had not attacked Iraq earlier (Levy 2008). While Israel's diplomatic efforts against Iraq's nuclear program remained fruitless (Naor 2006), Israel perceived an increasing threat by Iraq's growing military capabilities and its nuclear program. Their last hope for diplomatic alliance against Iraq's nuclear program rested on the United States. Despite the agreement on an

assessment that Israel reached with the Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and Secretary of State Alexander Haig, regarding the Iraqi nuclear threat, the Americans refused to act (Naor 2006). These occurrences represent an increasing perception of threat regarding the Iraqi nuclear program by Israel.

The realist approach to the question of perception of threat from a “why” perspective, more than from a “how” perspective, focuses on the material aspects of the relation, rather on the differences between the identities of Israel and Iraq. In the events leading to the Osirak bombing, including Iraq’s increasing military capability, its covert nuclear program and its ambitions to reestablish a Pan-Arabic movement raised the Israeli perception of threat. Even if the accumulation of military capabilities of Iraq would not be a direct threat to Israel, the behavior of Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war made clear that the Iraqi state leader would accept the costs of war. Iraq’s growing military capability (and the accumulative military force of other Arab adversaries) reached the limits of Israel’s acceptance level, to the point that it felt the need to prevent such a scenario. The perception of threat condition resulting from the military capabilities of the rival state is a causal mechanism, since it is a reaction to a situation and therefore not a constant contextual condition. The perception of threat interacts with the contextual conditions of state identity, prior military hostility and hostile statements of the Iraqi state leader leading to the outcome of the use of force. The defensive realist hypothesis could therefore explain the pre-emptive use of force. *HYPOTHESIS: The increase of the perception of threat regarding the attainment of military capabilities of an opponent state increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against the opponent state.*

3.1.4 Iraq's undeterrability

However conflicting the views in academic literature about Israel's perception of Iraq's undeterrability or the Iraqi state leader, in the period prior to the Osirak bombing, there are factors in Israel's Begin Doctrine that could explain its foreign policy decisions regarding its Arab adversaries. To begin with, Saddam Hussein has been portrayed in different ways, expressing the different views that exist about his character and its affect on policy decisions. In his book "Leaders and their followers in a dangerous world", Jerrold M. Post writes that Saddam Hussein has often mistakenly been portrayed as the "madman of the Middle East". He claims Saddam's choices in foreign policy were not irrational, but still dangerous (Post 2004). He continues that Saddam had been inspired by nationalistic anti-Persian and anti-Zionist propaganda and strongly supported Ba'athist ideology of Pan-Arabism before becoming its leader (Post 2004). The Ba'athist ideology, that was based on the sentiments of an oppressed and divided Arab world, due to Western interests and the "Zionist entity", created a dream of Arab brotherhood against its enemies (Post 2004). The leader position of this movement was long competed between Hafiz Al-Assad and Saddam Hussein. Post adds that Saddam's attitude of freeing the oppressed Arabs from the "Zionist entity" appealed to the Palestinians, as they saw him as their advocate (post 2004). According to Post, Saddam Hussein had "messianic ambition for unlimited power", had little conscience regarding his cruelties to others and was aggressive and paranoid (Post 2004). The combination of these features turned him into a dangerous state leader who would not shy away from using destructive force to reach his goals. This view about Saddam's character could imply that Iraq would not be perceived as undeterrable per se, but nonetheless a dangerous enemy to Israel.

The analysis of Post regarding Saddam's character and its implications on policy decisions, however, is contradicted by scholars as Najib Ghadban who claim that Post's analysis highlighted the wrong characteristics of Saddam (Ghadban 1992). Ghadban claims that Iraq's "dramatic" dealings with Iran during the war do not imply a lack of conscience or excessive aggression, other than how states deal with each other during wartime (Ghadban 1992). He adds that Post should have highlighted the fact that Saddam only understood the language of power. He agrees with Post that Saddam's strategic planning stretched beyond the immediate crisis, which especially was the case regarding attaining nuclear weapons (Ghadban 1992). If Israel was aware of Saddam's strategic view, which could have been exemplified by Saddam's statements about his role as the liberator of the Palestinian people and his vision to destroy the "Zionist entity", Israel could have perceived a nuclear Iraq as an existential threat, that could explain its pre-emptive use of force.

Other scholars, as Karsh and Rautsi, on the other hand, argue that Saddam sought personal and political survival by aiming to attack in order not to be attacked (Ghadban 1992). This view, which resembles the basic idea's of the Begin Doctrine, could explain how Israel might have recognized Saddam's offensive strategy as a similar strategy to its own and therefore a threat to its security. This offensive attitude could be perceived as undeterrable, as the Karsh and Rautsi explanation would imply that Saddam acted out of fear, making its actions difficult to predict. According to this line of thought, Iraq's offensive security policy could have resulted in the fear of an Iraqi pre-emptive attack and consequently unleashed an Israeli pre-emptive attack. It is possible that the combination of these factors defined Iraq's undeterrability from Israeli perspective. It is, however, also likely that Israel did not want to be deterred by Iraq, rather than

that it thought that Iraq was not deterrable. It is therefore difficult to consider undeterrability as a causal mechanism in this empirical case study, since there is no certainty about the perception of Israel regarding Iraq's security policy and the rationality of the state leader. The rational deterrence hypothesis therefore provides too little causality between conditions to explain the use of force in counter proliferation. *HYPOTHESIS: The increase of the perception of the undeterrability factor increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against the opponent state.*

3.1.5 Israel's domestic politics and its effect on Iraq-Israel relations

As liberal theory argues that domestic societal groups influence policy decisions, Israel's domestic developments must be taken into account when studying the conditions leading to the Israeli pre-emptive use of force against Iraq. In the period prior to the Osirak bombing, Prime Minister Begin suffered from loss of domestic support, as a result of social and economic changes, influencing Israel's choices in foreign policy. Domestic pressures on the Prime Minister and the fruitless diplomatic efforts regarding Iraq's nuclear program raised domestic pressure and brought the Likud Party's dominance in danger (Naor 2006). Signing a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979 did not improve Begin's domestic support (Rabinovich & Reinhartz 2008), partially due to economic and social changes (Reich 1991) and the Iraq-Iran war, which raised the sense of threatened regional security (Levy 2008). The Camp David agreements prior to the Israel-Egypt peace treaty presented the Israeli government as an inflexible party and casted a shadow over the achievement itself. By loudly rejecting demands of the other and digging its heels in, the Israeli government also wanted to send a signal to their domestic public that they were tough (Shlaim & Yaniv 1980). But support for the Prime Minister decreased in 1981 (Naor

2006). Domestic groups in Israel were disappointed with the rigid character of the Begin regime during the Camp David negotiations, which cast a shadow over the peace treaty with Egypt. The hard-line character of the new Israeli regime triggered domestic expectations which, however, reversed when Israel's economy deteriorated. This had implications for the support for the state leader and influenced his foreign policy decisions. The Israeli Prime Minister needed to realize the expectations and secure Israel's safety against the ever growing Arab threat. He did not want Jews to ever face the threat of destruction as they did during the Holocaust. He perceived the Iraqi nuclear program as a serious threat to destroy Israel. In the meantime, the Iraqi attitude in the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 only strengthened the Israeli perception of the Iraqi state leader as risk acceptant, increasing the perception of threat. At this point Begin felt the need to take action in order to answer to the expectations of the Israeli electorate and return the sense of security. Against this background the Osirak bombing occurred. The condition of decrease of domestic support of a state leader should be considered a causal mechanism, because it has a short term character and is not a contextual condition. This causal mechanism interacts with the contextual conditions of prior military hostility, uncertainty about Iraq's state identity and hostile public statements. These contextual conditions contain elements that also were mentioned in the statement Menachem Begin gave after the Osirak bombing, confirming the fear of a military attack and the uncertainty about state identity, by referring to the Holocaust and the fear of anti-Semitism. The causality between these causal and contextual conditions present that the liberal hypothesis can be used to explain the use of force in counter proliferation. *HYPOTHESIS: The decrease of domestic support of a state leader increases the likelihood of the state taking radical measures, such as using pre-emptive force in counter proliferation.*

The bombing of the Osirak nuclear facilities. On 7 June 1981, Israel attacked the Osirak Nuclear reactor in Iraq, in order to prevent Iraqi proliferation attempts (Betts 2006). A number of contextual conditions interacted with causal mechanisms, which could explain Israel's use of pre-emptive force against Iraq. To begin with the first contextual condition, the history of hostility between the Arab states and Israel, was continuously enforced by war rhetoric of the Iraqi state leader. The second contextual condition, the difference in identity between Islamic Iraq under the Ba'ath rule and democratic, Jewish Israel added to the causal mechanism of the perception of threat (constructivist hypothesis). Iraq had an increasing amount of military capacity and expressed intentions to attain nuclear weapons, which increased the Israeli perception of threat. This causal mechanism from the defensive realist hypothesis, too would result in the outcome of use of force in counter proliferation. The undeterrability hypothesis, however, did not present causality between the conditions and the outcome. Additionally, offensive realist theory explains that a nuclear Iraq would neutralize Israel's deterrence force and shift the balance of power in Israel's disadvantage. This shows that the risk of shift of balance of power is a causal mechanism. And the final causal mechanism leading to the outcome of the pre-emptive Israeli strike can be explained using liberal theory, which was the domestic loss of support due to social and economic changes.

3.2 Within-case study 2: The Israeli attack of Al-Kibar-Syria, 2007 (Operation Orchard)

War and hostility. The relation between Syria and Israel prior to the Israeli attack of the Al-Kibar nuclear facilities is characterized with continuous military hostilities which creates a context in which the pre-emptive use of force against Syria's nuclear facilities can be explained. Syria and other Arab states invaded Israel directly after the proclamation of the Israeli state in 1948, and the relations between these two states have been tense and hostile ever since. According to the conventional view, the 1948 invasion of Israel, and the Syrian attack were acts of offensive aggression, with the intention to destroy Israel (Slater 2002). Some other historians, however, argue that the attack against Israel was motivated by and Egyptian and Syrian alarm about a possible collaborations between the Zionist leadership and King Abdullah of Transjordan (Slater 2002). Arab rivals feared an even greater expansion of the Hashemite territory of King Abdullah. Additionally, Egypt and Syria also responded to the Israeli expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians as Israeli forces moved into areas which were part of the UN partition settlement (Slater 2002). Syria was also motivated to attack Israel due to border disputes, especially concerning access to Lake Kinneret (Slater 2002). Even after signing the Armistice Agreements in 1949, the hostilities continued, following Israel's removal of Arab homes from the demilitarized zones and replacing them with "paramilitary agricultural settlements" (Slater 2002). Syria responded with force and provoked a heavy Israeli retaliation (Slater 2002).

Territorial hostilities: Pan-Arabism versus Eretz Israel. Ben Gurion's expansionist vision provoked much resistance among Israel's Arab neighbors, as his constant reminder of the historical boundaries of Eretz Israel (Greater Israel). He advocated an annexation of all Palestine, including Transjordan and Jewish settlements in Syria and Iraq (Slater 2002). The refusal of

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Arab states to accept Ben Gurion's vision of a grand Jewish state made a possible peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors impossible (Reich 1991). In June 1967 Israel captured the Golan Heights during the Six-Day War and Syria counter attacked on Yom Kippur seven years later, together with Egypt, in an attempt to regain the Golan Heights (Haaretz 2007). They were defeated by an outnumbered Israeli army, humiliating the attack of the Arab rivals. In that same year the United Nations Security Council adopted a Resolution which called for Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in the 1967 war and to respect the sovereignty of all states (Reich 1991).

The peace treaty that followed with Egypt and the Camp David negotiations caused the Arab states to look suspiciously to Egypt. Especially Syria thought the peace between Israel and Egypt would endanger the pan-Arabist movement. Despite the Disengagement agreement signed by Israel and Syria in 1974, Israel annexed the Golan Heights in 1981. The international community was not pleased with this decision and in fact still considers it as Syrian territory (Korman 1996). In 1982, Israel Invaded Lebanon in order to drive out the PLO. Syria sent troops to assist, but they were routed by the Israelis. Syria continued its support to Lebanese resistance, until Israel's final withdrawal in 2000 (Haaretz 2007). This put the Israel-Syria relations even more under pressure. The first phase of the Syria-Israeli military hostilities were thus based on occurrences which can be explained by both realist and constructivist theory. Both territorial clashes as conflicting ideological motives played a role.

Hezbollah. Once Syria's support to Hezbollah started, this realized a new phase of the Syria-Israel conflict with an element that caused an immediate rise of the perception of threat by

increasing military capabilities (of Hezbollah) and an undeterrable enemy, which would change the balance of power in Israel's disadvantage if it would ever attain nuclear weapons. Syria's support to Hezbollah, a Shi'ite terrorist organization operating from Lebanon (Haaretz 2007) raised the tensions between the two states, expressed in a speech by Syrian President Bashar al-Asad at the Islamic countries' summit in Qatar, on 13 November 2000:

“The Israelis kill, and the Arabs and Muslims are accused of terror and anti-Semitism, while they are trampling the principles of human rights, we are denounced and described as inhumane and backward. They curse the old Nazis, but they are implementing a new Nazism with no precedent in history. Israel's arrogance and actions which contradict the moral principles and sacred teachings of every godly faith, would be impossible without the encouragement and assistance of certain countries and many other parties. The world sees the death of two murderous Israeli soldiers as far more important than the deaths of dozens of innocent Arabs” (Sobelman 2000).

The Nazi comparison made Bashar al-Asad even more unpopular with its Israeli rivals. Al-Assad, however, expressed that his remarks were not anti-Semite and added that this was Ariel Sharon's way of igniting a war between the two states (Der Spiegel 2001).

Second Palestinian Intifada. By the end of 2000, the second Palestinian intifada (uprising) marked the second phase of the Syria- Israel conflict, followed by increasing Israeli-Palestinian violence in 2001 and 2002 (Slater 2002). Once the second intifada took place, Barak abruptly ended Israel's negotiations with Syria (Slater 2002). Barak was at first willing to give in to Assad's demand to withdraw from the northeast shorelines of the Kinneret Lake, but he eventually refused to comply with Syrian demands (Slater 2002). Analysts argue that this abrupt

refusal was Barak's way of creating a triumph of passing domestic considerations over permanent security needs (Slater 2002). This emphasized Barak's vision on Israel's security and within the atmosphere of the second intifada it can be explained as a symbolic act of resistance against Arab adversaries. This action can also be explained with liberal theory, explaining that policy decisions are influenced by domestic societal groups. Barak needed to act in such a way in order to reassure domestic groups in Israel of his priorities in security policy. The war over the Golan Heights became a nationalist symbolic issue that neither sides were willing to compromise over (Slater 2002). Syria knew that by using water (of the Kinneret) as a weapon would be as to declare war on Israel. And considering the superiority of Israel's military capability compared to Syria, it would not act first.

But Syria's military inferiority compared to Israel, and its disadvantageous position on the deterrence scale was about to change, once plans of attaining a nuclear weapon raised Israel's attention.

3.2.1 Syria's state identity & Israel's perception of threat

A constructivist view on the conflicts between Israel and Syria, the public statements of the Syrian president and the Syrian support to Hezbollah and the Palestinians, create a context that explains the perception of threat on the Israeli side. In relation to its societal identity, the Syrian state reflected values which were not shared by Israel. The first constructivist variable in explaining the perception of threat is based on the differences of identity and religion (Humphreys 1979). The Islam, which is a part of the core values of the Arab states and an integral part of their political and legal system, defines a difference with states which do not

share the same Islamic values (Humphreys 1979). Besides the religious factor, there is also the pan-Arabic factor that defines the Syrian identity (Zisser 2006). The Pan-Arabic part of Syria's national identity and the values that stem from it have been used by the regime to find legitimacy in its rule. (Zisser 2006). Pan-Arabism has also been used to underscore Syria's position as the only Arab state still entirely committed to the battle against Israel and to concern with the Palestinian question (Zisser 2006). The Syrian political state identity also reflects values related to its authoritarian rule, using oppression and terror to enhance its domestic power (Humphreys 1979). A combination of these identity characteristics create a certain image which affects how it is perceived by its rival, Israel. There are very few aspects of state identity which could be shared by Israel and Syria.

Using in the "construction of threat" model of Rousseau and Garci-Retamero on the different societal identity of Syria and Israel shows how Israel could have perceived threat from the Syrian state (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). Firstly, the model states that a weak position in terms of military power increases the perception of threat. When analyzing the threat perception felt by Israel before the Al-Kibar bombing, we would have to conclude that this was not the case. Israel had more military capability than Syria. Israel was, however, aware of Syria's covert nuclear program, which could have raised the sense of threat regarding its vulnerable position by being surrounded by rival states (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). When using the second variable of the "construction of threat" model, the importance of shared identities, we can see that a shared identity reduces the threat perception (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). Since there was no sense of shared identity between Israel and Syria, Israel had a high perception of threat of the Syrian state and the security decisions it would make. Even though

Israel had more military power compared to Syria, the high perception of threat could have raised the alarm about the intentions of Syria in case it would increase its military power (Rousseau & Garcia-Retamero 2007). The Astorino-Courtois analysis model also displays a high perception of threat which also is the result of differences between Israeli and Syrian decision making (Astorino-Courtois 1995). The Astorino-Courtois analysis demonstrates a high uncertainty rate on the Israeli side, which causes a high alertness, increasing the risk of escalation in conflict with Syria (Astorino-Courtois 1995).

The contextual conditions of continuous hostilities between Syria and Israel, the hostile character of public statements of the Syrian state leader, and the differences between Syrian and Israeli identity in interaction with the causal mechanism of the perception of threat (constructivist variant), shows how the constructivist hypothesis explains the outcome of the Israeli pre-emptive use of force. *HYPOTHESIS: The higher the “perception of threat” and uncertainty about the identity of a rival (possibly) attaining nuclear arms, the greater the sense that a state is undeterrable and hence the more likely the use of pre-emptive force against the proliferating state.*

3.2.2 Nuclear Syria & the regional balance of power

Besides the differences in state identity between Syria and Israel, there is another factor increasing the perception of threat regarding Syria, namely the military capability and threat of Hezbollah and what it means to Israel’s position on the regional power balance. This militant Shi’ite Islamic party, which is on the list of terrorist organizations, was created in the early 1980’s in Lebanon and ideologically motivated by Iran’s first supreme leader, Ayatollah

Ruhollah Khomeini. One of the main objectives of Hezbollah is to destruct the state of Israel (Devenny 2006). Hezbollah is supported by the Syrian and Iranian regime with financial means and military capabilities. According to experts and analysts Hezbollah has massive arms stocks, between 10,000 and 12,000 missiles, up to 8,000 Katyusha rockets and even an unmanned intelligence aerial vehicle, designed by Iran (Devenny 2006). The relationship between Syria and Iran was another factor that increased the threat of transfer of nuclear technology to yet another strong rival. Israeli officials consider a nuclear Iran to be an existential threat for Israel (Cannistraro 2007) and therefore, would not risk a disturbance of the power balance, by being deterred by both Syria and Iran. A combination of Syrian nationalism, its pan-Arabist movement and the risk of nuclear transfer to Iran and Hezbollah, make it very likely that if Syria would attain nuclear arms, it would shift the power balance in Israel's disadvantage. This interpretation of events can be seen as an interaction between the contextual conditions, namely state identity (Syrian nationalism and the Pan-Arabist movement), hostile public statements of the state leader and prior military hostility with the causal mechanism of the risk of shift in the balance of power, leading to the outcome of use of force. The causality between these conditions explain how the offensive realist hypothesis, which connects the variable balance of power to the pre-emptive use of force could therefore explain the Israeli security policy of counter proliferation.

HYPOTHESIS: The higher the risk that the attainment of nuclear capabilities would shift the regional power balance, the more likely it is for a state to use pre-emptive force against that rival state.

3.2.3 Syria's threatening military capabilities

Israel not only feared the chemical and biological weapons and missiles Syria possesses, (Cordesman 2008), but also the military capabilities of Hezbollah's, when considering the risk of transfer of nuclear technology from Syria. During the war with Lebanon in 2006, Syria supported Hezbollah against Israel and allowed the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide Hezbollah with supplies, using their territory (Devenny 2006). There are alarming scenarios about Hezbollah strikes against Israel. With its military capability, it could not only create much civilian casualties, but also harm important Israeli infrastructure (Devenny 2006). Even though Hezbollah had stocks of devastating weapons which could harm Israel greatly, Israel still had an advantageous position regarding its military capability. This perhaps explains why Israel had not used pre-emptive force before against Syria. But a nuclear Hezbollah would have devastating consequences for Israel's security, as it would be in a weaker position, being both surrounded by enemy Arab states, which together would have much more military force, including a nuclear deterrent.

Considering Syria's possession of weapons of mass destruction and its close ties with Lebanon's Hezbollah, also owning a substantial amount of weapons, Israel could perceive that the accumulation of arms of enemy states would directly threaten its security. Syria's covert nuclear program was, however, the last straw that broke the camel's back. The interpretation of these events explains that the contextual conditions, prior military hostility, uncertainty about state identity and hostile public statements by state leaders interact with the causal mechanism, perception of threat and the risk of transfer of nuclear technology to Hezbollah, leading to the outcome of pre-emptive use of force. The defensive realist hypothesis using the variable of

perception of threat therefore can be used to explain Israel's security policy decision and the pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation. *HYPOTHESIS: The increase of the perception of threat regarding the attainment of military capabilities of a rival state increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against the rival state.*

3.2.4 Syria's undeterrability

Syria's support to Hezbollah gives Syria the label of an "undeterrable" rogue state according to the standards of the Bush Doctrine, which only makes it unacceptable for Israel to allow Syria to have access to nuclear weapons. Israel perceives the Syrian support to a fundamentalist and ideology driven terrorist organization as the Hezbollah, and the risk of nuclear transfer as a great danger to its own security and would do everything to prevent Syria's access to arms which could deter Israel. Additionally, Hezbollah's prior military offense against Israel, increases the perception of being undeterrable. According to the Begin Doctrine, which is still the ideological base for Israel's security policy, accepting deterrence by a terrorist organization would be impossible. And any state directly allowing a terrorist organization to deter Israel would have to be punished. The support Syria provides to Hezbollah must be seen as a causal mechanism which is activated when interacting with the other causal mechanism of a Syrian covert nuclear program and the contextual conditions of uncertainty about state identity, hostile public statements and prior military hostilities. The interaction of these conditions lead to the outcome of the pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation. The rational deterrence hypothesis, therefore explains the Israeli policy decision to use pre-emptive force in order to stop Syria from attaining nuclear arms. *HYPOTHESIS: The increase of the perception of the*

undeterrability factor increases the likelihood of the pre-emptive use of force against the opponent state.

3.2.5 Israel's domestic politics and its effect on Syria-Israel relations

When considering the period prior to the Al-Kibar attack, certain developments in Israel's domestic politics could have some explanatory power, using liberal theory to explain Israel's security policy decisions. Following the 2006 Lebanon War, acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's popularity fell dramatically low in polls (McCarthy 2006), reaching its deepest point as 74% of Israeli in a poll expressed they thought the acting Prime Minister should resign (IMRA 2007). According to liberal theory, domestic societal groups influence policy decisions. But when they feel that policy decisions do not reflect their interests, their support of the state leader decreases drastically. The pressure on Olmert to act against Syria and to secure Israel's security interests rose even further.

Olmert was saved from his loss of domestic support though, once he took action against Syria when he learned that Syria was working on a covert nuclear program. Israeli intelligence reported that Al-Assad received delegations from North Korea, a state of which was known to own information on nuclear technology. Israeli military intelligence informed the Mossad about a Syrian nuclear program in the making. The detected telephone calls from North Korea to the Al Kibar region, raised further suspicion with the Israeli intelligence (Follath & Stark 2009). On 6 September 2007 the Israeli Air Force attacked a target near Al-Kibar in Syria (Garwood-Gowers 2011). Investigations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) later revealed uranium particles on the site, confirming that the Al-Kibar site was in fact a secret nuclear facility

(Garwood-Gowers 2011). These events can be interpreted as contextual conditions as prior military hostility, state identity and hostile statements by state leaders, interacting with causal mechanism as a covert Syrian nuclear program and the loss of domestic support, leading to the outcome of the pre-emptive use of force. The fact that Olmert responded with his policy decisions to correct the loss of domestic support by taking action within a very short times pan, suggests that the liberal hypothesis can be used to explain Israel's pre-emptive use of force in Syria. *HYPOTHESIS: The decrease of domestic support of a state leader increases the likelihood of the state taking radical measures, such as using pre-emptive force in counter proliferation.*

To conclude, a number of contextual conditions interacted with causal mechanisms, leading to the outcome of Israel's use of pre-emptive force against Syria. To begin with the history of military hostility between Syria and Israel and the clashing ideologies in the state identities, expressed in hostile public statements by state leaders create a context. The motives of both states in their conflict are both constructivist as realist. For example the ideological and nationalist drive of Ben Gurion to create an Eretz Israel clashed with the Pan-Arabist movement which Syria aimed for. Additionally, there were territorial disputes in which both states strived to gain their own domestic interests. These two elements marked the first phase of the Israel-Syria conflict. In this phase Israel always had a superior position to Syria considering its much larger military capability and an advantageous position in the regional power balance. Their conflict, however, reached another level once Syria started supporting Hezbollah, which gained much military capability and became undeterrable. Israel's military superiority thanks to its nuclear weapons was suddenly threatened by signals of a Syrian covert nuclear program. The risk of an

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undeterrable Hezbollah attaining nuclear weapons was a causal mechanism interacting not only with the contextual conditions, but also with other causal mechanisms, like the constructivist and the defensive realist perception of threat and the risk of shift of regional power balance. Finally, Israel's domestic politics as well was a causal mechanism, activated by the interaction with the contextual conditions and the all the previous mentioned causal mechanisms, enabling Israel to take swift action in order to secure its security interests.

3.3. Cross-case analysis

The within-case analyses presented historical facts, ideological motives and policy decisions characterizing the Israel-Iraq and Israel-Syria relations, which in general can be seen as the conditions leading to the outcome of Israel's use of pre-emptive force in order to prevent the nuclear proliferation of both states. To begin with, in both cases there had been prior acts of military hostility, hostile public statements made by state leaders, and a high level of uncertainty about the states' identity creating an atmosphere of enmity. These conditions are contextual conditions, which means that their role was important, but they did not trigger the outcome on themselves. The first two contextual conditions were not included in the hypotheses but did, however, play a role. The presence of these three contextual conditions interacted with the causal mechanisms of a defensive realist perception of threat regarding the increasing military capability of that state. In the case of Syria the support given to Hezbollah and the friendship with Iran even strengthened the existing perception of threat. Secondly, the offensive realist hypothesis was applicable on both cases, since attaining nuclear weapons would shift the regional power balance in Israel's disadvantage. In the case of Syria the risk of transfer of nuclear technology to Iran and Hezbollah strengthened the statement. Thirdly, in the case of Iraq there was not a clear causality between the perception of undeterrability of Iraq and the outcome of the pre-emptive use of force. It is, however, likely that Israel simply did not want to be deterred by a state which did not accept the existence of the state of Israel. In the case of Syria, however, there was a clear causal relation between the causal mechanism of Syria's support to Hezbollah and Syria's covert nuclear program, and thus becoming undeterrable, while interacting with the contextual conditions. Finally, the domestic support of the Israeli state leader was a causal mechanism, which in combination with all the other causal mechanisms and

contextual conditions, triggered the outcome in both cases. The domestic support for the Israeli Prime Ministers seemed to have decreased, prior to the attacks and was increased again after the attacks.

When considering all the conditions that were explored through the hypotheses and which came forward in the course of the analyses, all seem to have had a role in Israel's decision to use pre-emptive force in counter proliferation. Some conditions were, however, contextual conditions, setting the state, while other conditions were causal mechanisms, which in interactions with the contextual conditions and other causal mechanisms would lead to the outcome. In the case of Iraq and Syria prior acts of hostility, hostile public statements made by state leaders and uncertainty about state identity were these contextual conditions. Consequently, these three contextual conditions interacted with the causal mechanisms: perception of threat about military capabilities (defensive realist hypothesis) and as a result of conflicting state identities (constructivist hypothesis), the risk of shift in the balance of power, undeterrability (only in the case of Syria) and the loss of domestic support of the state leader. The interaction of these causal mechanisms with the contextual conditions triggered the output of an Israeli use of pre-emptive force in counter proliferation.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis I tested my hypothesis, next to other hypotheses from realist, constructivist and liberal theory, arguing that *the higher the “perception of threat” and uncertainty about the identity of a rival (possibly) attaining nuclear arms, the greater the sense that a state is undeterrable and hence the more likely the use of pre-emptive force against the proliferating state*. Firstly, the within-case analyses demonstrated two types of conditions, which played a role in explain the outcome of the Israeli pre-emptive use of force in counter proliferation. The conditions uncertainty about state identity, hostile statements by state leaders and prior military hostility are the contextual conditions, which create a context but do not trigger the outcome on themselves. When these contextual conditions, however, interact with causal mechanism like the risk of shift in the balance of power, the perception of threat about the rival state’s increasing military capabilities or due to conflicting identities, the loss of domestic support of state leaders and undeterrability, this leads to the outcome of the pre-emptive use of force.

However in both cases the outcome of the use of force was the same, there were differences when considering the role of certain conditions. In the case of Iraq there was no clear causality between undeterrability and the outcome. This was, however, a causal mechanism in the case of Syria, due to the risk of transfer of nuclear technology to Hezbollah.

The implications of this conclusion could be that Iran, Israel’s largest rival state of this moment, would have to expect an Israeli pre-emptive attack, due to its alleged nuclear proliferation efforts and its close relations with Hezbollah (Raas & Long 2007). At a first glance,

one would perhaps argue that due to the lack of the contextual condition of prior military hostility between Iran and Israel, the perception of threat should be lower. But the Iranian government considers Hezbollah as its proxy army and has been providing financial and military support since its creation. Thus the use of military force by Hezbollah could be perceived as an indirect military attack by Iran (Devenny 2006). Additionally, a nuclear Iran would shift the power balance in the region, including a risk of transfer of nuclear technology to Syria and Hezbollah, which Israel would not want to risk (Bahgat 2006). Israel demonstrates a high level of uncertainty about Iran's state identity, following hostile public statements of the Iranian president, Mahmood Ahmadinejad against Israel (Gordon 2008). There is also a high perception of threat due to Iran's military support of Hezbollah. The final causal mechanism, which was presented during the within-case analysis, was the domestic support of the Israeli state leader. When considering the domestic support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, there seems to be a fall of his popularity since the summer of 2011 when an unprecedented uprising expressed dissatisfactory social conditions in Israel. If this dissatisfaction remains until the next general elections in October 2013, the Prime Minister could be in a disadvantageous position. This could trigger the causal mechanism of loss of domestic support of the state leader and result in a pre-emptive attack. Therefore, all contextual conditions and causal mechanisms for a pre-emptive military strike in the frame of counter proliferation are present, according to this case study. If current Israeli security policy is still based on the fundamentals of the Begin Doctrine, there is a high possibility that Iran will be attacked in order to prevent its nuclear proliferation.

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