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Abstract

The paper analyzes the E-3's/EU's diplomatic strategy vis-à-vis Iran and its nuclear programme against the theoretical background of coercive diplomacy. It investigates to what extent the E-3/EU strategy has met the theoretical criteria for coercive diplomacy to succeed. The paper addresses in particular the question why this strategy has so far, despite the "gradual turning of screw"¹, not succeeded in dissuading Iran from pursuing fuel cycle activities. I argue that the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy approach vis-à-vis Iran has suffered from certain flaws: the objectivity and the legitimacy of the E-3/EU underlying objective and its specific demand have been seriously challenged not only by Iran and countries of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), but also by the fact that with France and the UK the E-3/EU embraces two Nuclear Weapon States (NWS), which has further fuelled the perception of unfairness. Finally, I argue that a "carrots and sticks" policy as pursued by the E-3/EU is unlikely to work out in the Iranian case, taking into account that the E-3/EU demand touches on Iran's vital interests and on questions of prestige, regional supremacy and nationalism.

¹ A. George, "Forceful Persuasion: Coercive Diplomacy as an Alternative to War", Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, p. 68.

Introduction: the E-3/EU and Coercive Diplomacy

"[I]t is an important day for Europe because we are dealing with a major issue", announced the French Minister of Foreign Affairs De Villepin when the E-3 – the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Germany and the UK – in October 2003 entered into negotiations with Iran on its nuclear programme.² The E-3 engagement was preceded by the disclosure of two undeclared uranium enrichment and heavy water facilities in August 2002 which called the attention of the IAEA to Iran's possible nuclear ambitions and raised suspicion that Iran might strive for a nuclear weapons programme.³

The window of opportunity for the E-3/EU to demonstrate its aspirations to become a serious non-proliferation and global actor has been opened by the United States who initially refused to attend to the Iranian nuclear issue and therefore asked the Europeans to step in.⁴ Solving the Iranian nuclear issue has - after the European debacle over the Iraq war - become a serious test case for Europe's unity and for the European Security Strategy and the EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), both adopted in 2003.⁵

Since then, the E-3, initially single-handedly, later joined by the EU's High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana, and finally by the US, China and Russia in the so-called P5+2 format, have tried to prevent Iran from acquiring a closed nuclear fuel cycle.⁶ The E-3/EU have thereby embarked upon a diplomatic strategy called "coercive diplomacy" which couples a clear demand vis-à-vis a target with threats, positive inducements and a deadline for compliance.⁷ Despite nearly six years of significant E-3/EU and P5+2 engagement and five UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, so far the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy attempt vis-à-vis Iran has not brought about any changes in the Iranian conduct.

² Dominique De Villepin quoted in J. Spear, "The Emergence of a European 'Strategic Personality'", *Arms Control Today*, November 2003, accessed 20 May 2008, www.armscontrol.org/act/2003_11/Spear.

³ O. Meier & G. Quille, "Testing Time for Europe's Nonproliferation Strategy", *Arms Control Today*, May 2005, accessed 13 June 2008, www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_05/Oliver_Quille.

⁴ S. Harnisch, "Minilateralism, Formal Institutions and Transatlantic Cooperation: The EU-3 Initiative vis-à-vis Iran's Nuclear Program", in P. Schmidt (ed.), *A Hybrid Relationship: Transatlantic Security Cooperation beyond NATO*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2008, p. 95.

⁵ European Council, "A Secure Europe in a Better World", Brussels, 12 December 2003; European Council, "EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", Brussels, 12 December 2003; and C. Portela, "The EU and the NPT: Testing the New European Nonproliferation Strategy", *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 78, July/August 2004, www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd78/78cp.htm.

⁶ Quille & Meier, op.cit.

⁷ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 68.

This paper seeks to shed light on the following research questions: Why has the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy approach vis-à-vis Iran and its nuclear programme despite the “gradual turning of the screw”⁸ so far not succeeded in dissuading Iran from pursuing fuel cycle activities but instead provoked further defiance by the Iranian leadership and other members of the international community? Has the E-3/EU strategy met the necessary, theoretical criteria for coercive diplomacy success? To what extent is the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy approach vis-à-vis Iran a promising strategy to induce Iran to stop its fuel cycle activities?

I argue that the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy attempt vis-à-vis Iran has had to grapple with certain flaws. First, against the background of the “grand bargain” of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the fact that so far nobody has been able to prove that Iran indeed strives for a nuclear weapon capability, the E-3/EU objective and specific demand is not perceived by Iran and other members of the international community as legitimate but rather as “excessive” and unfair.⁹ This has undermined the legitimacy and credibility of the E-3/EU demand and provoked criticism and defiance not only by the Iranian public but also by other members of the international community.¹⁰ Second, the E-3/EU coalitional format has turned out to be disadvantageous to address the Iranian issue as the NWS are over-represented.¹¹ Third, it is highly unlikely that a strategy of threats coupled with positive inducements is a promising approach to dissuade Iran from carrying out further fuel cycle activities, taking into account that this demand touches on Iran’s vital interests and on questions of nationalism and prestige, both psychological factors which cannot be influenced by altering a target’s cost-benefit calculation.

The paper starts with an overview of the concept of coercive diplomacy, followed by the theoretical conditions for the success of coercive diplomacy. It then addresses the question of internal divisions among EU member states on nuclear disarmament. The subsequent section of the paper delineates the objectives of the E-3/EU in the nuclear standoff, differentiating between explicit and implicit objectives. In the analytical part, the theoretical framework is applied to the Iranian case study. The paper concludes with a brief assessment regarding the extent to which the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy approach vis-à-vis Iran can be regarded as a success.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹ T. Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited: The Iranian Nuclear Weapons Crisis”, Chicago, *48th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA)*, 28 February-4 March 2007, p. 17, accessed 20 April 2008, www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/7/8/7/0/pages178706/p178706-1.php.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ S. Harnisch, “The Lessons of the EU’s Iran Diplomacy”, 2007, accessed 20 May 2008, www.atlantic-community.org/index/articles/view/The_Lessons_of_the_EU’s_Iran_Diplomacy.

Theoretical Background: the Concept of Coercive Diplomacy

Broadly speaking, coercive diplomacy can be seen as a diplomatic strategy involving some kind of coercion seeking to bring about change in the opponent's behaviour.¹² It is a form of "crisis bargaining".¹³ Through the use of threats, positive and negative incentives as well as "persuasion", policymakers can at least try to find a peaceful way out of the crisis.¹⁴ This study is based on the definition of coercive diplomacy as used by Alexander George: "The general idea of coercive diplomacy is to back one's demand on an adversary with a threat of punishment for noncompliance that he will consider credible and potent enough to persuade him to comply with the demand."¹⁵ I have deliberately chosen this definition because of its analytical clarity as well as its flexibility and inclusiveness of various types of threats which are not limited to threats of force. Coercive diplomacy is thus characterized by three key features: a) a demand, b) a threat of punishment and c) a deadline for compliance.¹⁶ The use of threats serves the purpose of convincing the opponent that the costs of non-compliance with the coercer's demand will be higher than the costs of compliance and the expected benefits of continuing an action.¹⁷ Thus, coercive diplomacy aims at the cost-benefit calculation of a rational actor, trying to *persuade* him "to cease his aggression rather than bludgeon him into stopping".¹⁸

The coercive diplomacy attempt encompassing all three elements (a demand, a threat of punishment and a time limit for compliance) with or without positive inducements constitutes the purest variant of coercive diplomacy, the "classic ultimatum".¹⁹ George further distinguishes between the "tacit ultimatum", the "try-and-see" approach and the "gradual turning of the screw" approach.²⁰

Furthermore, coercive diplomacy can vary with regard to the different kinds of threats which can be used by a coercer. In general, three different kinds of threats can be discerned: a) political and/or diplomatic threats which can be considered as the mildest form of coercive threats, b) economic threats which can be regarded as

¹² P. Bratton, "When Is Coercion Successful?", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2005, p. 101.

¹³ George, "Forceful Persuasion", *op.cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁶ G. Schaub, "Compellence: Resuscitating the Concept", in L. Freedman (eds.), *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 44; and Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ George, "Forceful Persuasion", *op.cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ George, "Forceful Persuasion", *op.cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

the strongest type of coercive threats "that can be adopted short of force"²¹ and c) threats of force which constitute the strongest and most extreme type of coercion.²²

Conditions for Coercive Diplomacy Success

In assessing the success or failure of coercive diplomacy, this study takes into account the extent to which the outcome actually matches the coercer's objectives as stated at the beginning of the crisis. Although this appears at least from a practical point of view as challenging, as the coercer's objectives can be subject to change during the bargaining process²³, it could shed a more nuanced light on the "inside/outside" dimension of the EU's success.²⁴ Following this argument, the paper will also assess the coercive diplomacy outcome according to the extent to which it matches the EU's internal and external objectives of the coercion. Although the general success rate of coercive diplomacy is low, the strategy appears tempting to many policymakers in order to achieve changes in the target's policy "'on the cheap'", without waging war.²⁵

Demand-related Conditions: Nature of the Demand

The nature of the demand is a key factor for the target's motivation to comply.²⁶ A high demand which touches upon the target's vital interests will likely encounter strong opposition by the target, thereby making successful coercive diplomacy more difficult.²⁷ George himself therefore distinguishes analytically between three kinds of coercive diplomacy demands: to induce the opponent, a) "to stop short of the goal", b) "to undo the action" or c) "to make changes in the government", whereby the third one constitutes the most ambitious type of demand.²⁸ However, the decisive factors in assessing the nature of the demand are not only its magnitude but also the target's "psychological perception" of it.²⁹ Even if the demand falls within

²¹ Ibid., p. 27.

²² P.G. Lauren, "Coercive Diplomacy and Ultimata: Theory and Practice in History", in A.L. George & W.E. Simons (eds.), *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994, p. 29.

²³ A. Hyde-Price, "Coercion in Crisis Management and Peace Support Operations", *49th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA)*, San Francisco, 26-29 March 2008, p. 27.

²⁴ K.E. Jørgensen, "The European Union's Performance in World Politics: How Should We Measure Success?", in J. Zielonka (ed.), *Paradoxes of European Foreign Policy*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 1998, 90.

²⁵ R.J. Art, "Introduction", in R.J. Art & P.M. Cronin (eds.), *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003, p. 7.

²⁶ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 12.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A. George, "Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics", in A.L. George & W.E. Simons (eds.), *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994, p. 9.

²⁹ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 12.

the most modest category ("stop short"), the specific requirement can be "a tough one to achieve".³⁰

Legitimacy of the Demand

The legitimacy of a demand is another important feature which can contribute to the success of coercive diplomacy. Even if a coercer's objective follows norms of international law, it will only be perceived as legitimate if other states which allegedly violate norms of international law, too, are required to comply.³¹ Otherwise, "critics can easily point to the double standards" used by the coercer.³² Furthermore, with an underlying legitimate objective, it is easier for the coercer to obtain broad public support at the domestic as well as at the international level.³³

Assurance against More Demands in the Future

Another important criterion which enhances the chance for success of coercive diplomacy is the assurance for the target against "new demands" by the coercer in the future.³⁴ The target will less likely comply with the coercer's demands if he expects that his compliance with the first demand could tempt the coercer to make further demands on him.³⁵

Threat-related Variables: Credibility of Threats

The credibility of the coercer's threat can indeed be regarded as key to the success of coercive diplomacy.³⁶ The coercer therefore has "to leave as little room as possible for judgment or discretion in carrying out the threat".³⁷

The credibility of threats depends on the following factors.³⁸

Proportionality of the Threat to the Demand

The proportionality of the threat to the demand can have a significant impact on the credibility of a coercive threat. On the hand, the threat has to be "potent"

³⁰ R.J. Art, "Coercive Diplomacy: What Do We Know?", in R.J. Art & P.M. Cronin (eds.), *The United States and Coercive Diplomacy*, Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003, p. 396.

³¹ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 4.

³² Ibid.

³³ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 68.

³⁴ P.V. Jakobsen, "Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War: A Challenge for Theory and Practice", London, Macmillan, 1998, p. 29.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 26.

³⁶ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 5; and Bratton, op.cit., p. 101.

³⁷ T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 40 and 160.

³⁸ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 79; and Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., pp. 5-6.

enough in order to persuade the target that the costs of his compliance will be lower than the costs of his non-compliance.³⁹ The target's costs of compliance, in turn, depend on the magnitude of the coercer's demand. Therefore, the coercive threat should not be too small in comparison to the coercer's demand.⁴⁰ On the other hand, one should also take into account that the credibility of a threat depends to a certain degree also "on the costs and risks associated with [its] fulfilment" for the coercer.⁴¹ Thus, too big threats might appear less credible for a target if their fulfilment implicates high costs and risks for the coercer.

The Coercer's Reputation

Threats are more likely to be perceived as credible by the target if the coercer has already a reputation for "toughness"⁴², that is, for executing his threats.⁴³

"Escalation Dominance"⁴⁴

The chance for success of coercive diplomacy is higher when the coercer manages it "to create fear of unacceptable escalation in the mind of the opponent".⁴⁵ "Escalation dominance" then refers to a coercer who is able to quickly raise the costs of non-compliance for the target if the target continues to resist.⁴⁶

Time Limit

Coercive diplomacy is more likely to succeed if the coercer's threat is coupled with a reasonable deadline.⁴⁷ The coercer should set the deadline according to what he demands of the target.⁴⁸ The deadline therefore should not be, on the one hand, too tight, and, on the other hand, too loose as then the target might interpret this as a sign of the coercer's weakness and might embark upon "delaying tactics".⁴⁹

"Carrots and Sticks"

Coercive diplomacy is more likely to succeed if the coercer combines his demand on the target also with positive inducements if he does comply.⁵⁰ From a cost-benefit

³⁹ Jakobsen, "Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War", op.cit., p. 26.

⁴⁰ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 5.

⁴¹ Schelling, op.cit., p. 6.

⁴² S.J. Brams & M.P. Hessel, "Threat Power in Sequential Games", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1984, p. 27.

⁴³ Bratton, op.cit., p. 101.

⁴⁴ Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 25.

⁴⁵ Jakobsen, "Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War", op.cit., p. 27.

⁴⁶ Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 26.

⁴⁷ Jakobsen, "Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War", op.cit., p. 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴⁹ P.V. Jakobsen, "The Strategy of Coercive Diplomacy: Refining Existing Theory to Post-Cold War Realities", in L. Freedman (ed.), *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 72.

⁵⁰ Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 22.

perspective, positive inducements do not actually reduce the target's costs of compliance (as the demand itself is not changed) but make them more acceptable for the target, offering him additional benefits.⁵¹

Do the Sticks Meet the Target's "Most Vulnerable Pressure Points"?⁵²

The chance for success of coercive diplomacy is higher if the coercer's threats are targeted at the opponent's most important and valuable sectors and assets.⁵³ In order to be able to determine these "pressure points", the coercer has first to find out what accounts for the target's strength and then to calculate which of these points of the target he can threaten credibly without being too costly for himself.⁵⁴

Domestic Political and Economic Realities within the Target State

Coercive diplomacy is more likely to be successful if the coercer's demand is favourable to the interests of domestic key groups in the target state.⁵⁵ In non-democracies the success of coercive diplomacy is highly dependent on the interests of "key elite groups" and whether and how they are affected by the coercer's demand.⁵⁶ Jentleson differentiates between elite groups serving either as "circuit breakers" or as "transmission belts" for the coercer's demand.⁵⁷ They will likely serve as "circuit breakers" if compliance with the demand turns out to be disadvantageous for their interests.⁵⁸ They will likely serve as "transmission belts" if the concessions promote their interests.⁵⁹

Strength of the Coercer's and the Target's Motivation

Attempts of coercive diplomacy constitute a form of "chicken game".⁶⁰ Giving in is tantamount to losing.⁶¹ Therefore, as George argues, "the relative motivation of the two sides plays [an important role] in determining the outcome of coercive diplomacy".⁶² The motivation depends highly on the strength and kind of interests which the coercer and the target associate with the conflict and on how much

⁵¹ D. Byman & M. Waxman, *The Dynamics of Coercion: American Foreign Policy and the Limits of Military Might*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 9-10.

⁵² Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 30.

⁵³ Bratton, op.cit., p. 106.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ B. Jentleson, "Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World", *The Stanley Foundation*, Policy Analysis Brief, December 2006, p. 4, accessed 20 March 2008, www.stanleyfoundation.org/policyanalysis.cfm?id=57.

⁵⁶ Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 30.

⁵⁷ Jentleson, "Coercive Diplomacy", op.cit., p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ F. McGillivray & A.C. Stam, "Political Institutions, Coercive Diplomacy, and the Duration of Economic Sanctions", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 48, No. 2, 2004, p. 158.

⁶¹ Art, "Coercive Diplomacy: What Do We Know?", op.cit., pp. 366-367.

⁶² George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 77.

each of them is willing to risk and pay for enforcing its interests. Jakobsen differentiates between four categories of interests, namely "vital", "strategic", "stability" and "moral/ideological" interests, and argues that the coercer's willingness to use threats or even force in order to induce the target to comply is higher, if the conflict involves "vital" or "strategic" interests.⁶³

Unilateral or Coalitional Coercive Diplomacy

It can be assumed that the coalitional use of coercive diplomacy generally diminishes its chances of success as it usually requires consensus amongst all coalition members, which can be an extremely difficult and protracted process.⁶⁴ And even if there is consensus amongst the coalition members about the general objective of their coercion, they can still disagree about how it can be achieved best.⁶⁵ Furthermore, usually the members of the coercing coalition will be required to make substantial concessions concerning the nature and the extent of the demand and the coercive threat in order to be able to reach a consensus and to maintain their coalition.⁶⁶ This, in turn, is likely to diminish the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy.⁶⁷ Hyde-Price therefore concludes that employing "coercive diplomacy" successfully is "particularly difficult for alliances of democracies like NATO, or international organizations like the EU".⁶⁸ However, one could easily argue that coalitions using "coercive diplomacy" can exert a much bigger and more extensive pressure on a target state and usually have more resources at their disposal than a single coercing state.⁶⁹

Engaging in the Nuclear Standoff on Iran: the Objectives of the E-3/EU

From a historical perspective, coherence of the EU member states on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has turned out to be difficult.⁷⁰ In particular with regard to disarmament, there are cleavages among the EU member states: between France and the UK, which possess nuclear weapons, and those EU member states which have the technology and knowledge to produce nuclear weapons but have committed themselves under the NPT to refrain from doing so. The latter group consists of Germany and traditional "pro-disarmament" or non-aligned EU member

⁶³ Jakobsen, "Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War", op.cit., pp. 31-36.

⁶⁴ George, "Forceful Persuasion", p. 70.

⁶⁵ Art, "Coercive Diplomacy: What Do We Know?", op.cit., p. 367.

⁶⁶ L. Freedman, "Introduction", in L. Freedman (eds.), *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 14.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hyde-Price, op.cit., p. 33.

⁶⁹ George, "Forceful Persuasion", op.cit., p. 70.

⁷⁰ S. Pullinger & G. Quille, "The European Union: Seeking Common Ground for Tackling Weapons of Mass Destruction", *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 74, December 2003, accessed 13 June 2008, www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd74/74europe.htm.

states like Ireland or Sweden which are members of the so-called "New Agenda Coalition" as well as Austria, Slovenia and Greece.⁷¹

France and the UK turn to several arguments in order to justify their nuclear arsenals.⁷² Despite the clear provisions of Article VI NPT which oblige them to "eliminate" their nuclear weapons, they basically follow NATO's position that nuclear weapons are "essential to preserve peace" and thus contribute to more security.⁷³ By contrast, the EU member states which belong to the New Agenda Coalition call for a "speedy, final and *total elimination*" of nuclear weapons by the NWS.⁷⁴ Submitting an annual resolution on disarmament at the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the NAC first succeeded in 1998 to drive a wedge between NATO members with nuclear weapons and those without.⁷⁵ Also in 2004, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Greece and Finland openly declared that "[n]uclear disarmament is an integral part of the NPT regime", calling for nuclear disarmament by the NWS, arguing that otherwise their "appeal to aspiring nuclear weapon states" like Iran would be "less credible".⁷⁶

The E-3/EU's Explicit Objectives in the Iranian Case

Although the IAEA has so far been "unable to [...] verify the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran",⁷⁷ many EU member states suspect Iran of developing a nuclear weapons capability under the smoke-screen of the NPT.⁷⁸ Following its strategy against the proliferation of WMD, the E-3/EU's obvious motivation for engaging in negotiations with Iran was based on the main principle already stated in the June 2003 declaration: "to prevent, deter, halt and, where possible, eliminate proliferation programmes of concern worldwide".⁷⁹ Iran constitutes a proliferation concern for the E-3/EU and should therefore be prevented from the acquisition of nuclear weapons.⁸⁰ The Iranian leadership has always asserted that its nuclear activities are of an exclusively peaceful nature and not for

⁷¹ Meier & Quille, op.cit.

⁷² T. Sauer, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime in Crisis", *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2006, p. 336.

⁷³ NATO's Strategic Concept of 1991 quoted in T. Sauer, "Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament: Two Sides of the Same Coin", *IIEB Working Paper*, May 2005, p. 10, accessed 20 May 2008, soc.kuleuven.be/iieb/bib.php?name=Sauer&init=T.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Sauer, "Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament", *ibid.*, p. 13, emphasis added.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Sauer, "Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament", op.cit., p. 15.

⁷⁷ See for example IAEA Board Report, GOV/2006/64, p. 4.

⁷⁸ J. Fischer quoted in M. Fitzpatrick, "Assessing Iran's Nuclear Programme", *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2006, p. 5.

⁷⁹ European Council, "EU Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", op.cit., p. 2.

⁸⁰ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 15.

acquisition of nuclear weapons, an argument which was further supported by the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who issued a Fatwa "that the production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons are forbidden under Islam and that Iran shall never acquire these weapons".⁸¹ The E-3/EU's focus therefore shifted to Iran's potential nuclear weapons capability.⁸² The E-3/EU's initial objective was to bar Iran from pursuing a closed nuclear fuel cycle including uranium enrichment, reprocessing, conversion, plutonium separation and the construction of heavy water reactors and to induce Iran to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol (AP).⁸³

The E-3/EU's Implicit Objectives in the Iranian Case

The E-3/EU's implicit motivation for engaging in the crisis over the Iranian nuclear activities comes from its ambition to prove to the outside world its "actorness" qualities not only with regard to nuclear non-proliferation but also in general with regard to the CFSP.⁸⁴ On the one hand, the Iranian case offered the opportunity for the E-3 to prove that the E-3/EU indeed is able to act and to intervene "commonly" in a crisis situation like the one over the Iranian nuclear crisis. On the other hand, by engaging in the crisis, the E-3/EU could prove its "leadership" qualities including its aspiration for "recognition" of its actorness by other countries like the US, its "ability to effectively negotiate with other actors", the adoption and actual use of relevant "policy instruments" and the evidence of its "coherence".⁸⁵

The Position of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Iranian Nuclear Programme

The NAM encompasses 118 states which have committed themselves not to align "with or against any major power bloc".⁸⁶ The NAM states form a considerable voting bloc at the UNGA.⁸⁷ Traditionally, the NAM member states have taken a strict stance on the disarmament obligation of the NWS under Article 6 of the NPT.⁸⁸ They strictly oppose the NWS' interpretation of Article 6 of the NPT and call it a "highly

⁸¹ "Iran, Holder of Peaceful Nuclear Fuel Cycle Technology", IRNA, 10 August 2005, accessed 20 May 2008, web.archive.org/web/20051016053118/http://www.irna.ir/en/news/view/line-17/0508104135124631.htm.

⁸² Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 15.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ M. Overhaus, "Analysis: European Diplomacy and the Conflict over Iran's Nuclear Program", 19 July 2007, p. 2, accessed 20 May 2008, www.deutsche-aussenpolitik.de/resources/dossiers/iran06/Dossier-Iran-Introduction.pdf.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

⁸⁶ T. Ogilvie-White, "The Non-Proliferation Diplomacy of the Non-nuclear-Weapon States: Understanding International Responses to Iran's Nuclear Defiance", Paper presented at the 48th Annual ISA Convention, Chicago, 28 February-4 March 2007, p. 6, accessed 20 May 2008, www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/8/1/4/1/pages181410/p181410-1.php.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

discriminatory" reality.⁸⁹ Despite defections by certain NAM member states, the majority of NAM members seems to support Iran's nuclear fuel-cycle related activities, as becomes apparent from the statement adopted at the XVth Ministerial Conference of NAM in July 2008 which calls for the respect of "the basic and inalienable right of all states to develop research, production and use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes" and the respect of "[s]tates' choices and decisions, including those of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the field of peaceful use of nuclear technology and its fuel cycle policies".⁹⁰

Applying the Theory of Coercive Diplomacy to Iran

This section investigates whether the E-3/EU coercive diplomacy approach vis-à-vis Iran has met the theoretical conditions successful for coercive diplomacy.

Demand-related Variables: Nature of the Demand

On 1 July 1968 Iran signed the NPT and subsequently ratified it in February 1970.⁹¹ It is thereby legally bound under Article II of the Treaty to abstain from the acquisition of nuclear weapons.⁹² However, it has an "inalienable right" under Article IV NPT to "develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes".⁹³ Iran further concluded a Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which entered into force in May 1974.⁹⁴ Under this Agreement it is obliged to declare all its nuclear activities, including facilities and material to the IAEA.⁹⁵ When the E-3 entered the negotiations with Iran on its undeclared nuclear facilities and activities in October 2003, they asked Iran to suspend all its "activities leading to the production of nuclear materials", concretely uranium enrichment, conversion, plutonium reprocessing and the construction of heavy water facilities.⁹⁶

Against the background that Iran has kept its nuclear activities and facilities secret for over 18 years, its assumed connections to terrorist groups and to the A.Q. Khan

⁸⁹ See for example the 12th NAM summit in Durban, September 1998, accessed 20 May 2008, www.fas.org/nuke/control/nwc/news/980905-nam.htm.

⁹⁰ IAEA, "Information Circular", INFCIRC/733, 11 August 2008, p. 3, accessed 15 August 2008, www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/infcircs/2008/infcirc733.pdf.

⁹¹ P.M. Cronin, "The Trouble with Iran", in P.M. Cronin (ed.), *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*, Westport, Praeger, 2008, pp. 13-14.

⁹² Article II NPT.

⁹³ Article IV:1 NPT.

⁹⁴ IAEA, "Information Circular", INFCIRC/214, 13 December 1974, accessed 20 May 2008, www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/laealran/index.shtml

⁹⁵ See IAEA, "Safeguards: Stemming the Spread of Nuclear Weapons", p. 2, accessed 20 May 2008, www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/laealran/index.shtml.

⁹⁶ International Crisis Group, "Iran: Is There a Way out of the Nuclear Impasse?", *Middle East Report*, No. 51, 2006, p. 11.

network and the fact that a civilian nuclear programme can be easily transformed into nuclear weapons capabilities ("dual-use"), the E-3/EU demand might indeed appear reasonable.⁹⁷ Taking into account that North Korea has developed its nuclear weapons capability under the smoke screen of the NPT and then withdrew from it, an example which Iran might follow, the E-3/EU demand might even appear "plausible".⁹⁸ However, the IAEA and nobody would else have been able to verify that Iran wants to use its nuclear fuel cycle activities for other than "peaceful purposes".⁹⁹ Furthermore, other Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) like Japan or Brazil, which are also parties to the NPT, legally maintain a partial or full fuel cycle under the NPT.

It is also questionable to which extent it makes sense with regard to the chance for success of coercive diplomacy to demand from a target country something that it has definitely refused to do from the beginning.¹⁰⁰ Since the start of the nuclear negotiations, the Iranian leadership has declared that it will never permanently suspend its uranium enrichment activities.¹⁰¹ Applying George's theoretical categories of coercive demands, the E-3/EU demand would best fit under "stop short of the goal", the most modest demand in coercive diplomacy.¹⁰² However, the demand must be seen in relation to the target's intentions.

The Legitimacy of the Objective

The E-3/EU objective of preventing Iran from the acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability, taking into account Iran's alleged support of terrorist groups, might indeed appear legitimate.¹⁰³ The question of the legitimacy of the E-3/EU demand with regard to Iran, however, is much more directed at the key principles of the "grand bargain" of the NPT.¹⁰⁴

When the NPT was set up in 1967, a division of the international community in the NWS and NNWS was introduced.¹⁰⁵ According to Article 9 of the NPT, the NWS are

⁹⁷ S. Chubin, "Understanding Iran's Nuclear Ambitions", in P.M. Cronin (ed.), *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*, Westport, Praeger, 2008, p. 51.

⁹⁸ S. Harnisch & R. Linden, "Iran and Nuclear Proliferation – Europe's Slow-Burning Diplomatic Crisis", *Foreign Policy in Dialogue*, Vol. 6, No. 17, 2005, p. 51.

⁹⁹ See the various IAEA reports, for example IAEA Board Report, GOV/2008/15.

¹⁰⁰ M. Fitzpatrick, "Is Iran's Nuclear Capability Inevitable", in P.M. Cronin (ed.), *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*, Westport, Praeger, 2008, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ See Rouhani quoted in A.Z. Borda, "Iran and the EU3 negotiations", UACES European Studies On-Line Essays, 2005, p. 9, accessed 20 May 2008, www.uaces.org/E53Borda.pdf.

¹⁰² A. George, "Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics", in A. George & W.E. Simons (eds.), *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994, p. 9.

¹⁰³ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 16.

¹⁰⁴ Harnisch & Linden, op.cit., p. 49.

¹⁰⁵ T. Sauer, "The 'Americanization' of EU Nuclear Non-proliferation Policy", *Defense & Security*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2004, p. 115.

those states which had already acquired a nuclear weapons capability by 1967.¹⁰⁶ The NNWS committed themselves not to build or develop nuclear weapons under Article II NPT. In return for their relinquishment, they were granted an “inalienable right” under Article IV:1 NPT to “develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes”. In addition, the NWS were obliged to step-by-step dismantle their nuclear weapons arsenals under Article VI of the NPT. This was the condition under which the NNWS agreed to abstain from the acquisition of nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁷ Subsequent NPT Review Conferences had clearly stated that the obligation of nuclear disarmament implicated a *de facto* “elimination” of nuclear weapons by the NWS.¹⁰⁸

Whereas the NWS argue that nuclear proliferation and nuclear disarmament are two different issues, and therefore no comparison should be drawn between the compliance or non-compliance of the NWS with Article VI and that of the NNWS with Article II of the NPT, the NNWS (including Iran) perceive this practice as highly discriminatory.¹⁰⁹ The Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in 2005 that “the total indifference of nuclear weapon states to the wishes of the international community to make progress towards nuclear disarmament” could result in an “unravelling of the fabric, credibility and authority of the NPT”.¹¹⁰ The NNWS are closely monitored by the IAEA and are held accountable if they are suspected of being in non-compliance with Article II NPT, whereas the NWS are not held accountable for their *de facto* non-compliance with the disarmament obligation under Article IV NPT.¹¹¹ The NNWS perceive this as injustice and complain that “they are the only ones who keep their part of the bargain”.¹¹²

Assuming that Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle activities indeed serve the purpose of clandestinely building nuclear weapons, which could not be verified so far, it still remains doubtful whether the E-3/EU objective can be regarded as legitimate.¹¹³ One should not forget which EU member states form the E-3, namely France, the UK and Germany. France and the UK (which is considered by the Iranian leadership as the “second Satan”¹¹⁴) are both in the possession of nuclear weapons and do not indicate any willingness to abandon them due to prestige and security benefits.¹¹⁵ It

¹⁰⁶ Sauer, “Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament”, op.cit., p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited”, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Kharrazi quoted in Harnisch & Linden, op. cit., p. 49.

¹¹¹ Sauer, “Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament”, op.cit., pp. 13f.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹³ Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited”, p. 17.

¹¹⁴ C.H. Martin, “‘Good Cop/Bad Cop’ as a Model for Nonproliferation Diplomacy toward North Korea and Iran”, *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2007, p. 72.

¹¹⁵ Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited”, p. 17.

is therefore doubtful whether France and the UK are able to “credibly convince Iran – that is situated in a much volatile region, [...] between two ‘de facto’ nuclear weapon states (Israel and Pakistan) that are apparently allowed to keep their nuclear weapons – not to acquire nuclear weapons”¹¹⁶ without being criticized for their unfair “double-standards” practice by the NAC or/and NAM states like Egypt or other Arabic or Islamic states.

The Legitimacy of the Specific Demand

At the beginning of the negotiations in October 2003, the E-3/EU specifically demanded of Iran to suspend all its nuclear fuel cycle activities which could enable it to acquire the necessary knowledge and capability to build nuclear weapons, including uranium enrichment, conversion and plutonium separation.¹¹⁷ When it became clear that Iran has proceeded with its activities and overcome certain technological difficulties, the focus of the E-3/EU demand has shifted to the suspension of uranium enrichment.¹¹⁸ Whereas the Iranian leadership claims that enriching uranium is its “inalienable right” as a party to the NPT and therefore a legal activity under Article IV of the NPT, the E-3 and E-3/EU argue that “Iran’s right to the peaceful use of [nuclear] power is distinct from ‘the right to enrich’, which does not exist”.¹¹⁹

Although the E-3/EU do not deny the NNWS the right under Article IV NPT to run fuel cycle activities, including the enrichment of uranium, for peaceful purposes, they argue that in the Iranian case these activities are not “normal” because Iran has not complied with its obligations under its Safeguards Agreement.¹²⁰ Iran has therefore, according to the E-3/EU, “forfeited its right” under Article IV NPT to pursue peaceful nuclear activities.¹²¹ According to the E-3/EU, Iran has also forfeited its right under Article IV:2 NPT to “undertake to facilitate, and have the right to participate, in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy”.¹²² Against the background of the “dual-use” nature of nuclear capabilities, the E-3/EU demand might be considered as comprehensible.

However, it still remains doubtful whether the demand can be indeed also regarded as legitimate, especially against the background of the Indian-US deal on nuclear

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁷ International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited”, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ E-3/EU statement quoted in International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 11.

¹²⁰ Harnisch & Linden, op.cit., p. 51.

¹²¹ International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 11.

¹²² Article IV:2 NPT.

cooperation which undermines the E-3/EU line of argumentation and the E-3/EU's implicit tolerance of the nuclear activities carried out by Japan or Brazil.¹²³ So far, the E-3/EU have not been able – and it is unlikely that they will be able – to convince the NAC, the NAM or other Arab or Islamic countries to follow their specific interpretation of Article IV NPT.¹²⁴ Because of the *de facto* non-compliance of the NWS with their disarmament obligation, it is unlikely that the E-3/EU will be able to rally “broad political and normative support for confronting [...] Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions”.¹²⁵ The credibility and legitimacy of the E-3/EU demand has been further undermined by the obvious attempts of the US to test new nuclear weapons and to exempt itself from global nuclear non-proliferation agreements like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Assurance against More Demands in the Future

Indeed, one may conclude that Iran's unwillingness to suspend uranium enrichment and thus to give in to the demand of the P5+2 can be partly attributed to its concern that an initial giving in might trigger an avalanche of new demands from both sides, the US and the E-3/EU. It is therefore unlikely that the P5+2 coercive diplomacy attempt will work out in the Iranian case.

In 2004 the EU issued a report on the human rights situation in Iran which harshly criticised the Iranian leadership.¹²⁶ Although the EU addressed the human rights abuses separately from the discussion about Iran's nuclear activities, it is part of the EU's common “double-tracked”¹²⁷ approach to couple a particular area of concern with another critical aspect related to this country.

Against the background of the implicit US calls for a regime change in Iran, upgraded by the US initiative of the Iran Democracy Act of 2003, it is comprehensible that the Iranian leadership fears new demands by the US or the E-3/EU when it would give in on the nuclear issue. The Iranian leadership regards giving in to the P5+2 demand on the suspension of uranium enrichment as a “trap” which would spark off a spiral of new demands on human rights, democracy or its threatening gesture

¹²³ A.G. Arbatov, “The Inexorable Momentum of Escalation”, in P.M. Cronin (ed.), *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*, Westport, Praeger, 2008, p. 64.

¹²⁴ Harnisch & Linden, *op.cit.*, p. 54.

¹²⁵ W. Huntley, “Rebels without a Cause: North Korea, Iran and the NPT”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 4, 2006, p. 740.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ S. Roudsari, “Talking Away the Crisis? The International Negotiations of the E3/EU and Iran on the Nuclear Issues”, Master's Thesis, Bruges, College of Europe, 2007, p. 10.

towards Israel.¹²⁸ Therefore, it is likely that Iran will try to resist the P5+2 demands as long as possible.¹²⁹

Credibility and Proportionality of the Threat

Assessing the credibility and the potency of the E-3/EU and the US threats vis-à-vis Iran, it remains questionable whether any sanctions or threats of sanctions could induce Iran to abandon its nuclear fuel cycle activities. Despite the already comprehensive economic and financial sanctions within the framework of four UNSC resolutions, the separate financial EU sanctions and the unilateral US economic and financial sanctions against Iran, Iran has unaffectedly continued its nuclear fuel cycle activities.

E-3/EU Threats

In comparison to the E-3/EU demand vis-à-vis Iran, the sticks used by the E-3/EU have been small. The E-3/EU sticks included, on the one hand, the threat to support an IAEA resolution which would immediately refer the Iran case to the UNSC and, on the other hand, the threat to impose economic sanctions within the framework of a UNSC resolution under Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter.¹³⁰

Although in particular the French President Sarkozy and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs Kouchner have also indicated to consider the possibility of a military strike against Iran, the E-3/EU have always underlined that they focus on a diplomatic solution. The only possibility to further step up the pressure on Iran and its economy would be the imposition of sanctions on Iran's oil and gas industry.¹³¹ However, an oil and gas embargo would likely not only be very painful for the Iranian economy but also for many EU member states, as 44% of Iran's oil exports go to EU member states.¹³² Also sanctions targeting investment activities of foreign companies in the Iranian natural gas sector are highly unlikely due to the economic interests of companies in the EU member states.¹³³ Possible vulnerable points of Iran's oil and gas industry include Iran's dependency on the import of oil refined products like gasoline.¹³⁴

Though an E-3/EU threat to impose sanctions on the Iranian oil sector would probably be the most potent one, it would also be the most costly and therefore the least

¹²⁸ Fitzpatrick, "Is Iran's Nuclear Capability Inevitable", op.cit., p. 31.

¹²⁹ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 21.

¹³⁰ Borda, op.cit., p. 14.

¹³¹ B. Jentleson, "Sanctions against Iran: Key Issues", *The Century Foundation*, 2007, p. 21, accessed 20 May 2008, www.tcf.org/list.asp?type=PB&pubid=600.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 23.

¹³⁴ Jentleson, "Sanctions against Iran", op.cit., p. 23.

credible one to Iran.¹³⁵ Furthermore, Russia and China as permanent members of the UNSC will likely oppose the imposition of such sanctions as particularly China's economy is highly dependent on oil imports from Iran.¹³⁶ Thus, the E-3/EU will likely be unable to impose such sanctions within the framework of the UNSC but would have to impose them separately, outside the UN framework, which would undermine its commitment to "effective multilateralism". Although this scenario should not be completely ruled out, since the EU has in June 2008 already imposed financial sanctions on Iran outside the UNSC by freezing the assets of Iran's Melli Bank, it is unlikely.

US/Israeli Threats

Both the US government and Israel's leadership have openly threatened Iran with a possible military strike if Iran does not suspend its nuclear fuel cycle activities. US President Bush has always made clear that with regard to the Iranian nuclear programme "all options are on the table", implicitly referring also to the one of a pre-emptive military strike. Israel has also threatened Iran with a pre-emptive military strike.¹³⁷ Israel perceives a nuclear-armed Iran as an "existential threat" after the Iranian President Ahmadinejad has officially called for Israel to be "wiped off the map".¹³⁸ In 1981, Israel has already once launched a pre-emptive military strike at the nuclear reactor Osirak in Iraq, referring to its right of self-defence.¹³⁹ Beside the fact that the "threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner"¹⁴⁰ violates UN law according to Article 2:4 of the UN Charter, such strikes will be likely regarded as excessive, illegal if without UN authorization and questionable with regard to their destroying or delaying effect on the Iranian nuclear facilities.¹⁴¹ It would be difficult to hit the suspected facilities as they are widely dispersed, some of them located underground and others even unknown.¹⁴²

In addition, the repercussions of such a military action against Iran would be fatal. With a strike against Iran the US would further antagonize and destabilize the Middle East and other Islamic and Arab countries. A military strike by the US and/or Israel

¹³⁵ EU official quoted in International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 16.

¹³⁶ Jentleson, "Sanctions against Iran", op.cit., p. 21.

¹³⁷ Israeli Deputy Prime Minister quoted in "Israel Considering Military Strike on Iranian Nuclear Sites", *Associated Press*, 7 August 2008, accessed 20 August 2008, www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,399124,00.html.

¹³⁸ Quoted in N. Fathi, "Wipe Israel 'off the Map' Iranian Says", *International Herald Tribune*, 27 October 2005.

¹³⁹ M. Tocha, "Modern Diplomacy: Functions and Procedures", Essay, Bruges, October 2007, p. 13.

¹⁴⁰ Article 2.4, Chapter I, UN Charter.

¹⁴¹ Crisis Action, "Time to Talk: The Case for Diplomatic Solutions on Iran", 2007, p. 11, accessed 20 May 2008, www.pugwash.org/publication/tran/timetotalk.pdf.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 11.

would probably even increase Iran's resolve of acquiring a nuclear weapons capability and fuel anti-US resentments in Iran.¹⁴³ Iran could use a military strike by the US or Israel as a plausible justification for the need of an own nuclear weapons programme.¹⁴⁴ Finally, Iran has different possibilities at its disposal to strike back, inter alia to assail UK and US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan or to block the strait of Hormuz where daily 21 million barrels of oil pass on their way to Europe.¹⁴⁵

The Coercer's Reputation

The EU is generally rather reluctant to carry out its threats and impose economic or political sanctions. According to Einhorn, the EU is considered by other states as a natural "good cop".¹⁴⁶ In contrast to the US – the "bad cop" with its inclination to pre-emptive strikes and its military superiority –, the EU is often perceived as a "soft power" with limited military capability, focusing rather on diplomatic solutions and a policy of engagement.¹⁴⁷ The E-3/EU threats of economic and political sanctions vis-à-vis Iran might therefore be perceived as little credible by Iran.¹⁴⁸

Escalation Dominance

So far, the P5+2 have not been able to evoke any fear of escalation by the Iranian leadership. On the one hand, the P5+2 have not been able to credibly threaten Iran with an immediate imposition of higher costs. On the contrary, due to Russia's and China's opposition to tougher sanctions, the process of negotiations and of the final adoption of UNSC resolutions against Iran has been protracted. On the other hand, Iran has used effective counter-threats to encounter the P5+2 threats, including the threat of its withdrawal from the NPT, the threat of "double force"¹⁴⁹ retaliation and the threat of suspending the application of the AP. Although these threats might in hindsight rather be considered a "bluff" by Iran, as they would undermine the credibility of the peaceful purpose of its nuclear activities, they further strengthened Iran's negotiation position vis-à-vis the P5+2.¹⁵⁰

Time Limit

The P5+2 have set Iran many deadlines for complying.¹⁵¹ However, the P5+2 and E-3/EU deadlines were not perceived as credible by Iran. In many cases, the deadlines expired without any immediate, painful consequences for Iran due to the protracted

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ Borda, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ Crisis Action, op.cit., p. 15.

¹⁴⁶ Einhorn quoted in Martin, op.cit., p. 70.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ P.M. Cronin, "The Trouble with Iran", in P.M. Cronin (ed.), *Double Trouble: Iran and North Korea as Challenges to International Security*, Westport, Praeger, 2008, p. 15.

¹⁵⁰ Fitzpatrick, op.cit., p. 34.

¹⁵¹ Sauer, "Coercive Diplomacy Revisited", op.cit., p. 23.

decision-making process of the P5+2 coalition. In other cases, the E-3/EU have put off the deadline for Iran's compliance, trying to give it more time as was the case with the IAEA Board resolution of February 2006. In certain cases, Iran simply ignored the deadline set by the P5+2 for responding to its package deal and instead determined the deadline when it would respond by itself, for example its response to the initial package deal of the P5+2. Iran has thereby successfully exploited the coalitional difficulties in order to buy time either to fulfil the demands or to postpone further sanctions.¹⁵²

"Carrots and Sticks"

The E-3/EU has offered various kinds of benefits in return for Iran's suspension of its fuel cycle activities. In the area of nuclear cooperation, the E-3/EU benefits have focused, *inter alia*, on the provision of a guaranteed access to nuclear fuel and the acknowledgement of Iran's right under Article IV NPT to pursue fuel cycle activities for peaceful purposes.¹⁵³ With regard to economic cooperation, the E-3/EU have offered to actively support Iran's aspirations of becoming a member of the World Trade Organization by pushing for the opening of its accession negotiations and the resumption of negotiations on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement.¹⁵⁴ In the political and security field, the E-3/EU have offered Iran to cooperate on combating terrorism and drug trafficking, on the creation of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East and to provide Iran, within a framework of a long-term agreement, with "firm commitments on security issues".¹⁵⁵

Although the E-3/EU "carrots" are quite comprehensive, they do not offer what Iran wants mostly, namely security assurances from the US.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the E-3/EU benefits to Iran are insufficient in order to induce Iran to suspend its fuel cycle activities.¹⁵⁷ Although it is doubtful whether any E-3/EU "carrots", no matter how juicy they might be, could induce Iran to suspend its nuclear activities, it is clear that the E-3/EU will not be able to offer "juicier carrots" as they "may just not have such carrots in [their] garden".¹⁵⁸

The Role of Elites

The role of the Iranian elites might be relevant with regard to inducing the country's leadership to suspend its fuel cycle activities. Although Iran's key elite groups

¹⁵² Martin, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ IAEA, "Information Circular", INFCIRC/637, 26 November 2004, p. 4, accessed 20 May 2008, www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/infcircs/2004/infcirc637.pdf.

¹⁵⁶ Huntley, *op.cit.*, p. 737.

¹⁵⁷ Borda, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

generally back the idea of their country having a “nuclear option”,¹⁵⁹ they are divided with regard to their willingness to bear the costs of further sanctions in case Iran goes ahead with its nuclear fuel cycle activities.¹⁶⁰

Whereas the hardliners around Khamanei regard Iran’s nuclear programme as their “baby”,¹⁶¹ pragmatists are concerned about the economic costs they might have to bear in case of further sanctions by the P5+2.¹⁶² It can be assumed that the hardliners will be willing to bear any costs in order to pursue the “nuclear option”, which they not only regard as the best deterrent against potential aggressors, but also as a good way to win domestic support by “nationalizing” the project.¹⁶³

The pragmatists, mainly key businessmen, in contrast, focus mainly on the economic consequences of such a confrontational approach towards the West.¹⁶⁴ Although they regard the nuclear option as a significant “bargaining card” that Iran might use for normalizing its relations with the US, they are unlikely to accept significant economic costs such as the loss of foreign investments as a consequence of further P5+2 sanctions.¹⁶⁵ So far, Ahmadinejad has been quite successful in instigating the Iranian public against the pressure put on the regime by the UNSC sanctions, literally forming a “pro-nuclear nationalism”.¹⁶⁶ This could change, if the sanctions of the P5+2 were painful for Iran’s economy and threatened the Iranian leadership’s “control of power” by provoking public dissatisfaction.¹⁶⁷

Motivation

Although one can only speculate about Iran’s real intentions behind its nuclear fuel cycle activities, one might assume for several reasons that Iran at least strives for a nuclear weapons option and is therefore “highly motivated” not to give in to the P5+2 demands.¹⁶⁸ The argument of the Iranian leadership that it pursues fuel cycle activities only for the purpose of generating nuclear electricity, in order to be self-sufficient from foreign fuel suppliers and in order to increase its economic competitiveness, appears questionable.¹⁶⁹

¹⁵⁹ Chubin, op.cit., p. 58.

¹⁶⁰ M. Leonard, “Crunch-Time on Iran: Five Ways out of a Nuclear Crisis”, *The Centre for European Reform*, August 2005, p. 2, accessed 20 May 2008, www.cer.org.uk/pdf/pbrief_iran_july05.pdf.

¹⁶¹ Chubin, op.cit., p. 54.

¹⁶² Leonard, op.cit., p. 2.

¹⁶³ Chubin, op.cit., p. 55.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁶⁶ Huntley, op.cit., p. 736.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁶⁸ Sauer, “Coercive Diplomacy Revisited”, op.cit., p. 24.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 51.

Firstly, Iran's argument that its reserves of gas and oil are not infinite is contradictory to earlier statements that Iran's energy reserves were "endless".¹⁷⁰ Secondly, even though some experts argue that without foreign investments in the oil production technology, Iran might need to import oil by 2010,¹⁷¹ others argue that even if Iran's fuel cycle activities were for the purpose of generating nuclear energy and achieving independence from foreign fuel suppliers, Iran would still need to import uranium in order to produce enriched fuel for the international market.¹⁷² Against this background, it appears at least implausible that the Iranian leadership would bear the costs caused by the economic UNSC sanctions imposed just for the purpose of securing its energy provision and ensuring its fuel independence.

In terms of security, it can be stated that Iran is located in a war-torn and volatile region and is encircled by a "tough nuclear neighbourhood",¹⁷³ in particular Israel and Pakistan which both possess nuclear weapons and maintain close relationships with the US.¹⁷⁴ The US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan are perceived by Iran as a significant source of threat.¹⁷⁵ These factors might induce Iran to think that it needs a nuclear weapons capability as an effective deterrent against potential aggressors.¹⁷⁶ Should Iran indeed strive for a nuclear weapons capability because of its security concerns, this would imply that the E-3/EU's coercive diplomacy touches on Iran's vital interests and will therefore very likely fail. The acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability is also closely intertwined with Iran's pride and its aspirations to become a regional power in the Middle East.¹⁷⁷ Presenting the P5+2 pressure against Iran's nuclear programme as "selective non-proliferation" and "nuclear apartheid",¹⁷⁸ the Iranian leadership has succeeded in activating the public's resentments against the West and "[a]tomic energy has become the glue that has reinforced the solidarity of the nation".¹⁷⁹ In addition, the nuclear option is regarded by the Iranian leadership and public as a symbol for Iran's status.¹⁸⁰ This would mean that no positive and negative inducements could bring Iran to suspend its nuclear fuel cycle activities as its motivation touches on pride, prestige and regional supremacy, all factors which cannot be influenced by "sticks or carrots" since they are of a psychological nature.

¹⁷⁰ Borda, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Jentleson, "Sanctions against Iran", *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁷² Chubin, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁷³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷⁴ Roudsari, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁷⁵ Huntley, *op.cit.*, 735.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Chubin quoted in Roudsari, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁸⁰ Chubin quoted in *ibid.*

Coalitional Coercive Diplomacy

Two coalitions of coercers can be discerned, namely the E-3/EU coalitional format and the P5+2 coalitional format. In assessing the E-3/EU's performance in engaging in negotiations with Iran on the nuclear issue, it becomes clear that although it has turned out to be quite successful at the beginning, succeeding in concluding the Tehran and the Paris Agreement and in inducing Iran to sign the Additional Protocol and to voluntarily apply it pending ratification, this coalitional format had to grapple with certain problems. Firstly, it includes the two EU NWS, France and the UK, whose positions on the Iranian nuclear issue were certainly not representative for all EU member states. This might have from the beginning undermined the legitimacy and objectiveness of the E-3/EU's demand. Secondly, although the E-3/EU seemed to agree on the general objective, they were divided on how to achieve this objective with France and the UK, which insisted on "zero enrichment", and Germany as a NNWS, which was willing to settle for a "delayed limited enrichment".¹⁸¹

With regard to the P5+2 coalitional format and its impact on the chance for success of coercive diplomacy vis-à-vis Iran, it can be stated that on the one hand, it has provided the E-3/EU initiative with more bite, more legitimacy and with more resources concerning the possibility of offering Iran the "juicy carrots" it wants. However, on the other hand, the P5+2 coalition has significantly constrained the E-3/EU room for manoeuvre with the US on the one side, pushing for a tougher stance but undermining the E-3/EU efforts by concluding a deal with India on civilian nuclear cooperation, and with Russia and China on the other side, opposing the imposition of further sanctions.¹⁸² The protracted bargaining within the P5+2 and the diluted UNSC sanctions in fact provided Iran with more time not only for compliance but also for searching new loopholes.¹⁸³ In addition, the P5+2 coalitional format created the outward impression of being "fragile", not only to Iran.¹⁸⁴

Conclusion: the E-3/EU's Performance – Failure or Success?

Applying the analytical framework as outlined above, the E-3/EU's performance can be partially seen as a success in terms of the E-3/EU's "actorness" qualities and partially as a failure in terms of the outcome of their engagement.

¹⁸¹ International Crisis Group, op.cit., p. 21.

¹⁸² S. Harnisch, "The Lessons of the EU's Iran Diplomacy", op.cit.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ S. Harnisch, "Die Krise der Nuklearordnung: Internationale Reaktion auf die iranische und nordkoreanische Herausforderung", *University of Heidelberg Working Paper*, April 2008, p. 18.

With regard to the outcome, the E-3/EU have not been able to dissuade Iran from carrying out its full fuel cycle activities.¹⁸⁵ However, assessing the outcome-related performance it should not be disregarded that the E-3/EU, within the framework of the Tehran declaration and the Paris Agreement, initially succeeded in inducing Iran to first sign the AP, second to apply the AP pending ratification, third to temporarily suspend all fuel cycle activities and fourth to provide the required additional information to the IAEA.¹⁸⁶ In addition, it can be assumed that the temporary suspension at least might have had some delaying effects on Iran's full fuel cycle activities.¹⁸⁷

With regard to the E-3/EU's "actorness" qualities, the engagement was quite successful in terms of the E-3/EU's capacity and resolve to act and in terms of unity. The E-3/EU have engaged and reacted straightforward in order to prevent an escalation of the situation and succeeded in bringing the US, China and Russia on board.¹⁸⁸ They further succeeded in engaging the US in direct talks with Iran – something that the US has always refused to do and they have consolidated the P5+2 coalition to the extent that the UNSC was able to adopt already four resolutions against Iran.¹⁸⁹ Thus, the E-3/EU "proved itself as a coalition builder while maintaining credibility as a mediator between the Iran and the coalition".¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵ Overhaus, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁸⁶ Harnisch, "The Lessons of the EU's Iran Diplomacy", *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁷ Overhaus, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁸ Harnisch, "The Lessons of the EU's Iran Diplomacy", *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

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