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INTERNATIONAL THREAT, DANGER AND STRESS:

SOME RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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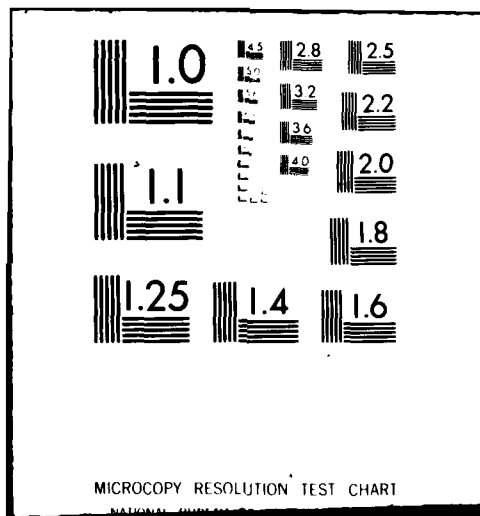
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Introduction

Since the 1960's, analysis of international relations has
made significant progress in the development of systematic theo-
retical insights and data sources for the purpose of describing,
explaining and predicting situations of tension. In this regard,
the work carried out at the University of Southern California under
the direction of Charles McClelland has had a particularly import-
ant impact on the ways scholars of international tension think
about this phenomenon and go about studying it. While the disci-
pline is obviously still far from achieving the status of a para-
digmatic science, there is some noticeable consensus among analysts
in this field about the nature of international stress phenomena
and the kinds of methods and data useful for studying these phen-
omena. This is evidenced by a substantial and growing body of
literature using the event data approach,[1] an approach that was
pioneered by McClelland's World Event Interaction Survey (WEIS)
Project.

In this paper, we focus on potentially fruitful areas for

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[1]We are using the term "event data approach" as a short-hand term
to refer to work based on the systematic codification and analysis
of press reports of foreign policy events and/or situations, thus
incorporating such work as the Threat Recognition and Analysis (TRA)
Project which is not based exclusively on event data.

further research to illuminate international tension, while recognizing the inevitable restrictions imposed by the less than perfect data we have at our disposal. In particular, we suggest some important "puzzles" worthy of further analysis and ways in which these "puzzles" may be usefully explored.

We pay particular attention to the potential for cross-fertilization between two research projects funded by the Advanced Research Projects Agency. The two projects are the Threat Recognition (TRA) Project and the earlier WEIS Project at USC and the portion of the Crisis Warning and Management Project at the University of Maryland emphasizing cognitive approaches to the study of international decision-making as illustrated by the Chinese case. We are concerned with the possibility of applying the insights, methods, and data from these two bodies of work to further research on internation stress and tension. Obviously the recommendations that follow do not exhaust all research possibilities. Also, there are always several alternative ways to investigate a research problem and we confine ourselves to outlining the general directions of possible investigations rather than stipulating particular operational procedures.

The implementation of our research suggestions necessarily will be constrained by the amount and coverage of data available for individual countries. In practice, this means that only selected countries will have a sufficiently rich data base to warrant the pursuit of these suggestions. Table I shows the top nineteen actors covered be the basic WEIS data for the ten-year

period of January 1, 1966 through December 31, 1975. This list

provides a basis for determining the bounds imposed by data con-

straints on our subsequent suggestions, although not all the

candidate actors on it will have adequate data for all the research

activities proposed.

TABLE 1

TOP 19 ACTORS IN WEIS COVERAGE

	Country	N of Events	% of All Events
1.	United States	15133	19.2
2.	Soviet Union	5482	6.9
3.	North Vietnam	5262	6.7
4.	Israel	4465	5.7
5.	South Vietnam	3254	4.1
6.	United Nations	3128	4.0
7.	United Arab Republic	3017	3.8
8.	China	2225	2.8
9.	United Kingdom	1961	2.5
10.	France	1683	2.1
11.	West Germany	1624	2.1
12.	Cambodia	1545	2.0
13.	Vietcong	1368	1.7
14.	Palestine Liberation Organization	1187	1.5
15.	India	1126	1.4
16.	Jordan	1116	1.4
17.	Japan	1102	1.4
18.	Syria	1025	1.3
19.	Pakistan	826	1.0
	Total	56529	71.6

Source: McClelland (1976), appendix 2.

What Have We Each Learned?

Before we make suggestions about further research, it is

useful to review briefly the progress that has already been made

as a result of the work at USC and Maryland. What we have learned
so far provides the foundation for the efforts to be proposed later.

The Maryland work is primarily concerned with the degree to
which knowledge about the cognitions of a foreign policy elite can
improve our explanations and predictions of its decisions and
actions. China was chosen as our initial national case, and our
work to date shows that an understanding of the Chinese elite's
operational codes will substantially enhance our ability to explain
and predict its policies (Bobrow et al., 1979). Moreover, we
found some important differences in the Chinese and U.S. operation-
al codes. In other words, our research indicates that the "black-
box" approach to international relations analysis -- which assumes
different national elites will interpret and react to the same
objective environmental stimuli in the same way -- is highly dubious.

As mentioned earlier, the work at USC has resulted in the
basic WEIS data set which provides the most comprehensive quanti-
tative records of recent international relations history available.
Moreover, the TRA Project has developed a coding scheme for the
compilation of threat situations from open-press reports (the
danger or D-files). Initial assessment of the data set derived
from this pilot project has shown substantial correspondence
between the quantitative readings from its indicators and what
we would label as high-tension periods on the basis of our quali-
tative historical impressions. The inclusion of domestic stress
data in this set in particular has enhanced its sensitivity, mak-
ing this set an important complement to the EFI and ROZ indicators

based on the core WEIS event set focused on foreign policy inter-
actions.

To avoid any misunderstanding of our subsequent discussion,
it is important to point out at this point that we believe it in-
appropriate to use the data generated by the WEIS and TRA Projects
as objective records of international relations history in any strict
sense. Since these data are almost exclusively derived from U.S.
news sources, we assume that they tend to reflect the perspectives
and concerns of the U.S. policy elite. Whether this assumption is
valid is, of course, an empirical question. In the discussion that
follows, we will propose some ways to check this assumption as well
as the expectation that these data are not likely to reflect the
Chinese interpretation of international relations history or that
of other national elites of policy interest.

As a way of summarizing the work that has already been done,
Table 2 indicates some of the major accomplishments of the two projects
pertinent to our suggestions for further research. These suggestions
involve either further validating these accomplishments, or generat-
ing research which will add entries to this table. We need not, of
course, confine ourselves to the research categories suggested by this
table, which only build on the existing data and findings of the two
projects rather than replicating their methodological or substantive
insight for other cases. The following provides an example of potent-
ially fruitful research that falls outside the realm of Table 2.

In studying international tension and stress, analysts have gen-
erally focused their attention on events or situations. In other words,
they tend to treat their analytic domain as populated by either

dangerous events or situations, and they define their concepts and select their cases accordingly. There is, however, a third possibility. One may wish to adopt an actor focus in dealing with international tension and stress, with the assumption that certain countries are more likely to be engaged in these phenomena than others and thus will provide the analyst greater opportunity to study the nature and effects of these phenomena. Accordingly, it would be useful to extend the USC data efforts for some sort of intensive monotoring of a limited set of "pariah" or "excluded" states (e.g., Israel, South Africa, Rhodesia, Taiwan, South Korea). Concomitantly, we may wish to apply the sort of multimethod approach used in the Maryland project to understand the decision process of the elites of these countries. Such undertakings not only have the merit of introducing a relatively novel approach to studying international tension and stress, at least with respect to the current conceptual orientation of the analysts in this field, but also have some important policy reasons to warrant them. The most compelling policy rationale is that these states are most likely to precipitate or participate in crises, and there is accordingly the greatest need to monitor and understand their behavior.

What Can We Learn from Each Other?

The following research steps seem relevant and feasible in view of the data and insights that have already been gained from the work at USC and Maryland.

1. Explicating U.S. Rules for Treat Recognition. In order to further bolster our confidence in the validity of the coding decisions of D-file developers and in order to increase the potential usefulness of this data set for forecasting purposes, the following research seems appropriate. The first stage of this research will be

Table 2

<u>SOME ASPECTS OF WORK TO DATE AT USC AND MARYLAND</u>

	Knowledge about the U.S.	Knowledge about the P.R.C.	Knowledge about the differences between the U.S. and P.R.C.
The USC Project	1. coding decisions on events and situations by the USC analysts (i.e., the WEIS and TRA data) 2. interpretative rules for events and situations (i.e., the WEIS and TRA coding schemes) 3. actor attribute data (the country threat files) 4. policy commitment scores (Wayne Martin's analysis)	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
The Maryland Project	1. crisis recognition and management tendencies, inferred primarily from the writings of US analysts	1. coding decisions on events and situations as revealed by official PRC historical interpretations. 2. interpretative rules for events and situations as revealed by qualitative content analysis 3. rules for classifying actors as established by quantitative content analysis 4. rules for changes in policy expression as tested by quasi-experimental analysis	1. contrasting US and PRC tendencies for crisis recognition and management 2. contrasting US and PRC interpretations and memories of salient events and situations

concerned with the validity of categorized open-press reports of threat situations. While McClelland has offered persuasive arguments regarding the editorial judgments of prestigious newspapers in recognizing threat situations, it seems still desirable to investigate the degree of correspondence between the editors' judgments and that of the relevant officials. Accordingly, it will be quite useful to discover how U.S. foreign policy officials go about detecting and categorizing threat situations. This purpose can be adequately served by presenting some sampled officials with a list of prototypical foreign policy situations, and asking them to participate in a simple exercise of sorting and grouping these situations. The results of this exercise can be checked against the results obtained from those trained in the method of coding the D-files.

More ambitiously, from the perspective of sound recognition and forecasting of threat situations, we need to know the logics used by the relevant elite. To the extent that we can capture and internalize these logics, we can simulate the perceptions of the relevant officials much more effectively. Accordingly, interviews that are designed to probe the threat recognition logics of U.S. officials will be very valuable. These interviews will try to elicit their rationales for treating situations as threatening or not threatening and for assigning threatening situations to different categories. The results of interviews can again be compared with the rationale of the D-file developers, in order to determine the extent to which the logics of the latter group tend to mirror the the logics of U.S. officials.

A further purpose that the interview strategy may serve is to clarify seemingly discrepant coding judgments which officials make from time to time. To be more precise, we have found in our research on the Chinese case that the coding logics imputed to officials can sometimes produce rather diverse or internally inconsistent definitions of situations, thus resulting in considerable lack of resolution and severly limited usefulness of the logics for prediction and explanation. The same problem also seems to be present in U.S. decision-making. Events and/or situations normally considered by analysts to belong to the same prototypical category can sometimes be assigned very different meanings by officials on different historical occasions. For example, the Chinese invasion of the Paracel Islands in 1974 did not create massive public concern in the U.S. Yet if the same event had taken place in the 1950's or 1960's, it would most certainly have been considered a crisis situation, as evidenced by the U.S. treatment of the Quemoy incidents in 1958. Such discrepancies are usually dismissed as resulting from "contextual effects." However, there is an important and largely unmet need to systematically dissect the bureacratic and/or strategic factors lumped together under this label. Interviewing current or former officials can contribute to clarifying, although not necessarily resolving the questions of why some events or situations are perceived as threatening while others that appear to be of a similar nature are treated as not threatening.

In carrying out the above research suggestions, several practical considerati ns should perhaps be kept in mind. First, formal interviews o. officials of the sort "how do you do your job" are

less likely to result in positive payoffs for our purposes.
Second, there may be important logistic problems (e.g., data faci-
lities, work locale, long-distance communication) that impede the
official-scholar interaction we seek. Third, in order to check the
congruence of event- or situation-coding by the officials and schol-
ars, it will obviously be desirable to have subjects who have had
some direct experience in these activities. These considerations
suggest that some scholar-official team arrangement will be most
suitable to implement our research recommendations, with members
of the team(s) drawn most ideally from those having close associa-
ion and familiarity with the USC projects and with U.S. policy plan-
ning. The team concept should encourage informal exchange of views
on the basis of continuing (over a period of several weeks, say)
judgments of current foreign policy developments, using the D-files
as an initial framework for conducting and comparing these judgments.

To the extent that the above research reveals the logics
(including those for treating the "contextual" variables) that
enter into U.S. officials' judgments, our ability to forecast
their crisis recognition and treatment will be improved. While
it is perhaps premature at this stage to talk about possible
efforts to program these information-processing rules into some
sort of machine-based executive aid, we may want to aim at this
development as an ultimate goal (Bobrow et al., 1978). In the mean-
time, it may be useful to train analysts to judge and interpret

foreign policy events and/or situations according to these U.S.
elite rules, and to assess the validity and predictive power of
these rules by running experimental studies that compare their
forecasts with those by analysts who did not receive such training.

2. <u>Cognitive Mapping of U.S. Foreign Relations.</u> The place-
ment of actors, events and situations according to some preexisting
conceptual framework is a basic step in any kind of decision-making
process. We can try to identify the nature of this framework and
the officials' placement logics from the kind of interview-based
research suggested above. Alternatively, with regard to the classi-
fication of actors, we may try to <u>infer</u> these from the policy out-
put of a foreign policy system. The underlying assumption for the
latter approach is that policy output reflects an elite's commitment
to certain patterns of allocating resources (including time) and
attention, thus providing us with a sense of its policy agenda. Our
work on the Chinese case has shown that such attempts at clarifying
the actor classification rules of a regime are possible, and that
they can be potentially useful for policy warning purposes. The
same sort of effort may equally benefit our understanding of U.S.
foreign policy decisions.

It seems that the basic WEIS data set and the data collected
for the D-files of the TRA Project are particularly suitable for
this kind of effort to map the perceptual domain of U.S. policy
makers, and to monitor shifts in their preoccupations, particular-
ly with respect to the relative emphasis or deemphasis in attention
to different countries and movements. Since the frequency

of foreign policy events or situations reported in the U.S. press about other actors can be used as an approximate indicator of their relative perceived importance, even a simple descriptive ranking of the data coverage of different actors over a relatively long period can be quite informative. And, these rankings can be compared with those derived from non-U.S. data sources to determine the presence and/or extent of possible cross-national discrepancies in the allocation of foreign policy attention and resources. Parenthetically, this kind of descriptive analysis of the relative importance of different countries can provide one possible way to capture the "contextual effects" referred to earlier, effects that can contribute to discrepant judgments about the threat implications of the same prototypical event or situation as it impacts on different actors.

However, the utility of this sort of descriptive analysis will necessarily be limited. To enhance the chances that we may be able to discover the conceptual framework and classification logics used by government officials in conducting foreign policy, it is even more useful to find out which countries are likely to be treated as similar or different. In other words, it will be desirable to discover the classification categories used by the decision-makers. The country threat files compiled by the USC analysts contain some very caluable information about the attributes of nations. One question to pursue with these data is whether countries with relatively high or low rankings on the U.S. policy agenda (as established through the descriptive

analysis referred to earlier) have similar or different character-istics. Q factor analysis is one useful way to identify clusters of countries sharing the same attributes; the country clusters can then be compared with the rankings of their members based on the event- and situation-analysis in order to determine whether there is any correspondence between the two. To the extent that there is correspondence, we can be more confident that there are indeed some general categories used by the U.S. policy makers in analyzing and treating relations with different countries. Con-comitantly, the analysis of the attribute data will give us a former basis to infer the nature of rules used by these officials in placing countries in these different categories. Another way to identify these rules would, of course, be to elicit official responses through the interview approach suggested earlier.

3. Assessing the Impact of Precedents. While we have argued in our earlier analysis that foreign policy decision-making is to a substantial degree influenced by the relevant participants' perception of lessons of history, we have been unable to subject this argument to any rigorous empirical test. One illustrative line of investigation suggests the potential of the rich data base developed by the TRA Project and the earlier WEIS Project.

From studies such as that of Blechman and Kaplan (1978), analysts can easily compile a list of salient foreign policy episodes from the perspective of U.S. officials (e.g., the Korean

intervention, the Berlin blockade, the Cuban missile crisis), and identify the policy actions initiated by the U.S. government on these occasions by charting the relevant event flows. One can then examine the degree to which the structures of U.S. action are similar or different in various conflict episodes. Alternatively, one may wish to ask how well a precedent set, such as Blechman and Kaplan provide, predicts U.S. behavior in subsequent foreign policy episodes as revealed by the WEIS data. If we find substantial congruence in these action patterns despite important differences in the policy objectives of the United States and in the actions of its adversaries and allies, it may suggest cognitive stability and perhaps even rigidity. That is, the same lessons of history may be applied to very different circumstances. Finding recurrent behavioral patterns suggests research on policy implementtation to assess the possibly constricting influence of standard operating procedures on crisis avoidance and management. From the perspective of forecasting crisis recognition and behavior, our task will be significantly simplified if decision-makers' evaluation and treatment of these situations are substantially constrained by their perceptions of historical precedents.

In order to assess directly the impact of precedents on policy analysis and behavior, we need to take into account not only the manifest behavior of governments in different foreign policy episodes, but also the perceptions of their officials that link the precedents to this behavior. In other words, rigorous content

analysis and/or interviews are necessary to identify the historical referents of the decision-makers. The research suggested here offers only a very indirect way to infer the impact of precedents on foreign policy decision-making.

4. <u>Testing Rules about U.S. Media Treatment of Events.</u> Given the emphasis on the analysis of data derived from open-media sources in both the USC and Maryland projects, it is appropriate to further investigate the U.S. government's rules for using media as a policy instrument. Of course, the role played by the press seems to be vastly different in the foreign policy processes of China and the United States. For example, in China the media are a direct organ of the state whereas in the United States the press is generally believed to be an independent and impartial observer. The latter assumption about the nature of Western press offers the basic rationale for using data derived from it as objective records of international relations history. If this assumption is valid, we would expect to find very different patterns in the Chinese and American media treatment of foreign policy events and situations.

An empirical test of this assumption can be carried out in reference to a set of rules for media instrumentation that we have imputed to Peking officials. These rules are:

a. Withhold publicity when events or situations contradict the elite's declared policy, even though coverage may be warranted at a later time to alert one's audience to a new policy line.

b. Withhold immediate media coverage to the extent that the event or situation in question has uncertain policy import or can induce undersired actions by one's foreign adversaries.

C. Media coverage of events and situations is influenced by the regime's perception of its impact on allies and adversaries. Thus, there will be pro forma recognition and reporting of events and situations even in the absence of their having any intrinsic policy importance, lest one's foreign audiences assume there has been a change in one's policies.

D. Media coverage of events and situations bears a direct correspondence with the regime's appraisal of their significance for its policy agenda, taking into account the rules of exception noted above.

A pertinent question to pursue with respect to these rules is the extent to which the U.S. media treatment of foreign policy episodes tends to be governed by these concerns as well. Impressionistically, there appears to be some evidence from the existing literature (e.g., Halberstam, 1969; Ellsberg, 1972; Allison, 1971) suggesting that U.S. media coverage in some stressful situations (e.g., Cuba, Vietnam) was influenced by some of the tendencies noted above. Accordingly, a survey of the pertinent literature (e.g., Cohen, 1963) to determine factors influencing the coverage of foreign events and situations by the U.S. press is highly desirable. If this survey yields sufficient information about the rules influencing U.S. media coverage, we may attempt to predict press attention levels to various developments. Obviously, this predictive attempt will be facilitated to the extent that we can also take into account the elite's rules for threat recognition and actor classification, matters that our earlier discussion has tried

to deal with. Finally our experience with the Chinese case suggests
that the quasi-experimental method we used is a useful way to invest-
igate this problem.

5.   Identifying Less Containable Crises. The work by Wayne
Martin (1976) on policy commitment offers one approach to answer
our earlier question of why some situations are perceived by an
elite as threatening while others are not. Moreover, an under-
standing of the level of a country's commitment to defend different
allies (or to oppose different adversaries, since Martin's commit-
ment scores can be negative and can thus perhaps be interpreted in
terms of intensity of opposition) provides us with a basis for
forecasting the phenomenon of crisis spread and escalation. To
the extent that several powers are bound by policy or emotional ties
to help both sides of a dispute -- the so-called "due commitment"
phenomenon -- crises are more likely to spread and escalate.
Coupled with the sort of "instability profile" analysis to be dis-
cussed below, the work on commitment can serve the very useful policy
objective of warning decision-makers against boxing themselves
into positions from which it would be very difficult to extricate
themselves (e.g., resource dependency, security guarantees), or
aligning themselves with actors whose vulnerabiltiy is very likely
to require them to "deliver" or renege on their commitments.

Martin's work lends itself to one sort of effort to predict
crisis behavior. Specifically, to what extent is the level of a
country's commitment a good predictor of its propensity to perceive
a situation involving an ally as threatening to itself? In other
words, do a country's commitment scores -- derived from objective
indicators as Martin did -- help us to discriminate its elite's

judgments of threatening and unthreatening situations and,
ipso facto, its decisions to pursue alternative courses of action
for coping with various situations? So far as we know, no attempt
has yet been made to link the commitment scores to elite percept-
ions and decisions in specific historical contexts. An empirical
test of the predictive yield of the commitment scores will also be
useful for determining the fruitfulness of "black-box" approaches
to international relations analysis in general. To the extent that
these scores can be used to provide powerful explanations or pred-
ictions of the policy behavior of nations without resorting to the
use of data on elite perceptions, the line of research we have
carried out at Maryland will seem to be unwarranted when com-
mitment scores can be derived. An analysis of the sort proposed
here can be relatively easily carried out by comparing U.S. reac-
tion to crises involving other governments, to whom it was committed
to varying degrees, with the WEIS data on U.S. behavior in these
episodes.

6. Developing Profiles for Critical States. Our final sugges-
tion relates to one possible use of the attribute data collected
for different countries in the country threat files at USC. The
objective would be to develop prototypical profiles of countries
that are important to U.S. policy makers, and to use these profiles
to search for potential "trouble spots." There are two non-exclu-
sive ways to develop such profiles. One has the analyst identify--
on the basis of his own judgment -- some contrasting countries in
terms of U.S. commitments which have experienced recent episodes im-
pinging on vital U.S. interests, such as national liberation

movements or nationalization of foreign business. Then, on the basis of countries so selected (e.g., Vietnam, Libya), the analyst can develop an ecological profile of political instability or economic takeover (or whatever other phenomena that might be of interest), and scan the country threat files for other nations that share the basic attributes of the ideal-type exemplars(Bobrow, 1968). The results of this analysis can be used to draw decision-makers' attention to potential crisis locales and parties, as the attributes of these parties increasingly approximate those of the exemplars.

An alternative way to accomplish the same purpose relies on interviews with current or former officials. The USC threat data set would then be restructured according to the officials' coding logics and categories provided by the interviews. As suggested earlier, the officials will be asked to give an operational definition of threat. This definition will include their coding rules for recognizing foreign threats, and these rules will presumably reflect evaluation on multiple dimensions such as a country's population and industrial size, its position in international trade and possession of vital resources, its military capability and strategic location, and the degree of historical and emotional ties between it and the U.S. This definition yeilds a checklist to scan the country attribute data for actors with different threat potentials to the U.S Threat potential in this context includes a country's ability to engage in direct actions harmful to U.S. interests, or its vulnerability to coercion by others with resulting indirect threat to the U.S.

Conclusions

The research suggestions summarized in Table 3 do not provide a comprehensive agenda. Our suggestions have instead emphasized possible areas of complementarity in the work carried out at USC and Maryland, the prospects for providing some important validating or clarifying evidence for each body of work, and the potential for translating the insights gained so far into products that promise relatively immediate aid to decision-makers. Since most of the efforts suggested involve modest objectives and scope, they should not be difficult to implement in principle.

Table 3

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES PROPOSED

Knowledge about the U.S.	Knowledge about the Differences between the U.S. and the P.R.C.
1. Do U.S. officials use the same interpretative logics and reach the same coding decisions with regard to events and situations as the USC analysts?	Do the U.S. and P.R.C. decision-making processes differ in:
2. What are the U.S. officials' rules for classifying actors?	a. the logics used for interpreting events and situations?
3. What are the policy precedents for U.S. officials?	b. the rules for classifying actors?
4. What are the rules for media treatment for the U.S.?	c. the remembrance of salient policy episodes and recognition of lessons of history (precedent sets)?
5. Can we explain or predict U.S. press coverage of events by combining the rules for treating actors, situations and media responses?	d. the rules for media treatment of events?
6. Do objectively defined commitment scores help to explain or predict U.S. involvement in different crises (or the perception of the existence of a crisis)?	
7. What ideal-type actors and situations will be perceived as threatening to the U.S.?	

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