Foreword

As will become apparent, there have been some adjustments made to the Strife Journal since Issue Two. We hope the most discreet will prove to be the change in editorship: our thanks are due to Pablo de Orellana, who has stepped down after two issues’ toil at the helm, and we hope we can continue his excellent work.

Other modifications are more cosmetic, and hence perhaps more obvious. The font and formatting is slightly different, and we also have a new logo, aligning us with the blog (at www.strifeblog.org) and illustrating more clearly than ever how unified the Strife project is across blog and journal. As in the last issue, we have reprinted an extract from our online counterpart: the excellent five-part series on drone warfare entitled ‘The Good, The Bad, The Drones’, which was posted online over the course of April.

The other major change has been the revamping and expansion of the reviews section, thanks for which must go to my co-editor Nikolai Gourof. We have four reviews this issue, on texts ranging from early modern history to (post)modern political theory. Issue four will see this section expand further.

Of course, the skeleton of Strife Journal has been and remains its extended pieces, and there are four in this issue. Nikolai Gourof writes about Sergei Eisenstein’s Ivan The Terrible, and draws parallels between it and Stalin’s contemporary regime. Alexander Langer, meanwhile, draws attention to Church resistance against state oppression in Latin America. Langer speculates as to why the state responses to broadly similar resistance movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador took such different forms. Alexandra Gallovicova’s piece is another Strife first: it is split into two instalments, the first of which is printed here, the second of which will be published in Issue Four. In her first part, Gallovicova explores the idea of the ‘image’ in IR theory, and lays firm groundwork for the case study that will form her piece’s second instalment: French and British perceptions of Germany in the wake of its abstention from the UN Security Council vote on establishing a no-fly zone in Libya during the 2011 Libyan Civil War. Finally, Thomas Colley looks at propaganda in the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s. Colley asks whether any of the lessons learnt then can be applied to the current crisis in Ukraine.

As always, many thanks are due to the department of War Studies at King’s College London, which has provided unceasing support. Special thanks are due to Dr Christine Cheng, Prof. Vivienne Jabri, Dr Oisin Tansey, Prof. Mats Berdal and Dr Kieran Mitton. Thanks are of course also owed to all the contributors to this issue, who have handled our editorial demands with grace and rapidity. We have continued with the peer-review model established in Issue 2, and we thank all our reviewers.

We are always on the lookout for interesting perspectives on conflict for both the journal and the blog; anyone interested in contributing is encouraged to pitch an idea or simply declare interest via email.

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Enemies of Rationality, Mirrors of Intent? The Role of Images in International Relations, Part I
Alexandra Gallovicova

This piece is the first of a two-part series. Part II will apply the ideas developed here to a case study: British and French perceptions of Germany regarding intervention in Libya. This will be published in Issue 4.

‘For the most part we do not first see, and then define; we define first and then see.’
Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion, 1922, p.81

Decision-making in international politics is not done at random; it is influenced by the environment it is made in, the circumstances leading up to the problem, the actors’ individual preferences and a great deal of other relevant factors. These situational characteristics exist in relation to one another, creating impressions of the problem, the other actors, oneself and possible solutions. The resulting constructs are known as images, and they are omnipresent in the world as we see it. Images affect how we view every actor, situation and decision in the world, and thus form an integral part of our decision-making. The same is true for decision-making in international politics.

Political psychology and image theory receive little attention in mainstream IR analysis, an oversight due to the fact that many of the classical IR theories base their core assumptions on the behaviour of actors in the international system. Broadly speaking realism, for instance, assumes all states behave in their own self-interest; whilst liberalism believes that basic human nature is good. However, these assumptions did not spring out of nowhere – they are based on observing human and state interaction and the consequent formation of impressions or images. In case this behaviour deviates from what the observer has come to expect from the actor, this new information can become a stimulus for image adjustment and entirely change the relationship between the observer and the observed – for instance, the U.S.-Russian relationship in the wake of the Crimean crisis. Unlike what classical IR theories assume, images are not static, and the same is true with international relations. The study of images in IR is thus important because image theory recognises the dynamic nature of the international system, which cannot be described fully in the rather simplistic terms of classical IR theories. The importance of images in IR also provides validity to constructivism as an IR theory – they are created through social interactions between actors and are ultimately joint products of the perceiver and the perceived object’s characteristics.

This article seeks to outline the importance of images in international relations. I will strive to answer three questions: where images and perceptions come from, how they affect international relations and how they change. Ultimately, I will argue that it is worthwhile to study images in IR in order to better understand the motivations of individual actors and possibly predict the outcomes of ongoing conflicts.

1.1 What are images in IR?
An image is an inferred construct. Boulding defines it as ‘the total cognitive, affective and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe’1. An image is thus the organised representation of an object in an individual’s cognitive system – ‘organised’ in the sense that images are not simply inventories of past impressions, but attempts to create a unified system composed of various impressions of objects and appropriate responses to them.2 Images can range from unsophisticated stereotypes to highly nuanced multi-element structures, but

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1 Quoted in Herrmann, R. K., and Fischerkeller, M. P., ‘Beyond the enemy image and spiral model: cognitive–strategic research after the cold war’. International Organization, 49(03), 1995, pp. 415-45
their core consists of cognitions and ideas regarding the sum of attributes an actor associates with a certain object\(^3\) — hence, the object’s perceived character.

Images exist in and influence only the ‘psychological milieu’ (the world as the actor sees it) not the ‘operational milieu’ (the world in which policy is carried out) of the actor.\(^4\) Thus, in image theory, the decision-making process is affected first and foremost by the actor’s own agency, as decisions are mediated by the actor’s goals, calculations and perceptions. According to image theory, individuals act to provide meaning to their environment. They do so through building mental representations of the world — images — in order to simplify their interpretation of their surroundings and make this representation stable and coherent. Finally, image theory assumes that perception and interpretation\(^5\) is inseparable.\(^6\) This represents a short but accurate description of the image-alteration and image-affirmation processes.

In terms of what images of any given object contain, Kelman\(^7\) outlines three key components, which place the respective images on three axes that then define the image in the eyes of the perceiver: strength-weakness, friendship-hostility and threat-opportunity.

‘Cognitive attributes’, which are viewed by the perceiver as ‘inherent’ characteristics of the actor, independent of their own response to them,\(^8\) are the primary component. They affect the actor’s placement on the strength-weakness perceptual axis and thus the object’s capabilities,\(^9\) as well as its perceived intent. The cognitive attributes of an actor stem from a pre-existing pattern of association, or the historical experience of the observer with the observed. Hence, the cognitive attributes are not simply a reaction to a single specific situation. Secondly, the ‘affective component’ encompasses the perceiver’s levels of approval for and liking of the observed actor, defining its positions on the friendship-hostility axis. The last is the ‘action component’, containing a set of responses to the actor deemed appropriate in light of its perceived attributes and placement on the threat-opportunity axis. In deciding the placements of an actor on each of the three axes, an image is created and categorised.

**1.2 Types of images**

However, as we are arguing for the significance of images in IR, we are attempting to attribute images to states. The problem with this is twofold: not only are images and corresponding perceptions of intergroup relations held by individuals within a given society — which, given that we are operating under the banner of constructivism, are not our primary actors in IR - but each individual in that society has their own distinct images. Even with oversimplification, we can end up with a minimum of two representative images — that of the decision-making elite and the general public.\(^10\) However, their connectedness in the creation and stabilisation of the state’s power structure allows us to assume Wendt’s standpoint\(^11\) for the purpose of this study - that ‘states share collective identities which structure anarchy’. Their accumulated historical experience, political culture and geopolitics shape enduring perspectives, attitudes and beliefs, within which policy predispositions emerge. The sum of these perspectives and predispositions forms the national identity — the sum of the national self-image and the images of all other actors in international relations – through which all information is interpreted.\(^12\) The process also works in reverse;

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3 Herrmann and Fischerkeller, 1995, p.444
5 Image-formation or image-alteration.
8 I.e. the observed actor’s perceived power.
through a process of socialisation into a culture, the individual is exposed to specific images: the national self-image, images of the ‘other’, images of specific nations, and images of an inter-societal order. Each separate culture includes a cognitive map of other groups and traits, which it transmits to its members through education as well as expressions of culture to which they are exposed, such as art. Acquiring inter-societal images is a key part of the process of socialization into a society with a particular social structure. An individual can and does acquire this common culture; hence, it can be claimed that a state has its own identity – a set of images of itself and other actors. This article therefore argues that the nation-state can be viewed as a sufficiently coherent entity that it is meaningful to treat it as an agent and that it is somehow distinct from other nation-states, with different interests, purposes, preferences, etc.

The first image forming the state’s identity is the national self-image; an amalgam of guiding beliefs, values, ethics and morals of the state. All together, they can be referred to as principles. These aspects of the self-image govern the choice of goals and actions taken to pursue them. The article will now look into the two aspects most significant to our case study – beliefs and values – as Vertzberger defines them.

Beliefs are primarily evidence-based scripts, involving principles and general ideas on the nature and physical environment that constitute the policy-maker’s field of action. Their subset of operational code beliefs plays a major role in political information processing, allowing beliefs to deal with the most basic images about the nature of the political world. The operational code is formed by two clusters. The first contains information about the essence of the political world and political actors, particularly philosophical beliefs about the essentials of politics, the nature of the political universe and of political conflict, instrumental beliefs on the best possible approach and the fundamental character of allies and enemies. The second deals with the controllability and predictability of historical-political developments. Its main importance lies with understanding risk calculation and coping with odds.

The diagnostic and prescriptive framework of beliefs is important in highly uncertain situations, novel situations with scarce, contradictory, unreliable or abundant information. The importance attached to information is largely determined by its placement on the belief-disbelief continuum. Just as with images and perceptions, the validity and centrality of a belief, as measured by the dependence of other beliefs on it, influences its degree of resistance to change, particularly if some or all other beliefs in a given subset need to change as well. Furthermore, when the beliefs of two actors match, they tend to view one another as closer than they are.

Values are the second relevant factor in national self-image formation. These normative scripts form the key to expectations about norm-based behaviour. They determine what is desirable, as evidenced by the increased sensitivity to stimuli compatible with one’s values at the expense of attention to other stimuli. In turn, negatively viewed objects tend to be evaluated negatively as a matter of course. It is also easier for a state to view the behaviour of others through the perspective of its own culture rather than adopting a different perspective – hence, imposing the observing state’s values and beliefs as the correct ones, and viewing deviations from that as wrong or of lesser value. Hence, the state tends to have a limited degree of empathy for other states.

Images form the cultural core of the state, which is concerned not only with the current

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13 Kelman, 1965, p. 43
14 It possesses an internal identity.
15 It possesses an external identity.
16 Berenskoetter, 2012, p. 5
17 Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 286-292
18 Beach, L. R. et al., 'Image theory: Descriptive sufficiency of a simple rule for the compatibility test', *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 1(1), 1988, pp. 17-28
19 Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 114-151

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20 Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 114-151
state of images and the relationships between them, but also what they should look like. However, the self-image alone cannot represent an actor’s identity, which Jepperson defines as ‘mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other’. The self-image provides a frame of reference from which political leaders can initiate, maintain, and structure their relationships with other states. The national self-image is thus one of the foundations of an ‘imagined community’ – it forms the basis of beliefs and values which individuals associate with the community to which they perceive themselves as belonging, thus creating the foundation for a feeling of citizenship and nationality, which are further social constructs. This national self-image – and thus nationality – is defined against the ‘other’, to the point where Alexander, Levin and Henry insist that an image cannot exist alone, but stems from the ‘perceived relationships between nations and serve to justify a nation’s desired reaction or treatment toward another nation’; hence, no state can have an identity without both an image of itself and of the ‘other’. Hopf adds that state identities are rooted in sociocultural milieus, which produce understanding of the other based on differences in identity and practice. Images are thus the key to interpreting the action of ‘the other’.

Images of the other are not only created by the actor’s own interests and values, but also its historical experience with the other. This allows for an assessment of the motivation, capability and decision process attributed to the observed country. Through this systemisation process, the perceiver determines if the other’s goals are competitive or co-operative, to what degree it supports the perceiver’s goals and what relative power it possesses – its placement on the strength-weakness, friendship-hostility and threat-opportunity perceptual axes. Hence, images are used as judgemental heuristics in interpreting the behaviour of other actors, despite the availability of other judgement-relevant information. This streamlines the decision-making process, but also opens it up to the possibility of error and misperception. Should an image of the other prove quite simplistic and absolutistic, it becomes difficult to disconfirm and a threat to perceptual accuracy. Oversimplifying or disregarding images in international relations can therefore lead to long-term misperceptions and mistakes in decision-making.

According to Kelman, there are three broad classes of images of another nation: images of its basic characteristics, predictions about its future behaviour and conceptions of appropriate ways of dealing with it. Though there are several distinctive sets of ideal types of images in IR, we find Martha Cottam’s typology as the most accurate and detailed way of categorising possible images. Her typology expands on the work of Richard Cottam and Herrmann, who identify four respective images: enemy, ally, colony and degenerate. But this typology ultimately cannot display the significance of events in modern IR, as the categories remain too general and simplistic to account for minor changes in the international system. Martha Cottam’s typology more fully captures the placement of images on all three axes - strength-weakness, friendship-hostility and threat-opportunity - distinguishing between seven types of images:

1. **enemy** (strong-hostile-threat)
2. **begemonist** (strong-hostile-threat)
3. **dependent ally of the enemy** (weak-hostile-threat and/or opportunity)
4. **neutral** (neither-neither-threat and/or opportunity)

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21 Vertzerberger, 1990, p. 268
22 cited in Berenskoetter, F., 2012, p. 3
25 Alexander, Levin and Henry, 2005, p.28
28 Herrmann et al, 1997, p. 10
29 Vertzerberger, 1990, p. 126
30 Vertzerberger, 1990, p. 151
31 Kelman, 1965, p. 394
32 Herrmann et al, 1997, p. 411
33 A state seen as representing a great opportunity to exploit and that is similar in capability but suffering from cultural decay.
34 Schafer, 1997, p. 815
5. ally\textsuperscript{35} (strong-friendly-opportunity)
6. dependent ally of the perceiver's state (weak-friendly-opportunity)
7. puppet of the perceiver's state\textsuperscript{36} (weak-friendly-opportunity)

Through this detailed typology, we can categorise and chart the progress of relations in IR with relative precision and make basic assumptions about the future of those relations. However, we must remember that the image applies to a specific point in time.

1.3 Perceptions and Image Change

Berenkoetter\textsuperscript{37} notes that ‘identities require constant affirmation and can be only temporarily stabilized – what one “is” (or wants to be) is sustained by what one “does.”’\textsuperscript{38} Images are not static constructs; they are reaffirmed or contradicted by perception. Internal messages about image stability form a part of the images; however, their core stems from inputs and outputs of information. Images can thus be modified by situational variables\textsuperscript{39} and are highly context-dependent, reinforcing their place in constructivist theory.

Perception is an integrative process by which stimuli become interpreted by the actor by integrating the stimulus events with the previous images the actor (in our case, the state) had held. It is through perception that a state assigns a cause to an event, defines constraints, states goals, and enables the creation and evaluation of solutions.\textsuperscript{40} Not all acts, occurrences or messages in IR reach the level of stimulus, meaning that they do not always penetrate the cognitive system of a given actor. Four questions must be answered before an event can be considered a stimulus, in the described order: Is the event truly informative? Is it relevant to our problems? Is it important?

Which of a set of possible alternative interpretations is the correct one?\textsuperscript{41} If all of these can be answered positively or relevantly, an actor will create cognitive representations of the environment in which foreign policy decisions occur – new situational images – and adjust the previously held ones. Perceptions are also concerned with the probability or a particular circumstance arising and changing in response to experience, either by reinforcing confidence or adjusting the previously held image.\textsuperscript{42}

1.4 Perception Creation

Perception is created in three interrelated stages. The first is the information-gathering phase, which also includes interpreting this information in order to create an accurate and sophisticated understanding of the social, political and physical milieu in terms of the issues faced and the environmental constraints placed on the range of available responses. Due to the fact that decision-makers generally prefer shallow, oversimplified and tendentious knowledge that nonetheless ‘gives them an unwarranted sense of confidence in their judgment’\textsuperscript{43} when observing other states, the possibility of error in their judgement begins in the very first phase.

Secondly, the actor derives and evaluates alternative courses of action, usually using a comparative cost-benefit analysis, and selects one. This is where the possibility of error is the strongest, be it contextual, transformational, epistemological or subconscious.\textsuperscript{44} These errors determine the level of differences between the subjective and objective reality and thus affect the accuracy of the image.

Finally, the actor implements its preferred response or chooses to implement it when domestic or external constraints allow it to do so. Misjudgements are likely to carry over, but do not always result in the same negative outcomes due to a possible discontinuity.

\textsuperscript{35} A perceived relationship in which the subject's belief in the prospects for mutual gain outweighs the importance of perceived capability or cultural judgments.
\textsuperscript{36} Schafer, 1997, pp. 815-816
\textsuperscript{37} Berenskoetter, 2012, p. 3601
\textsuperscript{38} Mercer, J., Reputation and International Politics, Cornell University Press, 2010, p. 45
\textsuperscript{39} Voss and Dorsey, 1992, pp. 8-23; Allport, quoted in Harris, E. E., Hypothesis and Perception: The Roots of Scientific Method, Psychology Press, 1970, p. 249
\textsuperscript{40} Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 24-25
\textsuperscript{41} De Mesquita, B. B., Principles of International Politics, CQ Press, 2013, p. 331
\textsuperscript{42} Vertzberger, 1990, p. 83
\textsuperscript{43} Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 323-338
\textsuperscript{44} Vertzberger, 1990, p. 45
between phases. Ultimately, perception is the continuous process of adding new aspects to pre-existing images and can thus have a profound effect on them.

1.5 Why images matter
Images serve to predict the behaviour of actors by outlining how they view others and interpret their behaviour. Brewer et al. note that images ‘include unique, detailed clusters of cognitive schema, and impact information processing and policy preferences in a variety of intergroup settings’. For instance, in a conflict situation, differences in images can produce a wide variety of responses and behaviours. Secondly, image theory argues that factors at the individual level of analysis do affect foreign policy decision-making and that those factors are subject to biases associated with psychological phenomena— or misperceived images. Thirdly, as Jervis and Vertzberger observe, ‘actors seek strong justification for their behaviour’ and ‘use images to define a situation, circumscribe roles to particular actors, determine their strategy by recognising the problem and formulating a response and justify the strategy implemented by acquiring accountability and legitimacy.’ Image theory work on the international level thus indicates a clear connection between the image of another nation and one’s strategic policy choices vis-à-vis that nation.

Images can also potentially predict structural changes in IR. Richard Cottam was the first to create the concept of a ‘perceptual milieu’, stating that individuals ‘behave in perceptually patterned ways’, allowing for predictability in IR. He developed the ‘perceptual inferential scheme’, which showed that individuals are likely to follow certain common patterns when making decisions about international relations. According to Richard Cottam and Herrmann, ‘images form as a consequence of strategic relationships between nations and serve a functional purpose’. Kelman adds that ‘the term image can be useful in conceptualizing political ideology in a way that bridges the system level and the individual level, since comparable dimensions can be used to describe both the definition that is communicated and the image that is adopted. The study of the mutual images of two nations can allow for the development of a common set of dimensions, not only to compare A and B, but to compare the way in which each nation tries to present itself and how it is perceived’. Images can therefore serve as a unique connecting point between agency and structure analysis. They can be used in an explanatory or predictive fashion at both levels, as consistent images of other groups directly lead to the adoption of response strategies tailored to fit those images.

1.6 Limitations of images in IR
We have already observed that images are rife with error possibilities. Firstly, the intensity of feelings involved in creating and evaluating images can lead to distortions and misperceptions in the images. However, this fault can theoretically be overcome by viewing the image from a cognitive perspective. The second problem of perceptual self-insertion is more severe. Actors ignore their national self-image and images of the ‘other’ in periods when they believe everyone shares the same principles, the same priorities and therefore the same response system to outside stimuli. Their decision-makers assume that another’s behaviour can be predicted by self-insertion into their situation, as if the other state shared the perceiver’s cultural core. This is often a cause of misjudgements and resulting image-alteration in IR. Thirdly, should decision-makers avoid the aforementioned error and feel the need for more detailed images of the other, their capacity to get others to accept the desired image is low. Decision-maker mistakes are only one form of limitations. Images are also constrained by their own lack of a detailed definition and the nature of IR, in which they are one of many elements influencing behavioural predictions.

45 Vertzberger, 1990, p. 9
46 Alexander, Brewer, & Herrmann, 1999; Herrmann et al., 1997
47 Schafer, 1997, p. 820
48 Vertzberger, 1990, pp. 298-307
49 Jervis, 1976, p. 382
50 Herrmann and Fischer, 1995; quoted in Herman et al., 1997, p. 29
52 Kelman, 1965, p. 26
54 Herrmann et al., 1997, p. 408
55 Jervis, 1989, pp. 11-13
Images possess a clear significance in an attempt to predict and understand decision-making in IR. However, they are limited by the possibility of decision-maker error, their imprecise definition and unheard voice. The logic of how images influence policy choice must also be defined more closely and the empirical strength thereof must be tested. Ultimately, despite the significant role of images in guiding actors’ actions in IR, these constructs can only give us an approximation of the situation. Image theory on its own remains a significant aspect of political psychology, but one that needs to be incorporated into a wider analysis of communications and interpretation.

2. Conclusion
The objective of this article was to demonstrate that images in international relations matter and can have a major effect on policy-making in international organisations.

Images in IR are evolving inferred constructs, based on past experience but with the possibility for dramatic change if they encounter a sufficiently intrusive stimulus. They are organised representations of patterns attributed to the actor itself and other actors in the international system, against which the actor explicitly defines its identity. They contain three aspects: a cognitive, affective and an action component, which measure respectively the independently ‘inherent’ characteristics of the perceived object, its place on the strength-weakness, friendship-hostility and threat-opportunity axes and a set of appropriate responses to the object. Hence, images can be useful in predicting behaviour and justifying strategy by providing decisions with accountability and legitimacy.

The national self-image is the first image every actor in the international system acquires, and it encompasses the sum of the actor’s principles, through which it views the world around it. The state also creates images of other actors in the international system, which are not necessarily accurate representations of ‘the other’. Images are defined through the historical experience, beliefs and values of the perceiver, but also through the perception of recent events. They are thus coloured by emotion and often ignored or simplified, but always present in the background of IR. It is through perception and interpretation of events that new experiences are integrated into the previously existing images if an event qualifies as a stimulus for perceptual change.

Images can have a predictive function in IR analysis, as they can give us an approximation of future actor behaviour based on the past and current relationship between the observer and the observed. However, they can also be derailed by sudden developments in IR, meaning that they cannot be relied on as a completely accurate means of forecasting. For individual actors, images influence their decisions and allow them to justify their strategies vis-à-vis a certain actor. Hence, images can both influence and display to an observer the development of actors and the international system. However, we must remember that images are emotive, not objective constructs, and can not only lead the actors making decisions to make mistakes, but also the academic observer, who has their own images when attempting to forecast developments in the international system. Despite our inability to escape them – or perhaps because of it – images in IR are a valuable tool for policy analysis that deserve further study, particularly due to the subjective nature of decision-making in international politics. This will be further explored in the second part of the article, which will outline the practical effects of images on inter-state relations in international relations. The case study of changing French and British perceptions of Germany after the latter’s abstention in the UNSC vote on establishing a no-fly zone in Libya during the 2011 Libyan Civil War will outline both the helpful nature of images in predicting behaviours of other actors (the British case study) as well as how a single event can have great impact on a particular image and on inter-state relations (the French case study).

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