

Introduction

The question of how policy makers gauge their adversaries' intentions remains fundamental to international relations theory and world affairs. Given states' uncertainty about each other's motives and types, and their incentives to misrepresent these factors, the task of determining another country's foreign policy plans is extremely difficult. This is not to argue that decision makers cannot gather potentially valuable information about their adversary's intentions. On the contrary, decision makers face information overload, with large amounts of "noise" compounded by deliberate attempts at deception. An overabundance of simultaneous signals carrying contradictory messages often leaves the decision maker unable to determine which to believe. This book shows that a number of outcomes are affected by decision makers' judgments regarding which indicators are credible: the conclusions decision makers will reach about the adversary's intentions, the reasoning they will provide to others in explaining their assessments, and the foreign policies they will choose to adopt. The complexity and variability of this phenomenon is demonstrated by the fact that during the three different historical episodes examined in this book, decision makers within the same administration—as well as the intelligence apparatus serving them—rarely agreed on what constituted a credible indicator of intentions. Observing the same behavior by the adversary, they drew different inferences about the informative value of the information on hand and what it signified regarding the adversary's long-term foreign policy plans. These differences were rooted not in personal idiosyncrasies, but rather reflect distinct, systematic patterns that challenge much of the current theoretical literature on costly signaling.

Discovering how observers infer the long-term intentions of their adversaries, and specifically, how a state's leaders and its intelligence apparatus—the bureaucracy that is explicitly tasked with assessing threats—gauge the enemy's foreign policy intentions, has important theoretical implications for different schools of thought in the international relations literature. Moreover, this question has historical significance and policy relevance. If British decision makers had understood the scope of Nazi Germany's intentions for Europe during the 1930s, for example, the twentieth century might have been much different. Today, predicting the future policy behavior of potential adversaries remains as critical as ever.

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A Brookings report from March 2012 illustrates the significance of this question in contemporary international relations: “The issue of mutual distrust of long-term intentions . . . has become a central concern in U.S.-China relations.”¹ US and Chinese officials’ statements confirm this attitude. In a January 18, 2012, interview, US ambassador to China Gary Locke said, “I think that there is a concern, a question mark, by people all around the world and governments all around the world as to what China’s intentions are.”² Some observers have found China’s recent actions along its coastal waters and maritime periphery particularly alarming. Others have worried that the “limited information” China has provided about “the pace, scope, and ultimate aims of its military modernization programs” raises “legitimate concerns regarding its long-term intentions.”³ Statements by Chinese officials indicate that Beijing, similarly, views recent US policies as a “sophisticated ploy to frustrate China’s growth.”⁴ It is not clear, however, what concrete data either government is using to justify its adversarial stance and fear of the other’s long-term intentions. Undoubtedly, current assessments of the degree of threat to US interests of a rising China—or for that matter, a possibly nuclear armed Iran or resurgent Russia—depend on the indicators observers use to derive predictions about the intentions of these countries.

Little empirical work identifies which indicators decision makers and intelligence organizations use or ignore when making such assessments.⁵ For instance, disputes among US intelligence professionals over alleged Soviet military capabilities dominated debates on the Soviet threat throughout the Cold War, yet there has been little empirical examination of the extent to which calculations of force levels or military balances shaped US political decision makers’ assessments of Soviet intentions. Examining how leaders assess intentions could also shed light on the sources of change in adversarial relations and longstanding rivalries. What prompts changes in how leaders perceive the intentions of their adversaries? What factors, for example, best explain the change in Ronald Reagan’s beliefs about the intentions of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev? Can these types of indicators usefully be compared to those that led members of the Carter administration to reevaluate Soviet objectives in the late 1970s, or those that Neville Chamberlain used to reassess Adolf Hitler’s intentions in 1939? Finally, understanding the processes and biases that affect how a state’s leaders and intelligence apparatuses read others’ signals of intentions, and exploring how a state’s own behavior shapes others’ understanding of its intentions, can inform useful advice to policy makers on how to deter or reassure an adversary more effectively.

THE SELECTIVE ATTENTION THESIS AND ALTERNATIVE HYPOTHESES

This book addresses these gaps in the literature by advancing and testing a framework I call the selective attention thesis, and compares it to three promi-

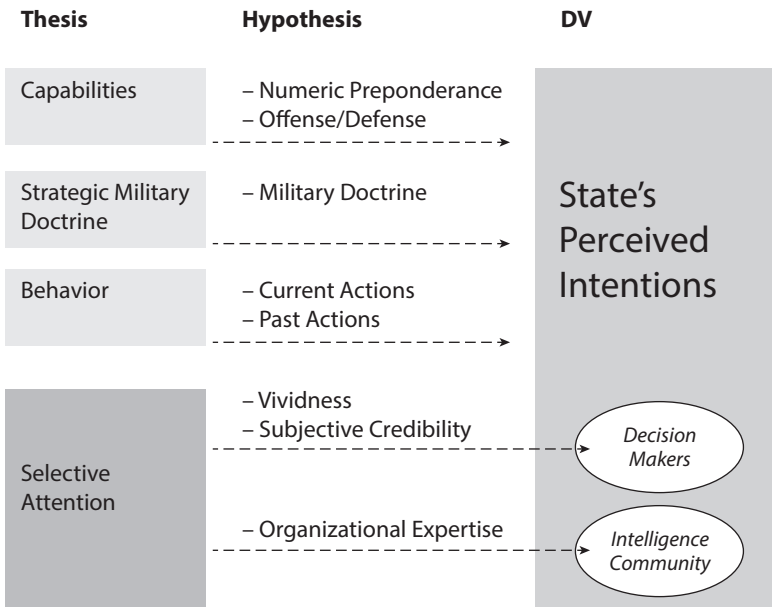


Figure 1. Summary of Theses

nent existing explanations of perceived intentions: the capabilities thesis, strategic military doctrine thesis, and behavior thesis.

Drawing on insights from information processing and organizational theory, the selective attention thesis posits that the ways in which decision makers form judgments about intentions differ from those of the intelligence community. Individual perceptual biases and organizational interests and practices are likely to shape what types of indicators are regarded as informative signals of the adversary's intentions as well as how these actors interpret such information about intentions. Put differently, the manner in which rationality is bounded varies across individuals and organizations as a function of psychological and organizational biases.

The selective attention thesis offers three key hypotheses: the vividness hypothesis and subjective credibility hypothesis pertain to the inference process of decision makers, and the organizational expertise hypothesis seeks to explain how a state bureaucracy—specifically, its intelligence organization—processes information about intentions (see figure 1).

The vividness hypothesis posits that decision makers tend to rely on kinds of information that are particularly vivid, even if “costless.” Vividness refers to the “emotional interest of information, the concreteness and imaginability of information, and the sensory, spatial, and temporal proximity of information.” This hypothesis is rooted in affective decision-making models, which predict that

vivid information will receive greater weight than its evidentiary value warrants.⁶ Vivid information, especially when received in face-to-face communications, is believed to be especially informative or, in Robert Jervis's terminology, a signal that is hard to manipulate (an "index").⁷ This hypothesis predicts that decision makers will rely on personal impressions acquired from private interactions with the adversary's leadership, or from the adversary's response to their own litmus tests, to derive conclusions about its intentions, even though this information may be costless and therefore less credible.

The subjective credibility hypothesis posits that decision makers often debate the significance of or entirely ignore what scholars consider credible indicators of intentions. In fact, my research shows that individual decision makers vary in their responses: which indicators they regard as informative will depend on their own individual theories and expectations about the adversary's behavior. This hypothesis is rooted in cognitive (unmotivated) decision-making models, which posit that in order to avoid the cognitive expense of reevaluation, decision makers discount or misinterpret disconfirming evidence rather than change their preexisting beliefs.⁸ This essentially means that decision makers tend to downplay or ignore information (even "costly" signals) about the adversary's intentions when it is inconsistent with their prior images and beliefs, and tend to pay inordinate attention to information (whether costly or cheap) that is consistent with their beliefs. Put differently, decision makers would "perceive what they expect to be there."⁹ In addition, this hypothesis draws on the idea that decision makers have varying theories about the link between certain actions and underlying characteristics. Decision makers who strongly believe in the influence of regime type on foreign policy behavior, for example, will attend to indicators of the adversary's domestic institutions and norms to infer its intentions, and will ignore or discount informative indicators that do not pertain to regime type characteristics.¹⁰ In sum, the subjective credibility hypothesis claims that decision makers' selection and interpretation of signals will be influenced by their own theories and preexisting stances toward the adversary. Accordingly, changing their perceptions about the adversary's intentions is likely to be difficult as well as unresponsive even to costly signals. Yet a change in beliefs about intentions is not impossible. It tends to occur under a particular set of conditions, such as when a specific experience is too vivid or salient to be ignored, too unambiguous to be discounted, or so directly in conflict with a decision maker's expectations that it becomes cognitively cheaper to abandon that belief instead of trying to tolerate the inconsistency.¹¹

The organizational expertise hypothesis uses insights from information processing in organizations. It posits that the organizational context in which intelligence analysts operate makes them attend to different indicators than those used by decision makers. Organizational missions and goals channel attention, and affect the selection of information. In intelligence organizations, collect-

ing and analyzing data on the adversary's military inventory typically receives priority for a variety of reasons. Military power is the *sine qua non* for strategic attack, which intelligence organizations are charged with preventing by early detection. Further, military inventories are relatively easy to track and monitor over time; they are tangible and thus quantifiable, and can be presented in a quasi-scientific way to decision makers. Intelligence organizations develop substantial knowledge about these material indicators, which they then use to make predictions about the adversary's intentions. This is not to argue that intelligence organizations only know how to count the number of missiles and divisions. Rather, this hypothesis posits that because analyzing intentions is one central issue with which intelligence organizations are explicitly tasked, and since there is no straightforward or easy way to predict the adversary's intentions, a state's intelligence apparatus has strong incentives to apply the relative expertise it has to the task of estimating others' intentions. This relative expertise frequently comes in the form of careful empirical analysis of components of the adversary's military capabilities. Consequently, as a collective, intelligence organizations tend to analyze the adversary's intentions through the prism of its military arsenal. Nevertheless, unlike the capabilities thesis, the organizational expertise hypothesis sees the logic of relying on capabilities as stemming from bureaucratic and practical reasons pertaining to intelligence organizations.¹²

THE COMPETING THESES

The capabilities thesis draws on the logic of several realist theories. It examines how different measurements of the adversary's military capabilities and significant changes in its armament policies—such as unilateral reductions in its military capabilities—give clues to its intentions.¹³ The strategic military doctrine thesis argues that an adversary's military doctrine, military training patterns, and strategic thought reveal information about its political and military intentions. The behavior thesis posits that particular types of noncapabilities-based actions by an adversary—such as withdrawing from a foreign military intervention or joining a binding international organization—are used to draw conclusions over its intentions.

All three competing theses share two issues. First, they draw, explicitly or implicitly, on the costly signaling approach, which emphasizes the role of information as a key influence on state behavior.¹⁴ This approach contends that states strategically undertake actions that are costly in order to convey information regarding their interests and intentions to other states. According to this view, in gauging others' intentions, observers should only attend to those actions that are costly because they either involve an expenditure of significant resources that cannot be recovered (“burning money”) or severely constrain a

state's future decision making ("tying hands").¹⁵ The basic logic of this approach is that any actor, regardless of whether it has benign or malign intentions, could engage in behavior that costs nothing, thereby offering no credible information about its likely plans.¹⁶ Cheap talk should, therefore, be ignored, and produce no effect on the perceivers' belief about the interests or intentions of the other state.¹⁷ Second, all three theses—at least as they have been presented by international relations scholars—presume that the state makes its assessments about the adversary's intentions as if it were unitary. That is, they do not look for significance in differences between decision makers and intelligence organizations in the *types* of signals they focus on to reach their conclusions about intentions.¹⁸

CASES

This book tests all four theses using three cases: British assessments of the intentions of Nazi Germany in the period leading to World War II; US assessments of Soviet intentions under the administration of President Jimmy Carter; and US assessments of Soviet intentions in the years leading to the end of the Cold War during the second administration of President Reagan. These cases exhibit important within-case variation in both the independent and dependent variables, allowing evaluation of the relative influence of various indicators of intentions on assessments. They also control for a number of key variables. Each concerns a democratically elected administration that is engaged in interstate communications with a nondemocratic great power adversary. A prior history of militarized disputes (at varying levels of violence) characterized each of these adversarial relationships. Moreover, even setting aside their historical significance, these cases are crucial because of the theoretical debates they generated. Carter's changing assessments of Soviet intentions marked the collapse of *détente*, leading observers to debate the evolution of his foreign policy. Analysts also dispute the extent to which revised understandings of Soviet intentions drove US foreign policy as the Soviet Union was collapsing.¹⁹ A new wave of research has revisited the conventional wisdom regarding Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.²⁰

The analysis shows that our current approaches are insufficient to explain the patterns observed in the empirical analysis. Decision makers draw divergent meanings and interpretations depending on their theories, expectations, and needs. They sometimes attend to costless actions while ignoring costly ones. Organizational affiliation and role matter; intelligence officials consistently refer to different types of indicators of intentions than do political decision makers. Put together, differences in inference processes among decision makers as well as between them and the state's intelligence community may lead to consistent divergence in interpretations of that adversary's intentions.

SIGNALING AND PERCEPTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

Realists actively debate the question of what role information about others' intentions should play in the strategic choices of states. Realist scholars have advanced propositions, implicit or explicit, about the sources and effects of assessments about intentions. Offensive realists such as John Mearsheimer argue that because intentions are both difficult to discern with confidence and liable to change, cautious decision makers must always assume the worst about their adversaries' intentions and formulate policies on the basis of relative material indicators alone.²¹ Defensive realists also emphasize the role of material capabilities in a state's calculus. In contrast to offensive realists, however, they reject a worst-case analysis of intentions, and contend that assessments of others' intentions should play a significant role in state's decisions on whether to adopt competitive or cooperative policies toward another state.²² Based on insights grounded in the security dilemma, defensive realists have thus identified a key role for signals about intentions in inducing cooperation even under anarchy. They maintain that by adopting certain reassuring armament policies and foregoing actions that may appear threatening to others, states can effectively communicate their benign intentions and desire for cooperation. Drawing on Jervis's work on cooperation under the security dilemma, defensive realists have examined how a state's decisions to deploy offensive or defensive weapon systems, and adopt offensive or defensive military doctrines, may provide important information to others about its interests and intentions.²³ A large literature explores the offense-defense balance along with the ways in which the quality, not just the quantity, of certain weapons can affect how states perceive each other's intentions and consequently interact with each other.²⁴

Building on Thomas Schelling's insights on credibility, Jervis's study on the logic of images, and work in economics on market signaling, international relations scholars have asserted that "informative" behaviors are those that distinguish different "types" of actors.²⁵ Thus, when gauging whether another country is an expansionist or status quo power, leaders should look only at those state actions that cannot readily be faked. Some actions that are costly for one "type" of state (e.g., a revisionist one) to undertake may not be equally costly for another (e.g., a status quo state). Costly and therefore informative actions include those actions that place greater constraints on a state's ability to alter its own policies in the future, such as by giving up armaments or joining a binding treaty organization. Statements of peaceful intent, by contrast, constitute "cheap talk" because either an expansionist leader or statesperson who is committed to peace or war could make such a statement if it would be to their state's advantage.

Using this basic intuition, rationalist security dilemma scholars such as Charles Glaser and Andrew Kydd have proposed various avenues for a security-seeking state to signal its nonaggressive stance, including arms control agreements

(especially those reducing offensive capabilities), unilateral shifts toward a more defensive military posture, and unilateral and broad reductions of military forces. The cost of such signals is rooted in the possibility that the other side is genuinely aggressive.²⁶ Although costly changes in a state's military policy and capabilities have been most salient in this literature on signaling, other types of nonmilitary-based actions have also been recognized as important. Due to some types of international institutions' "unique ability to impose costs on states," neoinstitutionalists have emphasized the instrumental role of international institutions in allowing states to distinguish those with benign intentions from those that are aggressive. Constraints imposed by certain institutions, for example, could decrease or limit a state's power; states with benign intentions are more likely to accept such constraints. Accordingly, by joining an international institution, a state signals that it does not intend to pursue aggression in the near future, contributing to others' belief that its intentions are benign.²⁷

These rationalist approaches underlie much of the signaling literature. Some scholars have also used psychological literature to explain how actors assess threats and discern information. In particular, psychological approaches to interstate communication focus predominantly on how actors' beliefs, background roles, cognitive limitations, and interests shape how they process information about intentions. Utilizing individual-level psychological variables, this literature in international relations has explored how various psychological biases and heuristics (shortcuts) can lead decision makers to mistaken judgments.²⁸ Analysts have thus attributed bad decisions, as Jonathan Mercer notes, "to the need for cognitive consistency, improper assimilation of new data to old beliefs, the desire to avoid value trade-offs, groupthink, idiosyncratic schemas, motivated or emotional bias, reliance on heuristics because of cognitive limitations, incorrect use of analogies, the framing of information, feelings of shame and humiliation, or a miserable childhood."²⁹ To date, however, this research program has yet to offer an integrated theory of misperceptions. The rationalist and psychological approaches discussed above provide a platform for addressing the questions guiding this book, but this basis leaves a number of significant theoretical gaps.

First, both the rationalist approaches to signaling and psychological literature on the sources of perceptions and misperceptions have essentially looked at the same transaction from two sides. The ability of states to signal their intentions and influence others' impressions effectively depends on how actors perceive these signals.³⁰ Surprisingly, there has been little attempt to study these twin aspects of interstate communication together.³¹ As Janice Stein and Raymond Tanter correctly argue, "We do not know enough about the conditions that promote effective signaling and reasonably accurate perception of threat."³² More recently, Jervis observed that "if signaling theories are arcane, perceivers who have not read the literature will draw inferences differently, which means that the theory will neither describe the thoughts of perceivers nor prescribe the

signalers' behavior. A theory of signaling then requires a careful investigation of how signals are perceived.³³ This study attempts to bring together these two literatures by examining whether and under what conditions observers understand concepts such as costly signals; to what degree they associate such actions with credibility; and how exactly observers' theories, predispositions, and impressions shape what indicators of intentions they will find informative.

Second, some rationalist approaches to signaling typically assume that in reading others' intentions, states can be envisioned as unitary actors. This simplification has several advantages, but it precludes us from examining why and to what extent individual decision makers, elites, and bureaucracies may read and interpret the adversary's intentions differently from one another. Indeed, if we find that different perceivers infer intentions differently, then there may not be a satisfactory way of aggregating divergent preferences for policies to satisfy all individuals. If the selective attention thesis is correct, furthermore, then we might observe persistent divergence among individual decision makers as well as between them and the state's intelligence community as to how to read and interpret the adversary's intentions. In other words, notwithstanding the existence of multiple costly actions and similar access to information by all observers, there may be no convergence toward a single view attributable to the state as a whole of its adversary's intentions.

This book, then, relaxes the unitary actor assumption and explores two *types* of perceivers. First, at the individual level, I examine how decision makers gauge intentions. I concentrate on the primary decision maker (i.e., the prime minister or president) and their closest advisers on issues of foreign policy. Second, at the organizational level, I analyze how the intelligence community estimates the adversary's intentions in its collective assessments. A state's intelligence apparatus is explicitly tasked with estimating threats, and policy makers often use its estimates to justify or reject various defense and foreign policies. Despite the centrality of these organizations, little scholarship exists on how intelligence organizations assess the intentions of the adversary.³⁴ Thus, this study tries to open the black box of the unitary state to examine different types of filters that decision makers and bureaucracies use to understand as well as interpret others' signals of intentions.

Third, some of the implications and hypotheses found in existing rationalist approaches to signaling have not been adequately tested. One reason for this gap lies in the normative and prescriptive nature of some of the existing rationalist work on signaling. As Glaser explains, a rationalist theory of signaling asks how a state would signal or infer intentions if its decision makers were to behave rationally or optimally. Although they provide important insights into how decision makers *should* behave to achieve their goals given the constraints they face, such theories' explanatory power may be limited when decision makers fail to act rationally.³⁵ Indeed, a substantial and diverse literature in international relations establishing that leaders rarely act rationally raises doubts

about the empirical validity of these rationalist approaches. The assumptions that undergird some of the rationalist approaches should be questioned, given the ambiguity that is frequently associated with interpreting behavior. Jervis points out that while “behavior may reveal something important about the actor, often it is not clear exactly what is being revealed, what is intended to be revealed, and what others will think is being revealed.”³⁶

This study tests the core insights of various contending approaches to signaling against a variety of primary and secondary sources. These tests allow us to look at the extent of the gap between the rational baseline of how leaders should behave and the empirical record of how they actually behave, and discuss its significance. We can also evaluate the casual mechanism that is so central to the arguments found in the current literature regarding the informative value of different types of signals. It may be that changes in actor’s perceptions of the adversary’s intentions are not due to the impact of costly signals, for instance. Tracing these inference processes may also reveal which *types* of costly signals actors tend to use or ignore. After all, observers often must interpret not just one but rather multiple signals. Some of these signals may suggest that the adversary’s intentions are becoming more benign, while others may indicate the opposite. Formal models are usually silent as to which costly signals perceivers are likely to notice and which they are likely to ignore. The empirical analysis of this book not only tests and modifies existing theories but also helps generate new theoretical claims about how different actors assess intentions.

Finally, the crisis-bargaining literature has only recently examined the role of costless communication in shaping conflict processes and outcomes.³⁷ This study is not specifically concerned with how states assess others’ resolve during crisis. Yet ascertaining the intentions of an adversary at a given time—and specifically, how committed it is to changing the status quo—can have significant implications for a state’s determinations regarding the other’s resolve in crisis situations. If decision makers view the adversary as an unlimited expansionist for whom coercive statecraft would not change its foreign policy objectives, then a corollary judgment is that the adversary is highly resolved. Examining differences in how decision makers assess intentions and respond to perceived levels of resolve might therefore offer critical clues as to how likely they are to enter into crises with the adversary.

It is important to note what is outside the scope of this study. First, this study is primarily concerned with the perceptions of an adversary’s long-term political intentions, because these are likely to affect a state’s own foreign policy and strategic choices.³⁸ The distinction between short- and long-term assessments is important, because during crises and war, observers are likely to focus on questions that are distinct from those that normally inform their assessments of an adversary’s intentions. Second, this exploration is not concerned with whether decision makers or intelligence organizations identified the intentions of their adversaries correctly. Although a significant question, it is a

complicated one. Such judgments would require that we first establish what the leaders of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the periods examined here actually believed their own intentions to be at the time. Rather, I ask a narrower question: How were assessments of intentions derived from the information available? Third, this book does not seek to discover all the sources of states' foreign policy and defense planning. It concentrates on the sources of assessments about intentions. Finally, this study does not attempt to address fully the conditions under which leaders' beliefs change. The focus here is on the indicators that leaders and intelligence organizations tend to privilege or ignore in their assessments of political intentions, how actors' subjective theories influence their expectations, and how organizational practices shape the ways in which different observers see signals of intentions as informative. I return to all these points in the book's concluding chapter.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The three competing theses of costly signals—the capabilities, strategic military doctrine, and behavior theses—fail to explain the systematic differences between the analytic lenses used by decision makers and intelligence communities to infer the adversary's intentions. They also do not explain persistent differences among decision makers as to what types of actions they each perceive as informative. For example, in the mid- to late 1970s and 1980s, US decision makers and the US intelligence community disagreed on the USSR's intentions, and analyzed these intentions through different analytic lenses. Prime Minister Chamberlain and other British officials held differing opinions of Germany's long-term plans before the outbreak of World War II. Such differences were not rooted in personal idiosyncrasies but rather reflect distinct, systematic patterns that can be explained by the selective attention thesis. In the rest of this section, I summarize the findings from the historical record that support my arguments.

British decision makers during the interwar period and US decision makers in two different administrations all gave the greatest weight to indicators associated with the noncapabilities-based behavior of their adversaries when estimating their political intentions. Yet contrary to the expectations of the behavior thesis, decision makers within each administration diverged in what costly actions by the adversary they categorized as credible and did not restrict their focus exclusively to costly actions when gauging intentions. Consistent with the logic of the vividness hypothesis, decision makers often relied on costless information when it was conveyed in ways that were highly salient and vivid. They repeatedly used private insights about the adversary's intentions acquired from personal interactions with its leaders to infer the adversary's intentions and justify their assessments. Furthermore, as the selective attention thesis predicted,

variations in decision makers' expectations about intentions influenced what they categorized as credible signals of intentions: those who had initially held relatively more bellicose views of the adversary categorized more of the adversary's actions as credibly signaling hostile intentions, compared to those who had initially held relatively more dovish views, and vice versa.

The capabilities thesis performs poorly in explaining how decision makers assess intentions, but it more accurately reflects the inference process of intelligence communities. Specifically, changes in the adversary's military capabilities did not by themselves alter decision makers' perceptions of adversaries' political intentions. Privately, decision makers only rarely linked the adversary's capabilities to their interpretations of its political intentions, even in cases when employing such evidence would have bolstered their contentions. In contrast, the adversary's military capabilities served as the most significant indicator on which the intelligence communities based their perceptions of intentions in all three cases. This pattern is consistent with the predictions of both the capabilities and selective attention theses. In most cases, however, intelligence assessments about political intentions had only marginal effects on the perceptions of civilian decision makers. Civilian actors chiefly relied on their own personal observations and private insights from meetings with their counterparts.

Finally, evidence suggests that decision makers did not use the adversary's military doctrine as an indicator of its intentions. Intelligence organizations found it difficult to agree on the nature of the adversary's military doctrine, and frequently debated what inferences, if any, about the adversary's intentions could be drawn from its military doctrine. Thus, support for the strategic military doctrine thesis is also weak.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

Chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework for the book's arguments. It defines what this study seeks to explain, and outlines the theoretical foundations of the selective attention thesis and three competing ones: the capabilities, strategic military doctrine, and behavior theses.

The empirical section of the book comprises three case studies, each in three chapters. The first case analyzes British assessments of Nazi Germany's intentions during the interwar period (1934–39). Chapter 2 outlines the predictions generated by each of the four explanations about perceived intentions, and tracks changes in Germany's capabilities, its military doctrine, and actions during this time. Chapter 3 draws on documents in the British National Archives to examine the evolution of the views held by key British decision makers about Germany's intentions, the indicators they used to make inferences about the nature and scope of Hitler's intentions, and the policies they advocated that

reflected their assessments. Chapter 4 discusses the analysis provided by the British intelligence community during the same period.

The second case looks at US perceptions of Soviet intentions during 1977–80, the years leading to the collapse of *détente*. Chapter 5 lays out the relevant predictions of the alternative theses about how states should assess intentions. Using evidence from US archives and interviews with former US decision makers, chapter 6 explores how well each of the alternatives explains how President Carter, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance assessed the intentions of the Soviet Union during the Carter administration. Utilizing evidence from declassified National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs) as well as interviews with former US intelligence analysts, chapter 7 tests the theoretical predictions against the collective estimates of the US intelligence community during the same period.

The third case analyzes how US decision makers and the US intelligence community reached conclusions about Soviet intentions during Reagan's second term as president. Chapter 8 discusses US perceptions of Soviet military capabilities, military doctrine, and behavior between 1985 and 1988. It derives predictions from the selective attention thesis as well as the three competing theses to predict how observers would assess intentions. Chapter 9 then uses newly declassified documents, open sources, and interviews to assess how President Reagan, Secretary of State George Shultz, and Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger evaluated various indicators of Gorbachev's intentions. Chapter 10 focuses on the US intelligence community, and explores how the preparers of the NIEs and SNIEs on the Soviet threat reached their conclusions about Gorbachev's intentions during the period prior to the end of the Cold War.

The concluding chapter of the book, chapter 11, summarizes the empirical evidence, explains the significance of the findings for both theory development and contemporary international politics, and suggests important avenues for further research.